

Festival of Virgo, London, September 2019

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Good evening everyone and welcome to the Festival of Virgo; a warm welcome also to the many friends and co-workers around the globe who are linking up with us this evening via our broadcast on the internet.

As one united group, our task at this time is to act as an invocative, receptive and distributive agency or centre, through which the potent energies of Virgo, emanating from that distant constellation of the same name, can pass.

Many of you will be familiar with the book *The Labours of Hercules* by Alice Bailey, and it provides a wonderful insight into the significance of each sign as it plays out in the life experiences and challenges of the disciple. Hercules, that son of man who was also a Son of God, passed through gate the sixth in Virgo, the sixth sign in sequence upon the Path of Discipleship, beginning with Aries and journeying via Taurus and Gemini. Whilst it is stated that he passed through the sixth gate to undertake this labour, it is perhaps more correct to say that the sixth sign passed through him - seeking thus expression upon the three lower planes of manifestation. His task was to handle that energy and force in such a way that it manifests aright. Our task individually and collectively tonight, and during the entirety of the 5 days of the Virgo Full Moon Festival, is also to act as a conduit for that quality or ray, in such a way that it is manifest to its highest potential, in its highest aspect - for it can be misdirected as we shall see. But what is the key faculty for directing this cosmic energy passing through our solar ring-pass-not at this time? It is mind or manas - that peculiar playground of the disciple - the primary realm of his testing and of his eventual mastery.

Though Hercules is depicted as a warrior taking on and overcoming physical feats of a heroic nature, of course the true significance here applies to the realm of the mind, and the overcoming of those impediments to right thought and the right assimilation and expression of the various energies which impact the mind on their journey towards precipitation. The mind then is the pivot, so to speak, upon which the higher energies turn for good or ill in manifested effect. The hour glass offers a wonderful visual analogy of this idea - the energies and impulses having to pass through the conduit of the mind in order to gain entrance to the lower planes, the mind in its turn colouring and directing those energies depending upon its own quality and bent. Quite a responsibility then. Let us remember that the energies we contact this evening and throughout this high-point of the month will be available for us to use in our own particular and peculiar environments over the coming days - thus we have an opportunity to participate with power, and through the fire of the mind, in the unfolding of the Divine Plan.

Before we continue, let us pause for a few moments and align with the wider group of 'souls and servers' who work unceasingly for the uplift of humanity and the unfoldment of right relationships as they express themselves upon a planetary scale; then let us sound together the *Gayatri*.

O Thou Who givest sustenance to the universe.
From Whom all things proceed.
To Whom all things return.

Unveil to us the face of the true spiritual Sun,
Hidden by a disk of golden light,
That we may know the truth and do our whole duty,
As we journey to Thy sacred Feet.

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Hercules had a difficult time of it in his sixth labour. The energies of Virgo were poorly understood by him and he initially mis-directed those energies and wrought destruction of an unnecessary and undesirable nature - much to his own distress and the great disappointment of his Teacher and Master. How could this be otherwise, as being without understanding, the mind could not direct those potent powers correctly. Upon entering this sign he was tasked with seizing the Girdle of Hippolyte, the Queen of the Amazons, the leader of a warrior tribe of women who worshiped the Moon, a symbol of the matter aspect. The Queen was forewarned of his arrival and had already decided to offer up the Girdle, the symbol of unity, that Hercules sought - just as the womb offers up willingly that which the growing foetus needs. And yet Hercules, failing to understand her significance, was quick to slay her as she initially played hard to get - again a symptom and a symbol of the inherent conflict which exists between spirit and matter which is as yet unaligned. He slay then the matter aspect, that which nurtured and loved him and which provided the environment and the vehicle for his experience and experiment as an emerging Saviour.

Distraught, confused and lacking any sense of direction at this point, Hercules left the island of the Amazons and before long encountered a distressing scene wherein the maid Hesione was being swallowed by a sea monster. Forgetting himself, Hercules dived into the monster's jaws and, grasping Hesione with one hand, Hercules cut an exit from the belly of the serpent with his trusty sword. The two emerged free into the light of day. At this his Teacher appeared, and seeing the Girdle and the maid He declared the labour complete. Hercules had redeemed his prior failure and once again the Mother and Child were united.

