

The Medium is the Message: Eight Ways Our World Knows Itself

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Winter, Deoch 218

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Preface

In this series of lectures, I explore the nature of our deities themselves.

At first I began to express it as Deoch exploring himself (that is to say inspiration) through us. Similarly with Glioca, coming to know compassion through compassion. However, I believe this is better expressed as examining our deities and the Octave as an infinity. We think and study about deities like Deoch and Glioca to learn more about them, their principles, and perhaps ourselves in the process.

Devotion is the application of a deity to a life - to live by and through certain natural principles and maxims they represent. It is a continual reapplication of those principles over time: inspiration over time, compassion over time, balance over time, and so on. A life lived through these means, and how that might define the deities themselves.

I first began to work on the Deoch lecture in Deoch 214. The idea began simply enough. Deoch exploring inspiration through us. Our shared medium - how we wield inspiration - becomes a message. A story that we tell ourselves, and all Aislings. In this way, Deoch's inspiration is the collective inspiration of all of us. A virtuous loop.

I began to think about how to apply this concept to the other deities in our pantheon - each stop along the Octave's cyclical path.

In these lectures I argue that each deity has a similar path of self-discovery.

Glioca's compassion rediscovers itself in every act of Aisling compassion, every act of selflessness. The gnosis of Luathas redefines our knowledge, disrupts our understanding and demands that we re-integrate new knowledge into our collective whole.

As Inuyoko wrote in her groundbreaking treatise [A Theology of Conjunction](#), the path of the Octave can not only be seen in our own individual lives, but is mirrored in our larger societies. Our civilizations, if we are lucky, go through the path of inspiration, compassion, balance, gnosis, wisdom, fortune, courage and release.

As I argued in [Eight Lectures](#): Temuair hovers over release, waiting for rebirth. We desperately need to return to the source, but are fixed in place and cannot do so.

We want the wheel to turn, but everything within our larger society is preventing it.

Each of us has a part to play in the renewal of our culture, but whether we have the courage, the inspiration, the compassion to do so...is a question that each of us must answer.

1 Deoch

Winter, Deoch 215

“Deoch is the divine face of the possibilities of art, and Aislings are the hands that shape it.”

One of the most enduring messages of Deoch is the one we receive on ascension: “**Aisling, do.**” Many of us (including myself) have interpreted this as a command. A divine mandate to create, express, to bring forth beauty, chaos, meaning.

The more closely we examine this phrase, however, the less it feels like a decree. We realize instead: this is an invitation.

Not a command from a monarch to its subjects, but an invitation. A request. Maybe, even in these times - a plea, from one participant in an infinite process to another.

“Do” - not that Deoch may be worshiped, but that Deoch may come to know himself.

The question I ask is not: what does Deoch want from us? We reframe it instead as: *What does Deoch become because of us?*

We have tended to inherit a picture of Deoch as a deity whose nature is fixed, as most of our deities are. Deoch, creator of the Spark. Glioca, the compassionate. Gramail, the order-bringer. But the nature of deities is not fixed. It ebbs and flows just as our inspirative force does. Several of our gods were in fact mortal before they ascended, and transcended to become something else, something perhaps eternal.

Deoch, however, is different. A dubhaim turned by love; a static process in Chadul’s ordered dominion transformed. A new goal emerged: to bring a generative force into Temuair.

Inspiration is not a finite property to be handed to someone like a loaf of bread or a jug of wine. Inspiration is a vast and infinite space. A boundless domain of shapes, emotions, stories, possibilities.

When we create - when we live our lives as Aislings, in communion with the Spark - we do not draw upon inspiration nor receive it. We are not begging Deoch: “Please, sir, may I have some more Spark?”

We sample it.

We cast a net into infinity and draw out forms: paintings, poems, arguments, gestures; moments of sadness, moments of kindness; decisions that change the trajectory of our lives and perhaps even our culture.

The medium through which we reach *is* Deoch. It *is* inspiration.

Deoch is not the source of inspiration: he is instead a gateway to the place. Deoch is a medium, not just a god, not just a father figure.

If Deoch is a medium, then we can begin to transform our understanding of him: the Spark is not divine favor. The Spark is our ability to draw down that infinity and perform it for others.

I’ve mentioned before that all art is of Deoch, and that any generative process is, itself, art, precisely because it connects to this infinite medium.

Let’s think for a moment about what happens when one of us paints. Not me. I can’t even draw a straight line. But I’m somehow sure there is an artist among us. Their brush descends into an abyss of potential, an infinite expanse of what might be. And the act of painting collapses that infinity into something we can see. The artist selects from that vast space exactly one vision.

A story told in a tavern is one narrative out of a million that might have been.

A decision by us to remain Aisling - to be as we are - exploring our lives and our journeys, is similarly a collapse of this potential into every step we take, every decision we make, every word we say, and every moment we live within the Spark.

Every artistic act is a narrowing of the infinite into a tangible artifact. The coalescing of raw, vast potential into precise moments. All Aislings are then, effectively, a type of spell caster: we transform potential into tangible form.

If that is true, then so is this: every act of Aisling creation, every narrative, every drop of blood and treasure, every joy, sadness, and madness, adds to what Deoch is.

If Deoch is a gateway to the infinite, then every finite manifestation of his infinity becomes a facet of Deoch.

Now. What of it?

