

Mystery Centres

LECTURE X: THE CHTHONIC AND THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

Dornach, December 14th, 1923.

LET us once again call to mind the real significance. of the fact that the knowledge and truths expressed in the Mysteries of Hibernia had been, in a manner of speaking, dimmed; that means that they could not develop any further activity in their journey towards central Europe and the East; and in the place of a spiritual approach even in matters of religion, physical perception, or at least a tradition based on this appeared.

Let us again call to mind that Image which appeared at the end of our last consideration. We pointed to the Being of Christ in the Mysteries of Hibernia. We indicated also that epoch in which the Mystery of Golgotha took place. There, in Hibernia, were the Initiates with their pupils; and there, without any means for the physical perception of the Mystery of Golgotha, without any possibility of information concerning this Mystery coming across to them, we find that at the same time in Ireland the Initiates established a universal ceremony, because they were quite clear from their insight that the Mystery of Golgotha was taking place simultaneously in an external way.

Now for these Initiates and their pupils in the Mysteries of Hibernia, they had of necessity to experience a physical reality, a sensible event, but only in a spiritual way. It was not necessary, for their way of thinking, and the manner of knowledge then customary in Hibernia to have more than the Spiritual in the physical world.

It must be clearly understood, however, that in Hibernia the Spiritual was paramount. In all kinds of secret streams of spiritual life that which had originated in Hibernia was brought over to central Europe, through the British Isles, through Brittany, through what is now Holland and Belgium, and even through the Alsace of today. Even though not present in the general civilization, yet, in the first centuries of Christian development, we find here and there in all the regions mentioned single individualities able to understand what had come over from the Mysteries of Hibernia, but, as we have said, this was not to be found in the general civilization of Europe. One must approach these things with an inner longing for knowledge, in order to find in the first Christian centuries those fairly numerous personalities. In the later centuries, from the 8th and 9th to the 15th and 16th centuries such personalities became rarer and rarer; personalities able to gather around them a small number of pupils through whom, in the silent places far removed from the world and its civilization, that which had been initiated in western Europe, in Hibernia, could be carried further.

In general, there spread over Europe that for which spiritual perception is not required, that which could be linked on to the mere historical tradition, which simply related the physical events which had taken place in Palestine at the beginning of our era. From this stream there proceeded that element which gradually developed more and more, which reckoned only with that which transpired in physical life.

Less and less did humanity in general divine what a colossal contradiction lies in the fact that the mystery of Golgotha, which is really only comprehensible by means of the deepest spiritual life, is now based simply on an external figure, perceptible physically; this became for a time the necessary course of development of civilization in Europe.

Fundamentally, all this had been gradually prepared over a long time, but it could only come about because a very great deal of the old Mystery-knowledge, even such as still existed in Greece, had been forgotten.

These Mysteries of Greece were divided into two classes; one of these busied itself with guiding man's mind towards the spiritual world, towards the actual guidance and direction of the world in spirit, while the other investigated the mysteries of nature and that which rules in nature, especially the forces and beings connected with the powers of the earth. A great number of candidates were initiated into both kinds of mysteries. Of these it was said that they had knowledge and had been initiated into the Mysteries of the Father, the Mysteries of Zeus, and also that they had been admitted into the Mysteries of the Mother, the Mysteries of Demeter. When we look back into those times we find a far-reaching spiritual perception, though still somewhat abstract, into the highest regions, and side by side with this, a conception of nature which was capable of descending into the depths. Above all, we find in Greece that which is of special significance — the union of both Mysteries.

Concerning this union of both Mysteries we see that which today is but little noticed; the fact that man carries certain external substances of nature in his being while certain other substances of nature he does not carry in his being; this was observed and studied in the very deepest sense, in the Chthonic Mysteries in Ancient Greece. You know that man has iron in his being, as part of his organization. He also carries other metals within him, calcium, sodium, magnesium, and so on; but there are other metals which he does not carry within him. If we were to try and find these metals within by means of ordinary scientific methods, if one analysed the substances in man, then by means of this external investigation, we should find no lead, no copper, no quicksilver, no tin, no silver and no gold within him.

That was the great riddle which occupied those undergoing initiation into the Greek Mysteries, and the apex of this riddle was reached in the question: How does it come about that man carries iron in himself, that he carries sodium magnesium, and other substances which we can also find in outer nature, but does not, for instance carry lead or tin in his being? They were deeply convinced that man is a small world, a microcosm; yet it would appear that man did not carry in his being these other metals, lead, tin, quicksilver, silver, gold and so on.