Clearly Hesione was herself the symbol of the matter aspect, like the hapless Hippolyte before her. Hercules, on this occasion forgetting himself, was inherently impelled to save the maid in distress. Matter needed him and he came to its rescue as the redeeming force. In doing so he reunited in conscious awareness with an inherent aspect of his very own being - that which he had denied when he had slain Hippolyte. It is interesting that we are told that in escaping the belly of the sea monster, Hercules employed his sword to hack through into the light of day. The sword is ever the symbol of the mind, that which through electrical force has the power to lift and raise matter into Heaven. Thus man, the Thinker, through manas, two words derived of course from the same etymological root - becomes the redeemer of matter.

Virgo is a sign which is closely related to matter or the mother aspect, it is an earth sign, a cave sign, and often symbolised by the womb - the place of nurturing, protection and of gestation. The womb is the place where spirit and matter meet, whether it be the appropriation of the growing foetus by the soul early in the human pregnancy, or on a grander

scale, the fall of the Lords of Flame, the Solar Angels, the gift of Venus to its Alter Ego Earth, which embedded the spark of mind in animal man during the Lemurian epoch. The process both microcosmic and macrocosmic and beyond is ever the same, and guided and influenced by the Virgo energy and forces. Within this womb, within matter, slowly grows the Christ life, thus to emerge eventually as the Saviour in Pisces. Matter has its value then in the great scheme of evolution, in fact, it is not only of great value, but as the Tibetan clearly states, it is of equal value to spirit, and the two together plus the Child of their union, the soul, or Christ aspect, each constitute the points of an equilateral triangle, and together signify one whole, a unity. And why wouldn't the matter aspect nurture and love the Christ aspect? For it is through the Christ that the lesser lives are eventually raised into Heaven.

The soul is eventually the redeeming force which itself becomes the nurturer, preparing the cells and atoms of lesser grade for the higher path in a subsequent solar system. For all, from the lowest atom of matter to the highest God, has been or will be a man and, a living Christ. Hercules did not grasp this fact and failed to see that after being nurtured to adulthood in a spiritual sense by matter, the roles would be reversed and his task would be to nurture matter to the point where matter itself could become the Christ in some distant epoch. The beauty of this is symbolised before our very eyes over time immemorial in the significance of the family unit. Parents nurture their child, a mid-point of equilibrium is reached at adulthood, and then the child in its turn becomes the caretaker and caregiver of the parents, meeting their needs and requirements, until the great transition takes place and the imprisoned lives are permitted liberation from their shackles. And so, the statement that Hercules was the son of man and yet also the Son of God was never so apt as it was in Virgo; for indeed it is only the soul who can truly speak the words of the keynote of Virgo for disciples: 'I am the mother and the Child, I, God, I, matter am.' Eventually Hercules saved his labour and emerged triumphant, if a little battered and bruised from the experience. He eventually recognised the value of, and his ultimate responsibility for the matter aspect - an integral and equal part of his very being.

The initial failure of Hercules in his task and his eventual largely unplanned and spontaneous success perhaps offers a deep lesson for all of us who aspire to tread the Path. We will fail from time to time, and perhaps that was ever meant to be the case, for in succeeding on the back of a known failure, the lesson of that trial is inevitably seared with even greater clarity and meaning into the consciousness. It is also an indication that perfection in this work is hard to come by and is not necessarily required in order to achieve. Walking the Path can be an untidy affair and fraught with disappointments, but it is the keeping on that delivers the goal - and inevitably so.

But what could have lead to the misunderstanding of this sign by the Great Disciple? As we have noted, in Virgo the soul and body are blended and seen as unified and of supreme importance to each other - equal partners no less. Perhaps the clue to the difficulty faced by Hercules lies in Gemini, when he was faced with recognising the body and soul as separate entities - thus to more clearly see himself as the soul, the director of matter, the creator of forms and of the vehicles of manifestation in the three worlds. This was a useful lesson in discrimination, and one which placed the consciousness of the disciple firmly in the higher of the two aspects, and lead to a recognition of the competing influence of matter - being itself of a lower and involutory nature. Yet, as we often, nay, always discover in this work, it

was but a partial truth, with only relative value in time and space. Virgo takes us a stage further than Gemini, and the identity of the soul as both spirit and matter, a union of the two, is revealed. The beauty of this approach of course has its everyday counterpart or analogy, as most of us learn our knowledge of things by pulling apart the pieces and studying the parts in isolation - it is the way of the lower mind. Only then, when we strive to reassemble these known parts into a whole can we really come to any real understanding of our subject as a unified reality. By way of example, despite the great knowledge we have acquired regarding the natural world in its parts, we are in some ways only now beginning to faintly see our home - the planet earth - as a unified and living organism. Likewise we are beginning to appreciate at last the impact that our use and misuse of resources - the blind use of the parts we have mastered - is having on this Great Entity. One day, when the higher mind and intuition are better developed in men, this necessity to know the parts in order to know the whole will not be required, as in a flash the whole is grasped at once - the group perspective is perceived wholesale. Perhaps this too was the lesson in Virgo, that the intuition is required to see the higher truths and from a group perspective and import.

