

COSMOLOGY COURSE

LECTURES TO MEMBERS - Willi Sucher: from 1 Oct. '54 to 1 Apr. '55 (All drawings by Willi Sucher)
Rudolf Steiner House, London, England

RETURN OF KING ARTHUR ~ 1 October 1954

Introduction

The contents of these lectures were gathered from notes and/or recordings of lectures that Willi Sucher gave in a series to members of the Anthroposophical Society from 1 October 1954 to 1 April 1955. They were not revised or edited by Willi, although he added a few clarifications to the lectures from 4 February to 18 February 1955. Even though some of the notes were marked “very incomplete”, they also contain mature insights that students of anthroposophy-astrosophy will find valuable for themselves or in relation to the body of astrosophy as a whole, and they were therefore included.

The first group of lectures, called Cosmology Course, were interrupted during Christmas 1954 by a group of four lectures called Christmas and the Cosmic Rhythms from 28 December to 6 January 1955. This Christmas group was separated out and put at the end in the publication *Cosmology Course I*, however, here they follow in the order that they were given.

In the Arthurian Legends it is said that one day, in some great emergency, King Arthur will return to lead his people. These Legends are not fantastic tales of far distant times, but spiritual facts inscribed in the myths which concern the present, the future, and the past.

Let us first speak of Tintagel, the legendary birthplace of Arthur. This is an island in the spiritual sense, for its very shape is remarkable, as you will see from its ground plan. This can be obtained from the official Guide. Myths describe spiritual facts in a form palatable to a certain age, and we must penetrate the legendary form of this spiritual truth. The island is roughly the shape of a pentagon, and as it is a pentagon, it is the foundation of the pentagram star. This is a cosmic pattern, for the ground plan is pure cosmology, a picture of the gestures of the planet which is called Venus. We will refer to this in future as occult Mercury, for this is how it was known in ancient times. The reasons for which I will not go into now, but just to say that it has the qualities of Mercury, which are true healing.

Occult Mercury, as we know, moves through the ecliptic, and we will look at it from the viewpoint of the Ptolemaic world conception. According to this view, it moves around our Earth in certain rhythms. Let us say as an example, when in the summer solstice it stands in the constellation of Cancer, and it is far behind the Sun, that this is a superior conjunction, and its light is overpowered by the light of the Sun, which stands between it and the Earth. Then it moves around the Earth, makes a loop in Scales, and comes between Earth and Sun. This is an inferior conjunction. Thus it moves on, alternately looping in front of the Sun and passing behind it, until it returns to its starting point after eight years. In that period of eight years it inscribes by its gestures a beautiful five-pointed pentagram star into the heavens; and the Earth “swims”, or is embedded in it. Such movement, from superior conjunction to loop takes nine months, and this gesture happens five times in different places of the Zodiac (see second drawing in March 11th lecture).

All this was known in ancient times. It is even in the Mexican stone calendars. There is indeed a kind of double pentagram made, one by the loops and one by the superior conjunctions. This is the same as the ground plan of Tintagel Castle, this island in the shape of a pentagram, which demonstrates it geographically. Does this seem far-fetched? We have many ancient monuments in Britain that deliberately reflect such cosmic facts. Stonehenge was used in ancient times as a celestial calendar, whilst the Isle of Avalon at Glastonbury reveals the features of the Zodiac according to a recent aerial survey. These are imprinted into the land by hedges, ancient roads, rivers, brooks, etc.

Occult Mercury is the cosmic being behind King Arthur. In the Celtic universe there was a great deity called Gwydion, who also represents occult Mercury. His castle was called Caerleon, which means the Milky Way. This Milky Way is the sky as it moves between the twin stars Castor and Pollux. Gwydion had twin sons, one dark and one bright, a shining youth. This great divine personality is the equivalent of occult

Mercury, for he fights the darkness and brings harmony into the world. His opponents are the dwellers in the deepest darkness, a region called Annwn in Celtic mythology. These opponents are called Pwyll and Pryderi, who build a bone fortress in this dark place. This could be understood as the skeleton, and Annwn represents the Abyss, or Hell. This is a kind of funnel, which is open at the top and goes down into a dark, narrow base. It is called a Cauldron, and its vast shape resembles our smaller Earth's shape.