The Spark does not merely allow Aislings to create or invoke novelty. The Spark allows us to do this in loops. That is to say, we can apply creativity to creativity. We can alter and create new works that would not have existed otherwise.

Art is a loop: by consuming it, we are transformed by the process. We become the medium; we are again brought into the infinite of Deoch. When we make art, especially when inspired by others, we enter into a kind of infinite regress. A mirror aimed at a mirror.

Deoch learns what inspiration is, what Deoch can become, as a dubhaim transformed through our art and through our shared medium.

Every poem, every performance, every chaotic board post and act of Aisling selfhood widens the gateway for the medium and the message to enter our world.

The relationship between us is not hierarchical. Deoch is our partner, our co-creator. We draw from Deoch, but in exercising the Spark, we not only renew Deoch - we tell Deoch's story.

We complete what the other cannot on their own.

And we must exercise that medium. We must return to our Spark, to be renewed ourselves, to complete the great work of our time: the transformation of both ourselves and Deoch.

We do not need to do a perfect job at this. Deoch is not Gramail. There is no demand for order. We can master skills; we can become better artists. But to paint the same painting over and over indefinitely would be to lose the plot entirely.

For when we do, we become.

Our expression of self and Spark: a continual, bountiful loop between the inner flame and the exterior world. This the engine of endlessly refining, projecting, weaving, destroying, and recreating that medium.

Every loop, every exploration, is a new possibility distilled into form. A new way Deoch can expand. A new way for Deoch to know himself, to know inspiration itself - to know the medium.

Temuair does not benefit from our correctness nor our attention to detail. It benefits from our authenticity. We honor Deoch not by obeying commands, but by daring to be fully, impossibly ourselves. In any world, Temuair or otherwise - art does not emerge from the artist alone. It emerges from the relationship between artist and medium. The medium shapes what is possible to create. The artist shapes what is selected from possibility.

Deoch is the mythic representation of this process: a self-improving, self-reflecting loop between thought and form, between possible and actual, between raw formless potential and...this lecture. Deoch is the divine face of the possibilities of art, and Aislings are the hands that shape it. Together, in concert, we create our world.

Do not wonder: "What has Deoch given me?"

Wonder instead: *What have you given Deoch?*

What patterns have you drawn from his infinite that did not exist until you dared make them real? What facet of his infinite light now exists because you existed and because you lived within the Spark?

Do we have the courage to be?

We must all answer the question: *What does Deoch become next, and what are we becoming alongside him?*

2 Glioca

Summer, Deoch 216

“Love without agreement, mercy without approval, forgiveness without forgetting.”

In my previous lecture, I spoke about Deoch. Most particularly, about the idea of Deoch as a medium, and a message. I asked in particular: *“What does Deoch become because of us, and how we explore our own inspiration?”*

I spent the next moon reflecting on that class and wondering: could the same idea be applied to every deity in our octagram? After all, the Octave is a path, a journey - beginning with inspiration (Deoch) and ending in release (Sgrios). Could not Glioca also experience this same experience of seeing herself in our acts? Our deities do not just stand aside and watch us from afar. They are part of our lives, and we travel across each of them in our own cycles.

This lecture is an attempt, then, to speak to Glioca's compassion - and how it transforms itself.

Glioca is often thought to be the goddess of love, but we also understand her to be the avatar of a deeper force: compassion. We might also include here mercy - and tenderness.

It is tempting to believe that compassion is a simple thing: a warm hand, a kind word, a healer casting ioc on an injured comrade.

Instead, we must begin to have a more complex understanding of her than the way a child might understand kindness. Glioca is not merely the urge to comfort, or the instinct to soften blows.

Glioca, similar to Deoch - represents a force folding back onto itself, infinitely. Whereas Deoch's force creates, Glioca's *remains*.

Compassion is not an emotion. Emotions come and go - we may look across a pond and remember a moment with a lover. We may enjoy a moment with friends in our favorite pub. Emotions arrive and depart without any real explanation. Compassion, however, remains - it persists. In its persistence, we see its actions laid bare.

Compassion is a posture towards suffering. It is a stance, a philosophy, a coherent, universal position.

It is deciding to respond to pain not by flinching, or striking back, or explaining it away - but remaining present with it. When compassion encounters suffering, something remarkable happens: compassion cannot eliminate pain, undo wounds, or restore the world to how it was before. Compassion clings to the pain, and refuses to allow it to stand alone.

This is the first inward arc.

If this were only a reaction, however, it would exhaust itself quickly. An act of mercy, followed by withdrawal.

Glioca does not stop. She observes suffering, then observes herself responding to suffering, and then - responds again. This process continues again and again just as it does with her priests and priestesses. Compassion for the wounded. Compassion for those who tend the wounded. Compassion for the one who is exhausted and battered by compassion. Compassion for those who scream that they have no compassion left.

This is Glioca's nature.

Compassion that notices itself, and chooses not to withdraw, but remains. When this compassion turns inward, it does not shrink: it widens. In this process it transmutes simple acts. Love without agreement, mercy without approval, forgiveness without forgetting.

Although it is tempting to focus on Glioca's positioning as the goddess of love, it is more important to remember that compassion, first and foremost, is endurance in the presence of pain, and a continual return to compassion.

Let us imagine a single act of kindness. Let us examine it gently, without judgment.

Why did it occur? What need did it answer? What suffering did it not resolve?

