



SIEBENQUELL

Why should we set out?

Paths into life



SOURCE: R. MONNERJAHN 2017

Setting out and taking new paths – this awakens in yearning in those who no longer feel at home on the well worn paths of their lives. It awakens desire in those who, by nature, have the heart of an adventurer. Some idealise this idea and may begin to rhapsodise without setting their foot outside the door.

However, what happens if we are forced to seek and take new paths? When that was firmly believed until know falls away – through an accident from without, through illness or death? What happens when no life can be fostered on the path previously taken? The collapse of the bridge on the autostrada A 10 in Genoa vividly places this before our eyes – the road travelled from decades has fallen away, it no longer exists and all those who wish to move on and live on must seek and find a new route to Genoa. That is laborious and takes time, yet, there is no alternative.

To set forth and take a new path is, however, occasionally not demanded for our own sakes. Someone else needs our courageous setting forth to a new way of thinking, to other priorities or forms of behaviour, to totally other solutions, so that he or she might find life.

A fairy tale demonstrates this to us. It is found in an old collection of the Brothers Grimm and is entitled »The Seven Ravens«. Here a tale is told of seven brothers and how their father curses them for godless behaviour. They then fly away as seven coal-black ravens. Yet, they have a dear little sister who loves them with all her heart. »Their banishment troubled her greatly, and she went to her father and mother and asked them if she indeed had had brothers, and what had happened to

them. She had neither rest nor peace until she secretly set forth and went out into the wide world, hoping to find her brothers and to set them free, whatever it might cost«. This girl could have continued living in security and well protected; she had no responsibility for the life of her brothers. But she loved them therefore she grieved for them. She cannot leave them to their fate, feels a responsibility for them rooted in deep love, and finally sets out on the path.

This path is adventurous and leads her beyond everything she had experienced to date. »She took nothing with her but a little ring as a remembrance from her parents, a loaf of bread for hunger, a little jug of water for thirst, and a little chair for when she got tired.

She walked on and on -- far, far to the end of the world. She came to the sun, but it was too hot and terrible, and ate little children. She hurried away, and ran to the moon, but it was much too cold, and also frightening and wicked, and when it saw the child, it said, "I smell, smell human flesh."«

The sister enters into the adventure, without a safety net, without security and comfort, but with great attentiveness, with courage and clarity. She does not shy away from the furthest paths, she encounters death-dealing powers. She does not rub herself raw against them, but rather retains in her heart the reason why she set out: Life if her concern!

»Then she hurried away, and came to the stars, and they were friendly and good to her, each one sitting on its own little chair. When the morning star arose, it gave her a chicken bone, and said, "Without that chicken bone you cannot open the glass mountain, and your brothers are inside the glass mountain." The girl took the bone, wrapped it up well in a cloth, and went on her way again until she came to the glass mountain. The door was locked, and she started to take out the chicken bone, but when she opened up the cloth, it was empty. She had lost the gift of the good stars. What could she do now? She wanted to rescue her brothers, but she had no key to the glass mountain. The good little sister took a knife, cut off one of her little fingers, put it into the door, and fortunately the door opened and she could enter gladly«

The girl orientates herself on her long journey by those who are well-disposed toward her and accepts aid and good counsel. Her inner compass is the caring love for her brothers; now she has an external goal before her eyes. But as she finally reaches this goal and discovers that she has lost the key, she does not give up, discouraged and in desperation, but instead invests something of herself, without hesitation – and can enter »gladly«.

The »dear little sister« of this fairy tale is on a journey with the heart of an adventurer. She possesses a deep inner motivation and knows what the lives of her brothers are worth to her. She does not allow death-dealing powers, be they ever so great and loud, to diminish her. Wisely, she keeps her distance from them, moves away from them, but neither surrenders nor despairs. No, this girl seeks after powers and means that help her and make life possible for her and, eventually, for her brothers.

»After she had gone inside a little dwarf came up to her and said, "My child, what are you looking for?"
"I am looking for my brothers, the seven ravens," she replied. The dwarf said, "The lord ravens are not at home, but if you want to wait here until they return, step inside." Then the dwarf carried in the ravens' dinner on seven little plates, and in seven little cups. The sister ate a little bit from each plate and took a little sip from each cup. Into the last cup she dropped the ring that she had brought with her. Suddenly she heard a whirring and rushing sound in the air, and the dwarf said, "The lord ravens are flying home now." They came, wanted to eat and drink, and looked for their plates and cups. Then one after the other of them said, "Who has been eating from my plate? Who has been drinking from my cup? It was a human mouth." When the seventh one came to the bottom of his cup, the ring rolled toward him. Looking at it, he saw that it was a ring from their father and mother, and said, "God grant that our sister might be here; then we would be set free." The girl was listening from behind the door, and when she heard this wish she came forth. Then the ravens were restored to their human forms again. They hugged and kissed one another, and went home happily.« *

Thus, at the end of this adventurous path, all are redeemed and the joy of life has a quality never known before.

* *Grimm 1857, Nr. 25*

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Vallendar, August 23, 2018