Gwydion fights the darkness but is imprisoned in his bone fortress, the mineral crystallized skeleton, and in the great Celtic battle of the "trees", he overcomes these forces of darkness; for occult Mercury is the healing, harmonizing force that brings light into darkness. Even some modern astrologers know of this great secret and call the star Venus "the harmonizer", thus giving Venus the Mercurial qualities of the true occult Mercury. Arthur is Gwydion's successor. Human beings came to recognize divinity as expressed in human nature, after having lost the experience of direct spirituality. Arthur is not a name so much as a title; it is a degree of Initiation. Arthur represented these occult Mercury forces and was born on the Island of Tintagel, which manifests the pentagram star.

Gwydion was a fighter for the light, and Arthur's story is the same, as he, too, descended from the heavens to the dark depths of Earth, but down a stairway of stars rather than through a funnel. The great Welsh bard, Taliesin, describes Gwydion's descent to Annwn, and how he had to conquer seven castles on the way. This is illuminating, as the castles represent the seven planetary spheres as this Messenger of Light and Harmony came down to harmonize the Cauldron of Wisdom and Illumination.

There are so many mysteries and secrets contained in this that I cannot touch on them now; but Tintagel was the birthplace of those healing forces on Earth which drew down the occult Mercury forces to our Earth. You know that the first part of our Earth evolution is under the darker Mars influence, but that it now moves toward the lighter half, which is occult Mercury. Both King Arthur and the Celtic pre-Christian stream prepared for this (see Rudolf Steiner's *Cosmic Christianity and the Impulse of Michael*). The Palestine events were then experienced in the form of higher visions. This throws new light on the story of the Round Table, and I want to make this the foundation of our work in the coming classes, i.e., this picture of the human Zodiac, which is a most democratic monarchy.

King Arthur sits in the most important seat, but he is not the head of the table, only one among thirteen. All are equal and all serve. They bring the food served at this table to humanity, and this is the motif of the healing forces of occult Mercury. This whole island represents the Round Table. In a place near Tintagel there is the legend that on the ancient Mount at midsummer the Table rises, but only certain people can see it.

Now we must take a detour. I have told you that I think the plateau of Tintagel is shaped like a bear. This is not far-fetched, because it resembles the constellation of the Bear in the sky, the Great Bear, Ursa Major, which also concerns King Arthur. There is a legend, told by Fiona McCleod, called "Beyond the Blue", about the seven stars that make up this constellation, and this deals with King Arthur's descent from the heavens. His soul meets his father there, Pendragon (the dragon's head), who directed him toward the constellation of the Great Bear. This is also known as the Plough, or by country people as Arthur's Waen (Wagon).

It is made up of seven stars, and these represent the seven Kings who sit at the table, of whom Arthur is one. They decide that the time has come when "the great shall become small", and the macrocosm descends to the microcosm. This represents incarnation. And so Arthur descends to Tintagel, and the Great Bear in the heavens is the same shape as this plateau on which Arthur is born. The name Arthur is supposed to be derived from the Welsh Uthyr, meaning Bear—the Great Bear. The Bear moves continuously around the pole star "which never sets", but this pole star was in a different place three to four thousand years ago, when it was in the tail of the Dragon. The Great Bear was then closer to the pole star and circled around it in a very narrow orbit. The ancients would watch this with great patience and devotion, which is foreign to us, and see in it a resemblance to descending spiral stairs, down which Arthur came to Earth.

Tintagel is an excellent place for the observation of the stars, both at sunrise and sunset, and wonderful for observing the calendar of the year. It was Arthur's earthly task to see that the economic life of the community was sustained by observation of the seasons and the star movements as they related to agriculture, so that they kept in harmony with cosmic cycles.

Tintagel probably stood as a point, along the bridge from the disappearing Atlantis to the European world, and it is certainly of very ancient origin. It was excellently suited for directing the affairs of humanity by the

cosmic rhythms. Tintagel and Arthur are concerned, in this respect, with very practical affairs and are without mysticism. One only needs an understanding of the working of the Sun and Moon and planets to realize it. It is essential that one understands the present events according to the stars, as a continuation, in a modern anthroposophical sense, of these ancient British traditions. There is a world of deep secrets in Celtic mythology and cosmology.

This gives us a great responsibility not to take it purely as an interest, but as something very important and practical. It is our practical spiritual aim, in no wise to be taken sensationally, that we on Earth should find fulfillment of that which still speaks to us from the cosmos, and that those questions which are now directed toward us, we must recreate as a spiritual Tintagel and, thereby, live up to the real expectation of Rudolf Steiner.