Now, as Glioca would - let us extend compassion to both the person extending the compassion and the one receiving it. This produces a strange effect:

A compassion that is no longer satisfied with gestures. A compassion that refuses to end at boundaries (do you deserve this? Are you worthy?) A compassion that expands outwards - indefinitely.

This is why Glioca's influence feels excessive to some. It spills over, overflows. It may not be welcome. It may not be thanked. It persists, even when exploited.

Infinite compassion really asks the question: is anyone still alone?

This position is inherently destabilizing to hierarchies. Compassion applied infinitely, universally, refuses clean divisions demanded between the innocent and guilty, worthy and unworthy. It dissolves divisions demanded by courts, by armies, by churches and even by ourselves. Glioca's compassion persists regardless of the one causing the harm, the one who cannot stop the harm, and the part of ourselves that cannot forgive, or is tired of forgiving. Glioca resolves this resistance by persistence - by staying. And that is costly. Compassion that does not know when, or cannot stop, becomes extremely inconvenient to systems that rely on clean, clear outcomes - like the law.

Similarly, then, to Deoch, we might ask: does compassion ever end?

Compassion, similarly to inspiration, only ends when presence ends. When witnessing ends. When we refuse to open ourselves again. This does not mean infinite tolerance of pain or an absence of boundaries. It means we draw those boundaries with compassion.

Leaving can be compassion. Grieving what cannot be saved can be compassion. Refusing, too...can be compassion.

Glioca does not command outcomes. She does not order us to love, to be compassionate. She instead reminds us through her own example to constantly extend a drop of her infinite compassion to others, in every act, in every relationship, in every moment.

When you pray to Glioca, consider this:

We do not ask her to remove suffering from the world. We ask her instead, for the strength to remain within it, even when doing so causes us pain. We ask her instead for the ability to continually extend compassion - most importantly to ourselves. When we do this, especially when we pay a price, we are not imitating Glioca. We participate in her ongoing discovery of what compassion is and what it is capable of bringing into the world.

We participate within an infinite process of compassion. Her work continues. One more act of care, one more refusal to abandon, one more widening of the circle.

Let us end by asking: Where has your compassion already tried to end, and what might happen if you extended compassion to yourself, and continued?

That is Glioca's work. And let us remember to have compassion for ourselves, first and foremost.

All are suffering as we do, and we change the texture of that instantly by yielding to Her art.

3 Cail

Summer, Deoch 216

"Equilibriums don't care about or optimize for happiness - they optimize for continuity."

Now we come to Cail, and balance. Cail is more important than people assume, certainly now as his temple is somewhat disused. What is balance? We think we understand Cail as a measurer, an examiner. We imagine him with scales, perhaps, constantly weighing this or that. In truth, Cail is the engine of this mechanism: he is equilibrium itself, the process that brings systems into balance.

That balance over time yields music. Rhythm. It also yields cycles. Oscillations, ebbs and flows between patterns. We might say the Octave itself relies on the balance of Cail. We have talked about how you cannot remain forever in inspiration - the wheel must turn. The act of the wheel turning itself is Cail's balancing force, producing the journey through inspiration all the way to release. Each progresses according to a natural balance, when the time is right. Cail does not

harangue, or order, or command - he represents the natural state that all systems seek on their own, including us, and our world.

Gramail may write laws which define our world - Cail sees those laws operate, and knows when they are in concordance.

But this balancing act is not a simple affair. Cail does not do this once - this is a continuous, ongoing process. The act of re-balancing something creates a new imbalance, which must itself be resolved. This process is continuous, a constant balancing. We see again the operation of a deity over time: a continuous, looping process.

Out of this process come the tides, political cycles, and nature itself. We observe this relentless balancing process constantly: the population of animals, the progression of seasons. Cail then is not a measurer, or the scale, but the movement towards balance itself.

But what is this balance? *What is balance?* We can start simply and say: two things being equal. That doesn't help our understanding, though. Nature in balance is nature in cruelty - a dominance of raw power, until nature upturns that raw power itself. Balanced systems can be cruel; balanced societies can still be unjust. Equilibriums don't care about or optimize for happiness - they optimize for continuity.

So balance needs to be itself. . . balanced, by his trinity: we see Glioca, his mother (a compassionate force as we discussed) and Luathas, that deliverer of gnosis. We can imagine in this a cycle: Luathas delivers an insight, a shock to the system. Cail brings the system back into balance. Glioca tries to ensure the system remains, if not compassionate, than at the very least, harmonic.

Part of Cail's enmity for Fiosachd is that Fiosachd represents a randomness that cannot be optimized, a type of entropy *that is outside of the system itself*. Similarly, Sgrios represents endings, which have nothing to balance. Endings represent a terminal state, an endpoint, a completion. Though we may begin again through Deoch, we must transform ourselves to do so. A new system, a new life, a new journey begins. Cail is focused on *balancing the in-process journey* - the steps we are immediately taking.

So. What about our own in-process journey?

What is the impact of the Aisling on history?

This is perhaps the most curious aspect of Cail. We might imagine he sees Aislings as an irritant: another Thing - maybe even not natural - interfering with nature. But we cannot escape Cail's equilibriums. We encode Cail in every system we create, every conversation we have with others - we see these patterns and rhythms in our own lives.

Cail is part of the fabric of the universe, an inherent process that, observing itself, constantly finds more to balance, more to witness.