We may truly say that the older candidates for initiation in Greece were of the opinion that this was only apparently the case; for they were deeply permeated by the knowledge that man is a real microcosm; that means that everything which is to be found in the cosmos he also carries in his own being.

Let us look for a moment into the mind of a man about to be initiated in Greece. He would be instructed somewhat as follows: (and here of course I must compose into a few sentences that which extended over long periods in the course of this instruction) he was instructed by being told the following: Observe how the earth today conceals iron everywhere in itself; iron is also in man. Once upon a time,

when the earth had not yet become earth, when it existed in a previous planetary condition, the earth which was then Old Moon, or perhaps even Old Sun also concealed in itself lead, tin and so on: and all the beings which had shared in the previous construction of the earth also had a part in these metals and their forces, just as man today shares in the forces of iron. But with those transformations which the ancient shape of the earth underwent iron alone remained in such a degree of strength and density that man could permeate his being with it. The other metals which we have just named are also contained in the earth, but they are no longer of such a consistency that man can directly permeate himself with them; they are to be found in an infinitely rarefied condition in the whole cosmic space which surrounds man.

If I examine a small piece of lead I see before me the well-known grayish-white metal, which has a definite density. One can grasp it. But this same lead which appears in the lead-ores of the earth exists in an infinitely fine ramification in the whole cosmic space surrounding man, and there it has its significance. It has this significance there, that it radiates its forces everywhere, even where there is apparently no lead and man comes into contact with these forces of the lead, not through his physical body, but through his etheric body; because outside the lead-ores of the earth lead exists in such a rarefied fine condition that it can work only on the etheric body of man. On man's etheric body the lead works in this condition of infinite ramification extended over the whole of cosmic space.

The pupil of those ancient Greek Chthonic Mysteries learnt that, just as is the case today with the earth, which is infinitely rich in iron, and I a planet concerning which the inhabitant of another planet could say: "That planet is rich in iron," (the only other planet rich in iron being Mars); just as the earth is rich in iron, so Saturn is rich in lead. What iron is for the earth, lead is for Saturn; and one has to assume — this the student of the Chthonic Mysteries in Greece learned — that once upon a time, when the separation of Saturn from the common planetary body of the earth took place as described in my Outline of Occult Science — when Saturn separated from this cosmic body, this fine division with reference to lead took place. One can say that Saturn took the lead out with him, as it were and held it through his own planetary life-force, through his own planetary warmth in such a condition that he can permeate the whole planetary system to which our earth belongs with this infinitely finely distributed lead.

You must therefore imagine the earth, and in the distances Saturn filling the whole planetary system with its finely distributed lead, and this fine lead substance works on man. You can still find traces that this was taught to those about to be initiated in ancient Greece, and that they learnt to understand how this lead worked. They knew that our sense organs, especially the organ of the eye would take the whole of man's being into its own sphere, and not allow man to come to self-reliance. Man would only be able to see, he would not be able to think about what he had seen. He would be unable to detach himself from what he saw and say: "I see." He would be over-powered by sight, as it were, unless this effect of lead existed in the Cosmos. It is this activity of lead which makes it possible for man to be independent in himself, which places him as an ego as regards receptivity to the outer world, which lives in him. These lead-forces first enter the etheric body of man, and from the etheric body they also impregnate the physical body, in a certain sense. Thereby man receives the capacity of memory; the power of memory.

It was always a great moment when a pupil, such as the Greek pupil of the Chthonic Mysteries, after having learnt all this, was led on to what then followed. He was shown with all possible ceremonial the substance of lead, and then his mind was directed towards Saturn. The relationship of Saturn with earthly lead was brought before his soul, and then he was told: "The lead which thou seest is concealed in the earth, for in its present state the earth is not in a condition to give the lead a form in which it can work in man; but Saturn with its very different condition of warmth, with its inner life-forces scatters lead in planetary space. Thereby thou art an independent being, possessing the power of memory. Just think, thou art a human being only through the fact that today thou dost know still what thou knewest ten or twenty years ago. Just think how the human part of thee would suffer if thou didst not carry within thee what thou didst experience ten or twenty years ago. Thy ego-forces would be shattered unless this power of memory were present in full measure. This is due to what streams to thee from that distant Saturn. It is the force which has come to rest in lead in the earth, and which can now no longer work upon man in its quiescent state. Thus it is the Saturn lead-forces which enable thee to consolidate thy thoughts, so that they can arise later out of the depths of the soul, and thou canst thus live a continuous life in the external world, and not merely in a transient way. Thou owest it to the Saturn lead-forces that thou dost not merely look around thee today and then forget the objects thou beholdest, but canst retain the memory of them in thy soul. Thou canst retain in thy soul what thou didst experience twenty years ago, and canst cause this to live again; thou canst so form thy inner life as to reproduce what thou didst experience in thy surroundings at any particular time of thy life."