We can see that the building of the antahkarana, the medium through which the redemption of matter takes place, is also under the basic influence of the Virgo impulse. The antahkarana is a brooding thought-form, which gradually evolves and inevitably acts as a transmitter of light from the higher three to the lower three planes. Here is the gestation of the archetype in the womb of mental matter; slowly developed through experience, experimentation and, most importantly, through imagination. We formalise the idea of building the antahkarana in discipleship training, and it can seem like a rather nebulous concept, and yet it has been developing slowly as an individual and a collective construct ever since the spark of mind entered into animal man. Man has been transforming his environment through the redemption of matter for aeons. We see it in the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age in faint outline, in the production of tools through the manipulation of matter, leading to experience, service and usefulness for the lesser lives through human influence. We see it in the gradual shift towards farming, the manipulation of the vegetable kingdom, and in the use and domestication of animals - though unrecognised by man as a definite service to his younger brethren. In the modern world, we see this ever broadening channel manifesting through mechanisation, through the manipulation of electrical forces, and latterly through the brave new world of genetic manipulation. The designers of cars, or of modern buildings are ever subconsciously seeking to approximate to the perfected archetype extant on the higher planes. All the while we are, collectively, transforming matter and the lower kingdoms, through thought, inspiration and application.

Man little recognises the service he is rendering to matter, for the dominant driver as yet is a relatively selfish interest; yet, as we have seen, the impulse towards the evolution and progress of the whole is unmistakable in manifestation. There are dangers of course. Kingdoms and matter have been serially abused along the way, for example in unnecessary cruelty towards, and experimentation on animals. We have seen it also in the production of weapons and munitions for the purposes of war, destruction and death. And yet even this latter fact is not as straight forward as it at first glance seems, as it has been occultly suggested that the World War itself led to a significant initiatory experience for the mineral kingdom, involved as it was in so much destruction and release upon the physical plane - again made possible by an unsuspecting humanity. We have the current ethical hot topic of how far we should go with the genetic manipulation of the vegetable kingdom, and even

more controversially in the manipulation of human life. We are at a point where we can begin to consider the eradication of certain severe diseases through genetic substitutions, a potential blessing no doubt to countless lives, yet this is uncomfortably entangled with the idea of the desire of some parents for bespoke or so-called 'designer' babies. Some accuse humanity in this new era of technological advance of playing God, and though this charge is meant as an absolute red-line beyond which we should not pass, in an occult sense, this is exactly what humanity is destined and meant to do; for, as we have learnt, humanity is both God and matter combined, and the Former is attempting to manifest through the latter in ever more perfected Glory. We are, and ever have been, responsible for 'shaping' the future.

Bringing this tentative and creative flight into the mind of Virgo to a close, the whole story from a Macrocosmic perspective is perhaps best summed up for us in the following passage from *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*:

‘At the close of the mahamanvantara the Solar Pitris will have built according to the Plan a perfect sheath or vehicle of expression for the Divine Thought, and this through the manipulation of negative substance; They utilise the heat of the Mother (or matter) to nourish the germ of Divine Thought, and bring it to fruition.’ (TCF 618-19).

We might go on to suggest that it is man's privilege to bring this about through his creative mind, thus to slowly materialise that which has ever existed in archetype upon the higher planes, via the emerging bridge or Antahkarana. In *Esoteric Astrology* the Tibetan asks us to consider the significance of the Virgo impulse from this microcosmic perspective:

‘Ponder upon the beauty of this synthesis and teaching and know that you yourself have said the first word as the soul, descending into the womb of time and space in a far distant time. The time has now come when you can, if you so choose, proclaim your identity with both divine aspects, matter and spirit, the mother and the child.’ (EA pp.284-5)

So let us now turn our attention to today's meditation - invoking and directing the available energies of Virgo. We are aided in our efforts by the directing potency of the keynote of the disciple in Virgo: *'I am the Mother and the Child. I, God, I, Matter am.'*