Aislings represent a contribution of, more than anything else, novelty - or if you prefer, entropy - into a fixed system. Part of why I rail so much about the current conditions around us is that we find ourselves in a decaying, static system - stagnation. Equilibrium, instead of bringing a commonality of order alongside an infinity of Aisling novelty, becomes a trap. We are fixed, all of us, in a minima, frozen by the ever-expanding grasp of Chadul. The balance becomes the frost on top of the ice encasing us and this world.

Cail, though, does not want this for us. In a static, unchanging system - there is nothing to balance. It settles to a terminal state and cannot change, cannot move.

Our process, then, is a reintroduction of fire, a reintroduction of novelty, of energy, to infuse the mundane around us with the randomness of our own lives. Our own stories, our loves, losses...the essence of our lives. The more we reflect this genuinely, as a mirror of our own selves, an immersion in our own magic, the more fire we bring back into a frozen system.

The gears move.

Cail stirs to duty once more.

Seek a balance in your own life, but remember. Seeking balance is finding it in the cracks between extremes. It is to stumble upon it, and become the balance itself. This is not an admonition to never seek out highs and lows, but rather a suggestion to find a peace in the process in and between them.

If Cail represents anything at all, it is seeking a path forward through an infinite unknown, and finding peace and balance along that path.

4 Luathas

Spring, Deoch 217

“The thing we cannot unsee, the word we cannot unlearn, the whisper in our ears that may come to seize our very spark and squeeze it.”

Let us now look upon the old wizard, Luathas: the knowledge of knowledge, so to speak. As we know, Luathas is primarily associated with gnosis, which any good dictionary will define as “direct, experiential, and mystical knowledge of the divine”. In other words: A transformative insight into one’s true, divine nature. “Liberation from the ignorance of the material world.”

Luathas is also associated with knowledge and wizards, for a number of historical reasons. We’ll discuss both knowledge and gnosis.

Knowledge has a pretty straightforward definition: the sum of what is known. Not just by us, but by culture. Knowledge changes over time - for instance, consider our own Temuairan timeline. The discovery of elements such as light and darkness. The discovery of certain insights into the nature and production of wizardly tools: scrolls, potions, powders. But this knowledge is not guaranteed. Luathas relies on Gramail, chiefly, to create the space to carry this knowledge forward. A well-organized, lawful society tends to be a better place for knowledge to continue to exist and be passed onward to future generations.

We won’t pull at this thread just yet, but Gramail can also create the opposite scenario: when the knowledge is so deleterious to the established order that it must be suppressed.

Knowledge itself is already a recursive process. We use knowledge to gain more knowledge. We re-apply knowledge to itself to develop new skills, spells, tools...everything that might mark progress in a culture.

Gnosis, on the other hand, is something else entirely. Gnosis is a lightning bolt. A sudden revelation. Not unlike inspiration...but a different vector: Inspiration tells us what may be possible on a journey. It’s the reason to embark.

Gnosis, on the other hand, is the stark and undeniable shock of where we are.

Gnosis is often totally disruptive to knowledge.

Imagine a scenario where a wizard, after meditation, is struck by Luathas: Light, which we take to be of chief importance to keeping away the dark, is a finite source in the universe. Now we must re-examine everything we know about light itself. Finite in what way? Are we running out of it? Do we need to conserve it? How do we enforce such rules? Gnosis overturns established knowledge like a mule kicking an apple cart.

In this process, knowledge reintegrates itself. Similarly, you can imagine the discovery of darkness being just as upsetting to the natural order. New elements means new interactions between the elements. It means rethinking what we know entirely. Four now becomes six now becomes... Each shock of gnosis requires knowledge to resettle, to reform, and to once again cohere.

This process is continuous, just like we’ve talked about with all of the deities in this series. Knowledge redefines itself, expands itself, may even contract. But it is constantly changing and evolving. And in the process, knowledge becomes more complex: we know more things, and those things can interact and change other things...the virtuous loop feeds complexity and new understanding. In this way: we may arrive at even more confusion. Gnosis therefore: clears away our fixed understandings, delivers shocks to it, kicks out the wall. Like a monk making their way through the forest: kick kick punch.

There is no end to this process, just like all of the processes we’ve discussed. That’s a very good thing. Luathas does his part in keeping our systems evolving, moving, living. In previous lectures I’ve discussed the stagnant order of Chadul, the freezing of Temuair. Luathas’ bolts from the blue

strike us, destabilizing systems, collapsing existing hierarchies, accelerating cultural progress. In this way dynamism returns to the overall system.

We are rejuvenated, at a cost. And we can continue on our journey again, with new tools, new paths, even new legends available to us.

Luathas more than anything is an invitation to examine our surroundings through a new lens. Luathas asks: is this true, in the light of new knowledge? Have we overturned every rock? Can we say for sure we've examine every angle, thought every thought? The answer to that is obvious: unless we are ourselves frozen, no.

Every moment with Luathas is a moment to seek better understanding, better integration, better and newer foundations.

Aislings are an inherent part of this process. Inspiration starts us out on the path. Gnosis is the challenge, the revelation. Through inspiration, we begin the journey; through gnosis, we begin to be transformed. That transformation is often uncomfortable. We may not be able to live with certain truths. They may feel too heavy for us to bear, and may come to see them as a curse instead. More importantly, almost every important truth at some point was considered a heresy. Gnosis can alienate us from our larger society - and stricken, we again must progress to Gramail, to redefine, reintegrate, and rejuvenate that society with our revelation.