It was a powerful impression that the pupil received, when with the greatest ceremony this knowledge was brought before him seriously and without sentimentality. He then learnt to understand: If it were only these lead-forces which were active in giving man the power of his ego, the power of memory, he would be completely separated from the Cosmos. If the Saturn-forces alone existed in man he would indeed be able to retain in his memory what he saw with his physical eyes, and preserve this throughout his earthly life; but he would be divorced from the Cosmos. He would become, as it were, a hermit in his earth-life in spite of being inspired by Saturn with the power of memory. The pupil then learnt that against the Saturn forces another force had to be set up, the force of the moon. Let us suppose that these two forces confront one another in such a way that the force of Saturn and the force of the moon, approaching from opposite sides, but flowing into each other, descend to the earth and to man on the earth. Now Saturn takes from man what he receives from the moon, and what man receives from Saturn is taken by the moon. So, just as the earth has in iron a force which man can transmute within himself, a force which Saturn has in lead, that same force is possessed by the moon in silver.

Now even the silver, as it exists in the earth, has already attained a condition in which it cannot enter directly into man; but the whole sphere which includes the moon is actually permeated by finely divided silver, and the moon, especially when its light comes from the constellation of Leo, works in such a way that man, through these silver-forces of the moon receives the opposing activity of the lead-forces of Saturn; he is therefore not divorced or cut off from the Cosmos, in spite of the fact that he is beneficently inspired with the forces of memory by the Cosmos. It was a moment of special ceremony when the Greek pupil was led to see this opposition of Saturn and the moon., In the sanctity of the night it was made clear to the pupil: "Look up to Saturn surrounded by his rings; to him thou owest the fact

that thou art an independent being. Now look towards the other side, to the silver-radiating moon. To her thou owest the fact that thou art able to bear the Saturn forces without being cut off from the rest of the Cosmos.”

In this way, based directly upon the union of man with the cosmos, that teaching was given in Greece which later on we find as a caricature in what is called astrology. At that time it was a true wisdom, for then man saw in a star not merely the speck or point of light above him; he saw in the star the spiritual living being, and the human being of the earth was seen in union with this spiritual living being. Men then had a natural science which reached up into the heavens, and extended right out into cosmic spaces. When the pupil had received such insight, and such illumination had entered deeply into his soul, he was led into the real Mysteries of Eleusis. You have heard what took place in these Mysteries, in my description of other Mysteries; for instance, the Mysteries of Hibernia. The pupil was led before two statues. One of these statues represented to him a fatherly divinity, that fatherly divinity which was surrounded by the signs of the planets and the sun, represented to him shining Saturn, but so radiant that the pupil was reminded of the fact: That is the radiance of lead from the cosmos — just as the moon reminded him of the silver radiance. And this same thing happened with each single planet. Thus, in that statue which represented the father principle there appeared all those mysteries which ray down to earth from the planetary environment, all that which was related to the single metals of the earth, which, however, had now become unusable within the earth as regards man's inner being.

Then the pupil was told the following: Here stands the Father of the world before Thee. The Father of the world carries the lead in Saturn, in Jupiter he bears tin, in Mars the iron, which is so closely related with the earth-being but in quite another condition, in the sun, the radiating gold, in Venus, the radiating streaming copper, in Mercury the radiating quicksilver, and in the moon the radiating silver. Thou dost only bear within thee that part of the metals which thou wast able to assimilate from the planetary conditions which the earth had once upon a time gone through. In its present condition thou canst only assimilate the iron. As an earthly human being thou art not complete. In that which the Father, standing before thee shows thee in the metals which cannot today exist within thee in thy earthly existence, but which thou must take up from the cosmos, in that thou hast another part of thy being; when thou dost look upon thyself as a human being who has gone through the planetary transformations of the earth, then art thou really a complete human being. Here on the earth thou art only a part human being; the other part the Father carries round his head and in his arms before thee. It is only that which stands before thee, combined with that which he bears which makes thee man. Thou standest on the earth, but that earth was not always as it is today. If the earth had been always as it is today thou couldst not dwell upon it as a human being. For the earth carries today in itself, even in a lifeless condition, the lead of Saturn, the tin of Jupiter, the iron of Mars (though in that other state) the gold of the sun, the silver of the moon, the copper of Venus, and the quicksilver of Mercury. It carries these things within it. But these metals which the earth carries in its body today are no more than a memory of their former existence, of the way in which, once upon a time silver lived during the Moon-existence of the earth, in which gold lived during the Sun-existence, only a reminder of the way in which lead lived during the Saturn-existence of the earth. That which thou hast today in the dense metallic ores of lead, tin, iron, gold, copper, quicksilver, silver, with the exception of the iron which thou really

