

Maze of the Sun

Being taken with a recent article on labyrinths in Source magazine I checked out an image I liked that came from St Mary Redcliffe church, Bristol and, thanks to the excellent web page by Jo Edkin I discovered it is a copy of the famous Chartres maze.

<http://gwydir.demon.co.uk/jo/maze/chartres.htm>

The article's report on the dates and locations of such sites brought to mind how the evolution of human consciousness has been critically influenced by the pursuit of self awareness that has taken aeons to occur but is flowering in our modern age.

Early civilisations, even as far forward as ancient Egypt, viewed the control of the group as more important than raising individual awareness. It was seen as paramount that human beings should function healthily as a group and many things that today would be seen as individual crimes, even such as murder were seen then as evidence that the group was out of balance, not in good health. Society up until then was run by spiritually aware priests who manipulated group consciousness, initially for the common good, but as their own sense of separate self began to dawn corruption of their aims began to creep in. Some of the highest of these leaders of human development began to be aware that a new age was dawning and that pursuit of the light that shines within the soul was now becoming necessary. These are the ones who first developed the maze.

The light that shines within the soul is intimately linked with the ego. Indeed the ordinary ego has these dual powers of self awareness and self-ishness and for all it's enticing light can be a monster, as the Minotaur myth describes. Only the thread of maintained awareness, careful memory of self can allow escape from the dark maze in which one would be eaten.

Thus following a maze became a way in which people could be trained in maintaining the thread of awareness, lose your focus and lose your place. Such exercises helped to develop self awareness, first amongst priests and leaders and later, centuries later amongst people on more everyday life paths.

Even today awareness or acceptance of the strange twists and turns of personal destiny can be gained by taking in more of the pattern of the maze. At the centre is balance, achievement. Yet to live one's life one has to come out from the maze again, a picture of much spiritual awareness, one goes in, finds the centre but must lose it again in order to act in the world.

Such mazes all over the world were part of a training in becoming a self. The pains of life, which in the group consciousness are simply blamed on someone else, in the maze become part of one's own path. At the centre a true self awareness, which being in touch with the Higher Ego, the Self of all humankind, becomes a bridge over which compassion and healing may flow from the gods, through the centred self, to all who truly wish to receive it.

Other myths have seen this more positively than the Cretans. As the human 'I am' became more at home with itself, as the minotaur was tamed, more detailed and hopeful stories were written.

The Christian myth is central to this process of becoming Self. The new testament teachings, particularly in the gospel of John are all about taking personal responsibility for your own spiritual path and moral integrity. Understand this fully and see that Christ **is** and (through becoming human) gives **us**, true Self.

Regrettably the history of the churches has been more about a group-imposed sense of right and wrong than about empowering this message, but if you read for yourself with an eye to how a true self is to be

developed out of a group awareness you will find the maze there but with Love at the centre, not a minotaur.

The grail romances tell this story most clearly. Their hero is Perceval whose name, pierce-the-vale means to make it through the dark to the other side, (the high point of wider perspective and compassionate comprehension). In these stories Perceval begins as a fool and **yet** comes to the castle of the Grail, as if by accident. Once there he cannot see how to enter the circle of understanding, the whole mystery of being human is played out in a pageant before him but because he has not overcome his education and become master of himself he can not enter into it.

In the maze, and for me most clearly in the Bristol roof maze the path leads straight in, almost to the centre then turns back and leads you through what seems an almost pointless series of twists and turns, sometimes closer, sometimes away from the centre until at last from an unexpected distance it leads you rapidly home.

Perceval experiences just this. Thrown out of the castle for not showing compassion his life leads him by tortuous paths to comprehension and from there through many further struggles. He is told clearly, that those who seek the grail will not find it. He is abominated for his failure then later feted as a hero but still seems no closer to his goal. Each turn in the path becomes another struggle. Eventually he finds himself in mortal combat with his (unknown) elder brother, a half dark person whom Perceval had never known. Once he accepts this strange person as brother, and journeys together with him the centre becomes attainable and eventually our hero becomes king of the grail. How much more clearly can you show that though monsters may roam the paths, the road to the true Self leads to the ability to bless others and the world.

The Perceval myth crosses paths with the Arthurian round table stories. The round table is an image of community, the highest goal of group consciousness. The knights go out from here to battle monsters and baddies. Again an image of protecting the group, an image not a million miles from the issues of psychological projection. Eventually, after Perceval has come and gone from their circle more than once most of them take on his search, become Grail seekers. In mythological terms this is a picture of the move from being a hero in the group to becoming a seeker for true Self, that light that reflects deep in the soul from somewhere inexpressibly glorious.

Strangely, and outside the scope of this article, the journey through the maze, across the wasteland and dark valley described in the Grail stories eventually leads to a place where true community becomes possible. The round table is both beginning and end for the grail seekers. Could that be why so many mazes are constructed within a circle?

Shakespeare mentions mazes with such passing lack of emphasis that one might suppose he was "right familiar" with their role in life.

"Thou mayst not wander in that labyrinth; there Minotaurs and ugly treasons lurk." Says Suffolk to himself in *Henry VI*, the better to hold in check his passion for a lady.

Also speaking to himself is Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* saying "What, lost in the labyrinth of thy fury!" as he seeks to control the passions in which we lose our centre.

Groups and individuals that have sought this path to the centre, from Himalayas to Andes, from ancient Greeks to New Age Teachers recognise their path as the **Path of the Sun**. Other cultures that seek the moon as their leader are characterised by a pursuit of enlightenment by grace. The Shinto religion, translated as 'The Way of the Gods' shows this clearly. Here the ebb and sway of higher beings holds more force in a persons life than their own inner activity. Many other religions from ancestor worship through branches of shamanism, Christian churches,

indeed sects within every religion place this emphasis on what is done TO one over what one does **oneself**. Yet within each and every religion one can find strains of thought, individuals and groups who understand the path to the centre. Ask any one of these if the path is a straight one or if, once the path is begun one can see the end and they will quite likely point you to a maze.

Even in this enlightened area, the South West of England where so many spiritually minded people, loving and developed souls are gathered, you will find these two ways. There are many who seek to be rescued, teaching that aid will come to human kind from without whether they are aware of that or not. And you will find other groups and individuals who will show you a maze, tell you that the only one following your path is yourself and that though there are fellow travellers on the way it is **your path** to find your centre. Not that one is totally alone, not that there are not beings incarnate and discarnate whose love it is to aid you on the path, yet in the end it is **your** path, your feet, your choice.

Ultimately the question the maze poses us is this; do you want to be saved or are you here for the whole journey.

The earth school is the place where wisdom must be transformed into love. Not a straight and easy path.