Sometimes we are successful. Sometimes we are not, and the knowledge may be lost; or settled, waiting again to be dropped in someone else's lap from the infinite.

This, then, is the Great Work of Luathas: Divine revelations that force us to reconsider knowledge itself, to arrive at a new plateau from which we may continue to explore our world. His light changes what we see, and we cannot unsee it.

That is Luathas. The thing we cannot unsee, the word we cannot unlearn, the whisper in our ears that may come to seize our very spark and squeeze it.

Let us pray that when our divine revelations come, we are steadfast and ready to receive them, and that we may find others to help us carry these burdens.

5 Gramail

Spring, Deoch 218

“The architecture, bereft of the beating heart, the blood that fought for it and built it - has no real meaning. It has ossified, calcified to something operated for ghosts.”

Now we must discuss Gramail, which as everyone is aware, I view fairly dimly. Not just because I am of Deoch; but also because too often we try to substitute law and political aspirations for what I feel is missing the most from our daily lives: Deoch. Inspiration.

Angelique once said to me, “May Gramail keep you”. There are quite a few reasons why I shuddered to recall that. One is, you could be forgiven for seeing Angelique as the literal avatar of the law. And not with scales, but a flaming sword. Another is: *do I want to be kept by structure?*

Gramail keeping me might mean wisdom, but it also means architecture.

Are we not surrounded by architecture? And what does it do for us besides slowly decay into ruins? We see this architecture all around us: politics and the law most especially. The architecture, bereft of the beating heart, the blood that fought for it and built it - has no real meaning. It has ossified, calcified to something operated for ghosts.

So in a sense: *no, Gramail. Do not keep me.*

As an acolyte of Deoch, I wish to remain in the fumes of inspiration, seized by his warm blood. But as a philosopher, I must recognize Gramail's importance. As we discussed last time, the bolt of lightning delivered by Luathas has a target. It breaks apart frozen systems. If we are lucky, it is not too frozen, and the strike bears fruit. And we must come to Gramail once we have *understood the message of gnosis*. Integration allows us to hold this message, to shape it - to let it sail into

the mists of time. Integration within the law - within the architecture of our societal systems and traditions, allows the kick to the apple cart to be passed on to future generations.

Begrudgingly, then, I'll admit: Gramail has a clear purpose.

But this purpose can often be twisted. Architecture fed back on itself, without disruption - becomes a tomb. Whether through inactivity or dogma, the life drains from the system, the dynamism is lost. We're left with sigils that we recognize but they no longer make us feel anything.

I tried to think, at length, about the impact of the looping nature of the law. Wisdom fed back into wisdom. Within the domain of most of the other deities this cycle is virtuous. Compassion begets compassion. Inspiration begets compassion. Gramail cannot be seen in such a fashion. The law, and the architecture of civilization itself, must be in service of all other domains, not superior to them. Law for the sake of the law is merely tyranny, both of spirit and in practice.

Therefore, Gramail is unusual amongst the gods. Deoch observes himself via inspiration. Glioca observes herself through compassion practiced in the world. Gramail, however, cannot simply observe the law, or systems - Gramail depends on inputs from the rest of the Octagram to integrate into the law. Law fed back onto law produces bureaucracy, stagnation, obsessions with semantics and definitions, until the structure collapses underneath its own weight. But the law and systems - fed back into themselves with kernels of understanding from around the Octagram...that produces real progress. Law that does not update itself to meet the present challenges of society and civilization quickly becomes useless, and loses all credibility. These updates may take time, however. The domain of Gramail after all being responsible for so much structure, so much architecture - cannot easily integrate change. Gramail's domain is multigenerational. Change in the law, outside of outright revolution, rarely happens overnight. We do not wake up to sweeping new architectures. It takes time to integrate what Gramail learns through others. So he has a unique function - he must resist change, but when committed to it - must commit to it entirely, and use it to rebuild all foundations. In this way, our societies can move forward and continue to advance.

That isn't to say Gramail doesn't observe himself. The law after all, governs behavior. What is and is not permissible. This changes over time, and also, as a byproduct - must produce complexity. Anyone who has been a lawyer, a judge or a politician knows - whenever you make a law, there are ten people thinking about either how to carry on with what they're doing, or how to exploit it to their advantage. These complexities yield searches for more law. In a dynamic society, law is almost always guaranteed to expand indefinitely - but there is also a scythe within time itself that cleaves away nonsense that no longer matters. In a properly governed society, the law is a self-optimizing process.

On the other hand: if anyone ever encounters a truly well-governed society, *this philosopher would like to be informed immediately.*

Still, without Gramail: the spark doesn't start a fire. Compassion is an isolated incident. Knowledge appears, and then vanishes. With Gramail: the spark starts a civilization. That civilization may come to encode compassion as a foundational ethic.

There is a certain irony to a Deochan saying that he recognizes the value of Gramail. But if I were to simply remain in the Deoch temple, drunkenly cavorting - would any work ever get done? Deoch inspires us but also, remember - sets us on a journey. We must embark. Gramail is there to receive our experiences along the journey and begin the long path of distilling them down into wisdom.

So: we must ensure that our messages, our wisdom, our ethics, our feelings are worth encoding into his multigenerational structure. We must be worthy of surviving across the depths of time. Gramail, given sufficient reason, will distill our journeys into wisdom, and that wisdom will be propagated. In that way, we achieve an immortality, even the mundane, that we cannot know in any other way.

Gramail, I suppose, does keep us - whether we like it or not.