knowest, and which is not the iron within the earth, for that belongs to the Mars nature, that which thou now seest in these dense compact metals — these metals poured themselves out on to the earth in a quite different condition. These metals as thou knowest them today on the earth are the corpses of the erstwhile metal-beings. The corpse has remained of that metal-being which during the Saturn time and later in a different stage, during the Moon time of the earth played a part in their ancient form. Tin played a part in a combination with gold during the Sun time of the earth in a very different condition. And if thou dost see these things in the Spirit, then will this statue become for thee in all that it brings before thee the true Father statue.

And in the Spirit, as in a real vision the statue of the true Mysteries of Eleusis became living and handed to the female statue which stood beside it that which the metals at that time were. In the vision seen by the pupil, the female statue received that which was the metals in their former shape, and surrounded it with what the earth in becoming earth could give out of its own being.

The pupil saw this wonderful process, this wonderful happening. There radiated forth out of the hand of the Father-statue the metallic mass, as the pupil now saw in a symbolic way; and that which the earth then was, with its chalk and stone-formation encountered that which streamed in and surrounded this in-streaming metal-element with earthly substance.

The way in which the hand stretching out in love from the Mother-statue received the metal-forces which were offered by the Father-statue made a great and mighty impression on the pupil, for he then saw how the Cosmos worked together with the earth in the course of aeons of time, and he learnt to feel in the right way what the earth was offering.

Look around at the metallic nature in the earth today. It is crystallized and surrounded with a kind of crust which comes from the earth. The metal-nature streamed in from the cosmos, and that which comes from the earth received lovingly that which streamed in from the cosmos. You see this everywhere if you go to metal-mines and take an interest in them. That which received the metal was called the Mother. The most important of these earthly substances which, as it were, came forward to meet the heavenly metal-element in order to take it up were called “the Mothers.”

That is only one aspect of “The Mothers” to whom Faust descends. He descends at the same time into those pre-earthly periods of the earth, in order to see there how the Mother-earth takes into herself what is given by the Father-element in the cosmos.

Through all this there was stirred up in the pupil of the Eleusinian Mysteries, in his inner being, a feeling of being one with the Cosmos. It was an inner recognition in his heart of that which is in reality the nature-processes of the earth.

If the man of today observes these processes, these products of nature, he finds everything dead, there is nothing but a corpse; and if we occupy ourselves with physics or chemistry, are we doing with nature really anything else in our science than what the anatomist does when he dissects the corpse in the anatomical theatre when he has only the dead aspect of that which was intended for life? Thus in our science and physics we cut into living nature.

To the Greek pupil was given a different natural science, a natural science of the living, which showed him our present lead as the corpse of lead. He had to go back to the times when lead lived, and in that way the mysterious relation of man with the cosmos, the mysterious connection of man with all that existed around him on the earth was made clear.

When the pupil had undergone all these things, when the Father-statue and the Mother-statue had sunk deeply into his soul, bringing before his soul the two opposing forces of the Cosmos and of the earth, he was led in Ancient Greece into the very holiest of all. There he had before him the picture of a female figure suckling at her breast a Child, and he was finally led to the understanding of the Word: "That is the God Jakos, Who is to come in the future."

In this way the Greek disciple learned to understand the Mystery of Christ in a pre-Christian period; again it was in a spiritual way that the Christ was placed before those to be initiated into the Mysteries of Eleusis. In that time, however, he had to learn of the Christ only as a future Appearance, as One Who was still a Child, a cosmic Child, Who must first grow up in the Cosmos. Those about to be initiated, who were taught to look towards the end, towards the goal of earth-evolution were called Tellists.