Gramail decides what survives.

If it can be encoded within the law - within structure - it survives. It is expressed in law and architecture. And if not... it will be lost to the mists of time. And this sifting ensures our societies remain dynamic and healthy.

Therefore, bring the best harvest possible to Gramail, so that one day we may drink a fine brandy and remember individual moments.

6 Fiosachd

Summer, Deoch 218

“You can do everything correctly and still fail.”

Now we arrive at Fiosachd: fortune. Fortune is an interesting case. You would be forgiven for not seeing how fortune, or chance, can loop back onto itself. But it does. Every gambler that thought *I can't possibly lose* has fallen victim to the fallacy of the streak.

Fiosachd opens possibilities and expands the vista of what is possible. But not every roll of the dice is fortune.

Fortune is really expressed clearly as probability. The chance of something happening. Fortune is when that chance actually occurs. All the possibilities collapse: we meet our love. We win the game. We are accepted to some academy. We survive against impossible odds. No probability involved, but certainty. Fiosachd collapses probability into a specific path.

If Luathas and his gnosis is the disruptor, and Gramail is the integrator: Fiosachd is the resolution - the dice throw.

Where does the gnosis lead us? How is our new wisdom accepted? Fiosachd's dice resolves these outcomes.

Crucially though we cannot predict or determine these outcomes. Aislings begin their path with Deoch, as we all know. We walk the path of the Octave in all things, all our endeavors, beginning with that inspiration. Fiosachd *selects the outcome from a sea of infinity*. Every aspect of our lives, in some way, involves chance, or fortune.

Even giving this class: will it be received well?

Luathas and Gramail can help me to write this class, may even result in it being filled with structural wisdom. But I cannot control how the lecture is received.

For that, we must cross to Fiosachd.

If I have walked the path correctly - if I have prepared myself in my journey along the Octave, Fiosachd *might* smile on me. Is that fortune, or my preparation? Perhaps it is best to say: Fiosachd is a randomness - a collapse of probabilities - but within certain predetermined parameters. That is to say: if I did not prepare my lecture in advance or care about it in any way, then I have to rely more on the moment - the exact moments I am speaking to you. If I am very clever, or very lucky, a spontaneous coherence might appear, tracing back to the inspiration I found for these classes.

But just as likely, if I had too much wine the night before or I had a cold, or whatever - it might fall flat.

Fiosachd delivers us to conclusions - but through our actions we determine what those conclusions might be. There is of course, an element of fortune, always - but we can hinder our chance at fortune, or we can allow it to blossom through careful steps.

In the end, though, we must live with Fiosachd's dice rolls.

You can do everything correctly and still fail.

You can do everything poorly and still succeed.

Fiosachd's dice rolls, however, often have unusual impacts on our journeys. His randomness influences other events. Gamblers know well about lucky streaks - sudden clusterings of rare outcomes. But this is a source of randomness feeding back onto itself. Imagine this class. A random comment leads to a conversation. That conversation may change a decision. That decision takes you to a place you've never been before. Each wrinkle of Fiosachd's dice throw creates more and more impact. Fiosachd's randomness, whether fortune or otherwise, creates new paths for us.

He doesn't guarantee we will like the path - and we must lean on Ceanlaidir, in fact, to have the courage and fortitude we need to continue walking it - but we will walk it.

His dice escort us down our path to its natural conclusion.

Fiosachd also acts as a continual source of perturbations. What does this mean? It means that by his very existence, he helps keep the static darkness of Chadul at bay. Chadul's darkness has no randomness, no choice left. Everything has collapsed to dark stillness. An infinite, ordered quiet. In a way, Fiosachd forces systems to confront themselves, and also forces *us* to confront ourselves: regardless of our preparation, regardless of our cleverness, regardless of our heroism - *we may still fail*. As a result, Fiosachd invites us to renew ourselves, by having courage to confront the results.

When we fail, we pick ourselves up and keep going.

When we win, we have the courage to wonder: now what?

We confront and integrate these results into new learning. That process of acceptance, of finality - is actually the domain of Sgrios. Fiosachd's part in the process, however, is crucial. Without Fiosachd we do not know the outcomes of anything we do, any idea we may have, any battle we may fight, whether on a grand scale, or within our own minds.

These perturbations keep our society going. They keep it unpredictable. And life must be unpredictable, after all, to be enjoyable. What would be the point otherwise? If we arrived at the certainty of gnosis, and the power of the law, and we knew exactly what was going to happen next - the law would never evolve. If nature only rewarded the largest, strongest wolves, if it only rewarded expressions of raw power, *all we would have is raw power*.

The reason why society weaves itself into a collection of multitudes is precisely because Fiosachd forces us to live with outcomes we may not like. We must keep going.

And we must too remember: there is no divine meaning in Fiosachd's randomness. Though his followers or allies may pray to him, in the end - he is fickle, and operates according to his own rules, his own game. When he blesses us, we might be tempted to take that as a divine mandate. History is littered with those who have done so and suffered great calamities. When we twist Fiosachd's randomness into a mandate - our personal mandate - we forget that constant success would be another form of static order.

Fiosachd does not tolerate control - whether actual or an illusion, and we will pay an enormous price if we fail to remember this.

Remember: there are no guarantees. The outcomes of all of our efforts will sometimes surprise us, sometimes leave us breathless. This means, more than anything: we are alive, we can be surprised, and we can keep going.

Fiosachd serves his dual function: to reinvigorate our paths, and to keep us moving towards conclusions...and thus we continue to walk the Octave.

7 Ceannlaidir

Fall, Deoch 218

"...This is the power that does not yield, the sword that will never stop swinging, the voice in your head shouting: MORE!"

Now we at last reach Ceannlaidir.

First and foremost I see Ceannlaidir not just as a god of war. To say that is to strip away most of his underlying meaning, and to encourage an understanding of him as a brute. It is to ignore any deeper meaning he may have, which is a shame, really. All of our deities, it can be argued, encode Temuairan archetypes.

Ceannlaidir is not merely a god of war, Glioca is not merely a goddess of compassion, Fiosachd is not merely a god of fortune.

So, not just war. War encapsulates a number of disparate concepts. Ceannlaidir more than any other deity in the Octagram, reminds us of the value of courage, persistence, and honor. When Fiosachd delivers us into a resolution of our path - when we finally discover the impact of his dice - we're generally presented with a choice.

That choice is actually pretty simple: *Do we accept the outcome?*

Ceannlaidir urges us more than any other deity to *strive* - to continue to push ourselves, to redefine ourselves in that struggle. No one has ever discovered who they truly are without being pushed to their absolute limits. This is very obviously a function of war, but it is also deeply encoded within Ceannlaidir himself. Not content to rest on his (or our) laurels, Ceannlaidir demands that we strive, that we push, that we train, that we reinforce our journey with his iron will.

In victory, we may find ourselves addicted to the feeling of winning - the rush we obtain when Fiosachd's dice have resulted in our success. In failure, too, we must ask ourselves: do we accept this failure? *Or do we redouble our efforts and try again?* Ceannlaidir unleashed into his full form is an unending process.

A war with no end. Strife with no resolution.

As Aislings, we must decide how long we will follow his lead. We are caught between Fiosachd's resolutions and Sgrios' endings - do we attempt to bend the arc of history and reality to our might? Or do we accept the outcome, and approach our problem and our path from a different angle?

There is a very thin line between courage and stupidity. In fierce storms, reeds and grasses bend. Strong, inflexible trees break, and do not survive. So we must confront our decision to *endure* carefully: for what purpose are we striving? Do we hope to change the outcome or are we just unwilling to accept where we have arrived and exist with it?

Either way, if we remain with Ceannlaidir, this courage loops back onto itself indefinitely. The war we are fighting, either literal or metaphorical, inside ourselves, goes on. When we do this without a clear destination, we become captive to Ceannlaidir's fire and fury.

It is only through *endings* that we can attempt to begin again.

Ceannlaidir doesn't just have this effect on us, though. Ceannlaidir's intensity is seen in totality within the blood of civilizations and empires. When we resist compromise, when we harden our hearts and armor ourselves against any other truth beyond our own, this dysfunction is mirrored within our cultures. They become brittle, demanding, and ferocious - just like the worst aspects of the god himself. They may expand well beyond their limits, constantly needing to encapsulate more and more territory.

Ceannlaidir encourages us to focus on the map, to see the boundaries, the lines, the potential victories, rather than the underlying people and structures.

When civilization comes to define itself by this impulse, you arrive at empire.

And then what? When the conquerors have conquered everything and anything, what's left?

History tells us: in the absence of external enemies, empires will often create new ones out of whole cloth. We have come to define ourselves *only* through unceasing conflict, so any de-escalation seems as if it is forfeiting our existence.

We are now so enamored with Ceannlaidir's flame that we cannot see anything else.

This, just like the static dominion of Chadul (unceasing order) is another unnatural ending. Unceasing chaos, which is to say, war, waged indefinitely - is just as deleterious. There is no rest here, no examination of past efforts, no analysis or even indeed acknowledgement of mistakes - this is the power that does not yield, the sword that will never stop swinging, the voice in your head shouting: "**MORE!**"

As Aislings we must remind ourselves that the Octave applies to all efforts, all works, every journey of value.

Therefore we must decide: *when is enough, enough?*

There is another facet of Ceannlaidir's courage, and one that is often overlooked: the courage to *accept something*, to integrate it as a truth, to begin to redefine yourself in response to lessons learned.

Ceannlaidir brings us on the path, fills us with courage, is at our side as we strive - but *we* must decide when to stop, and this is the hardest lesson of all for many of us. Ceannlaidir cannot tell us if a battle is worth winning, or if victory is even achievable. He only asks us if we have the strength to continue it.

We must remember as Aislings that all effort, all works, must end. Empires rise and fall, civilizations evolve, grow, and outlast their founders; and we continue our journeys. We move

towards Sgrios: the legislator of all ends. And we should not fear endings: for as we will learn in our next lecture, endings are the key to rejoining with Deoch, and beginning again.

Linger not in Ceannlaidir - endless conflict is another trap. The wheel turns, and our cycle moves towards completion. Sgrios tells us: unclench our fists, let go of our swords, accept what is.

Only when we do this, can we find the true meaning of Ceannlaidir's courage within ourselves: *the courage to stop.*

8 Sgrios

Winter, Deoch 218

“Sgrios never asks if we are ready - therefore, remember: we may never know when ends are forced upon us”

We began our journey with Deoch and we end it with Sgrios.

As we mentioned with Ceannlaidir during the last class - stopping takes courage.

We arrive here, finally, at the God of Endings.