Now there came a very important turning-point, which is expressed very dearly and even historically in the transition from Plato to Aristotle. It is remarkable that, in the evolution of this Greek civilisation, as the fourth century began, this first transition towards the abstract appeared. This fact is exemplified in the following scene which took place between Plato and Aristotle, at a time when Plato was very old, and really at the end of his earthly career. I must of course clothe in words what naturally occurred in a much more complicated way. Plato said to Aristotle somewhat as follows: "Many things I have told you and my other pupils may not have seemed correct to you, but what I have told you is really an extract of the most ancient holy Mystery-Wisdom. Human beings will, however, in the course of their evolution acquire such a form and such an inner Organisation, which will gradually lead them to something certainly higher than we now possess but this will at the same time make it impossible for them to accept natural science in the way it is presented to the Greeks." Plato made this clear to Aristotle. "Therefore, I will withdraw myself for a time" said Plato, "and will leave you to yourself. In the world of thought, for which you are so especially endowed, and which will become the thought-world of humanity for many centuries, try to build up in thoughts what you have learnt here in my school." So Plato and Aristotle separated, and Plato therewith fulfilled, as commanded, a high spiritual mission through Aristotle.

I am obliged to describe this scene in this way; but if you look in the history books, you will also find this scene described, and I will now tell you how it is there described: "Aristotle was always a headstrong pupil of Plato; so that Plato once said that though Aristotle was a gifted pupil yet he was like a horse that was trained by someone and then kicked its trainer with its hoof. That which took place between Aristotle and Plato led as time went on to Plato becoming annoyed and withdrawing from Aristotle. He returned no more into the Academy to teach therein." That is the account given in the history books.

This narrative is in the history books; the other which I have just related is the truth and bears within it an impulse toward something very significant. For there were two kinds of writings of Aristotle. The one

contained a remarkable natural science, the natural science of Eleusis, which came by way of Plato to Aristotle. The other contained the thoughts, the abstract thoughts which were also given to Aristotle by Plato from out of the Eleusinian Mysteries for the accomplishment of his mission.

That which Aristotle actually had to give also followed a two-fold path. We have his so-called logical writings, those logical writings which drew forth the most weighty thoughts from the ancient Eleusinian Mystery wisdom. These writings containing, less of natural science, Aristotle gave to his pupil Theophrastus, and through him and in other ways they came through Greece and Rome and formed the content of the wisdom taught throughout the Middle Ages to those leading minds in civilisation — the teachers of philosophy in Central Europe.

That which came about in the way I described in the last lecture, because the Mystery-wisdom of Hibernia had to be rejected, and men had simply to link on to what was tradition, tradition recording the events which took place at the beginning of our own era, this united with that which was separated from the wisdom of Plato by Aristotle, the wisdom of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The natural science which still carried within it the spirit of the Chthonic Mysteries and which had flowed into the Eleusinian Mysteries was a natural science which extended to the heavens, and soared out to the wide spaces of the cosmos to seek explanation of the earth from thence. For this natural science the time was past in Greece. As much as could be saved of this natural science was saved by Alexander becoming the pupil of Aristotle, who then undertook his journeys into Asia, and did everything possible to introduce this Aristotelian natural science to the East to extend it eastward. That then passed over into the Jewish and Arabian schools. From thence it came across from Africa to Spain, and there in a filtered form it influenced certain human beings in Central Europe. Theophrastus had given his version of the teachings of Aristotle to the theological teachers of the Middle Ages. Alexander the Great had carried his — the other version of Aristotle — over into Asia. That Eleusinian wisdom which came, but in infinite dilution, through Africa into Spain, shone out here and there in the Middle Ages, and notwithstanding the general standard of culture, was cultivated in certain monasteries and lived on under the surface. For instance, we meet with it in mystical form as brought down to posterity in Basilus Valentinus. On the surface there prevailed that culture of which I spoke to you in the last lecture. In this culture that which it was still possible to teach at the time of Aristotle was not to be found — that Christ must really be recognized and known.

The third picture, the female form who carries at her breast the Child, the Jakos-Child, must also be understood; but that which should bring the understanding of this third figure was still to come in the evolution of humanity. That must come through certain relationships which I have explained to you. This was made clear to Alexander the Great by Aristotle, not in writing, but through circumstances such as I have just described.

So we see how in the bosom of time there lies the demand to understand in its original reality what has been so beautifully put before the world by the Christian painters; the Mother with the Child at her breast; but which was not fully understood either in the Madonna of Raphael, or in the eastern icons. It still awaits understanding.

Something of what is necessary to acquire such understanding will be discussed in the lectures to be given here; and in the next lecture I will describe the way along which many deeply occult secrets traveled from Arabia towards Europe. This will help to place before your souls a certain historical phenomenon, and in the lectures which are to form the basis of the historical evolution of humanity, and which will be given to the delegates at Christmas I will endeavour to put before you at the proper place the significance of the journeys of Alexander the Great in connection with the teachings of Aristotle.