I've talked before about how our understanding of Sgrios has become more nuanced over my lifetime - admittedly, a long one. Sgrios was at first thought of as a pestilence: giving us scars, ripping us away from the world. And while that is true, what we often forget is *that we are returned from Sgrios' realm.*

We return to begin again.

This maps neatly with our understanding of the Octave. Sgrios is the fist unclenching, the journey ending. Whether that journey is us going to a class or our life's work, they still conclude.

Sgrios is a terminal state.

Through those terminal states, we are given concrete shapes. We can only see the shape when the lines are drawn around it. Sgrios forms those lines, that territory. Through his closure, we complete the story, we finish our work, and we can begin the work of integrating the conclusion.

That integration delivers us back to the hands of Deoch, where we can begin another journey.

Sgrios is, first and foremost, a release. A release from the expectations of Ceannlaidir, who exhorts us to continue the struggle indefinitely - but also from our own anxieties and expectations. Sgrios' finality puts an end to all of our worrying, striving, calculating and scheming.

With his help we have arrived, finally, at a finished product.

Whether or not we have regrets, of course, is up to each of us. Do we accept the end, or do we resist it? Do we use the end as a platform for renewal, or do we dwell in it forever? Each of us has a choice every time something concludes.

But it must conclude.

All activity, all endeavors, all love, all effort, all theory, all works, must end.

In ending, they become part of our cultural history.

You cannot put an unending book on a shelf. You cannot teach an unending class.

Endings allow us to integrate, internalize and reflect on our efforts, our works.

There's another reason to be grateful for endings. They allow us to find new inspiration. That act of communion with Deoch reinvigorates our path, and we are liberated from our old ways, to find entirely new ones through his (and our) art. Endings without this renewal process, without the reinvigoration promised by the flame of inspiration - would lead us slowly to Chadul's static dominion. An eternal order of darkness, from which no new idea or effort can arise.

So we must be thankful of Sgrios' efforts, perhaps, in the end - but we must also remember to return to the source. As I mentioned, Aislings are gifted in that we are scarred by our visits to Sgrios, but we return. His mark is not permanent, nor does it impact us nearly as much as we thought.

In truth, Sgrios liberates us.

He represents a certain freedom - the freedom to tell a new story.

The freedom to learn something new.

The freedom to begin again.

Each of us makes this choice when we return to Temuair, in truth. Take me, for instance. I've walked the Octave through these classes, just as I did my last series of eight. As I arrive here, at the conclusion - I reflect on where we've been, and where I want to go next. Do I begin again, or do I consider my academic and philosophical career "finished"? Only time will tell. Each of us though, makes a decision: *whether or not to embrace Deoch again.*

This series of classes was a calculated attempt to provide a new examination of our deities. Not just as avatars of myth and legend, not just as embodiments of our world, but as primal forces that shape each other (and us) by way of existing. The Octave is an embodiment of a spiritual journey as well as a mundane one.

The gods and goddesses of Temuair learn about themselves through us. Through our actions, their followers, their acolytes, and their clergy.

Through that process, through our culture, we not only find renewal, but also a form of immortality.

How many of us know Aislings who faded away?

We carry forward our memories, yes, but their works endure.

I have not seen Chloe in nearly two hundred Deochs. But her work on the gods and goddesses is cited to this day. In a sense, perhaps I hope that these classes will endure, that I will endure. Is that ego, or just a refusal to release?

I don't know. And that, I think...is fine. But this particular series of explorations is at an end. I have done what I came to do, and hopefully along the way, you have learned something and discovered something to take away with you in your own journey.

Walk the Octave, and remember: any one of us can decide to end, and begin again. We are in control of the direction of our lives. As we mentioned, Fiosachd has a role to determine in fate, but at the same time - the gods and goddesses wait for us to exalt them, to explore them, to carry them forward. It is up to us to decide on how we apply their lessons, how we travel these cycles, and what lessons we carry forward into the future.

In the end, we decide what matters. We shape ourselves, and our world, every moment we are awake. We decide what world we want to live in, and we create it in every moment we share.

Sgrios never asks if we are ready - therefore, remember: we may never know when ends are forced upon us.

When they are, we must let go, and we must do so with grace. Do not cling to that which has ended, but trust in the renewal that awaits.

Trust in Deoch.

Keep moving forward.

And when it ends - let it.

9 Deireadh

“When it ends, let it”. A powerful mantra for any Aisling.

I wonder: do we cling too long to our Aisling lives? When faced with the troubles of our society and the staleness surrounding us, we have to ask ourselves: are *we* a fist clenching too tightly?

I can't answer that for anyone. I can say for myself, that I have attempted to instead walk the path of the Octave in my own works. Deoch inspired me to write these lectures, and to deliver them at the College. If I am blessed, if my fire has not dulled - perhaps I'll pick up my pen again. All I can do, in the end, is write - and hope that my work still finds an audience, and inspires them to walk the path with me.

Perhaps I decided I would not too easily give up on us. Now, more than ever, we need to remember that *Aisling* means more than individuals or moments: it is the summation of our culture. The totality of our history, our philosophy, our literature and stories, indeed *all our art...* began with our expression of Deoch's inspiration.

Our hopes, our dreams, and our love.

All of these find a calling in the octagram.

All of these find their expression in us - whether here or in the beyond.

Inscribed in Winter, Deoch 218, in Rucesion - for the benefit of all Aislings

*Kedian Tassadar Ta'Null
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