

TEMPLARS AND THE HOLY GRAIL. A CROSS-REFERENCE RELATIONSHIP IN AN ONTOPOIETIC PERSPECTIVE

MINA SEHDEV*

Abstract: The order of Templars has always been seen as a complex and interesting phenomenon in many different fields, that's why it is difficult to define its nature exactly. Similarly, the Holy Grail can be considered a particularly fascinating subject, which otherwise appears to have an interesting connection with Templars. As a matter of fact, it can be seen as a medley of various themes and topics which take origin in man's inner needs and dreams and above all in his continuous research for the infinite and the supernatural world. From one side, it can be seen as a material object, associated to Jesus Christ's Holy Shroud; its origin is still discussed, but we can say that it refers to a mysterious energy linked to human body and to the forces of the cosmos. At the same time, it can assume the function of a real myth, that is to say a representation on unconscious contents, a creation of human psyche which can become a sort of fantastic knowledge, or a real teleological factor, as it emerges in the perspective worked out by psychology of depth (particularly by Jung's analytical psychology). In this sense it appears also as an expression of the development of "forming spontaneity" which is rooted in the wide field of phenomenology of life, that is to say "the universe of human existence within-the-unity-of-everything-there-is-alive".

Keywords: creations of human psyche, perspective of Depth Psychology, *unity-of-everything-there-is-alive*.

INTRODUCTION

From its beginning, the order of Templars has always been considered a central subject of research and analysis by scholars and a fascinating object in people's imagination; recently this inclination is increasing, due to the mysterious nature characterizing Templars, in connection to the general developing interest in the magic and unknown world. Many legends were worked out about its historical development, concerning above all the possible existence of a treasure or a particular secret, and

* Mina Sehdev (✉)

University of Macerata, Via G.Verdi, 3 – 62110, Macerata, Italy
e-mail: m.sehdev@unimc.it

we can also say that it has always been seen as a particular interesting phenomenon in many different fields.

Similarly the Holy Grail appears as a quite fascinating subject and otherwise represents one of the most interesting and meaningful themes linked to Templars; it can be seen as a complex phenomenon which can be interpreted from many different points of view, that's why it is difficult to define its nature exactly. For example the Grail may be described as the dish from which Jesus Christ ate the Passover Lamb at the Last Supper; or as the chalice of the first sacrament, in which later the saviour's blood was caught as it flowed from his wounded body; or as a stone with a miraculous feeding and youth preserving virtues. Its custodian may be called Bron or Ansfortas or Pelles or Joseph of Arimathea or simply called the Fisher King.

Templars and the Holy Grail

In ancient French, the term *Grail* denotes a “dish” or a “cup”, deriving from *gradalis* (Medieval Latin) or from *κρατήρ* (ancient Greek). During the Christian age, we can find some different traditions, always referring to Jesus Christ, in which it becomes the Holy Grail and is identified above all as the “chalice” used by him during his “Last Supper” and then by Joseph of Arimatea for collecting Christ's blood. Regarding the origins of the term “Grail”, we can find it for the first time in Chrétien de Troyes' story entitled *Perceval ou le conte du Graal*, in which it is seen as a “cup”, but it isn't yet identified with Christ's blood. In the literary field, another interpretation of Grail is contained in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, talking of Grail as a magic stone. The first author connecting the Grail to Christ's blood is Robert de Boron, who strictly links it to the cup of the Last Supper in his poem *Joseph of Arimatea* (which represents one of the three parts of the trilogy *Roman de l'Estoire du Graal*, together with *Merlin* and *Perceval*).

In several following literary works, the Grail's story is strictly linked to King Arthur's and Merlin's events; according to some legends it would then be brought to Middle East, where its traces got lost. Only in the XIII century, we can find again some news regarding the existence of the Grail, which is associated with the Templars' mysteries. In such an outlook, the Grail appears as a means able to broaden human knowledge, to send out food and drinks, to recover from mortal illnesses and wounds, to extend human lives and also to raise pure-hearted people from death. In relation to the theological

concerns characterizing the middle Ages, it is seen mainly as a spiritual object, which can join the human and the divine.

We can find several different traditions (Gnostic, Christian and Celtic) concerning the Grail, which can be combined in a complex but organic synthesis, mixing one another. The Grail appears as a sort of vessel for divine energy, but at the same time it is identified with Jesus Christ's holy blood (as affirmed in the Apocryphal gospels), or with a symbolic object with a mysterious meaning medieval knights and particularly Templars were looking for.

Nowadays we can distinguish three different approaches to the study of the Grail:

a) an archaeological approach, considering the Grail as a material object, linked to Christ's story and identified from time to time with a heaven-sent stone, with the Ark of the Covenant, or with Christ's sheet known as "Holy Shroud";

b) a symbolic approach, according to which the Grail is seen as a universal symbol, we can find in many different mythical and religious systems;

c) a philological approach, which analyzes the literary origins and development of the legend of Grail.

As far as the possible association between the Templars' mysteries and the Holy Grail is concerned, we have no documents and historical sources at our disposal, able to confirm or to deny it from a scientific point of view. Anyway, both of them can be set in the context of the most relevant and inscrutable mysteries of the whole human history, that's why they are still frequently associated. During the period of their historical development (the order was founded in 1119), the Templars were believed to make contact with something particularly important and mysterious, which surely contributed to the tragic destruction of the order in 1307.

The Templars were an extremely powerful organization, but they were indicted of various crimes (like murder, heresy and devil-worship), so after some dramatic processes, they were deleted from human history. Nevertheless according to Frale (2004), they did not completely disappear and continued acting under an assumed name, in a capacity of an extremely important knowledge's guardians. Such knowledge could be identified with an ancient wisdom or perhaps with the secret of the Holy Grail, which can show and be interpreted – as we already saw – in several ways, or also without a particular form.

A quite fascinating interpretation of the Grail is linked to the concept of Christ's royal birth ("sangréal") and identifies the Holy Grail with his blood, as affirmed in a research conducted by the British journalists Baigent, Leigh e Lincoln (1982); according to them, Jesus – instead of dying crucified – married Mary Magdalene and had some children, then emigrated to the southern France. On the other hand, we have to bear in mind that when Jesus Christ requests his disciples to look for the eternal food, we deal with the theme of man's research for the eternal life and for the supernatural world; so we can find a connection also to the Grail as an "object" which aims at human deepest needs and his longing for the unknowable.

The question of the possible identification of the Grail with Christ's blood represents a fascinating resolution; also because Jesus Christ's historical figure has a particular worthiness, not only linked to his double nature. In fact he can be seen as a sort of revolutionary character, a leader for his disciples and for the whole mankind (through his exemplar life and his extraordinary communicative abilities), and a particular "teacher", a "master" who affirms the principle of universal love. When Jesus invites his disciples to look for the eternal food, which is endless and can conduct them to Resurrection, his words remind us to man's inner needs for the transcendental and supernatural world.

In this regard, it could be possible to trace an interesting even non confirmed hypothesis, according to which the Holy Grail is associated to Christ's Holy Shroud, representing nowadays the most important memento of Christian religion. In the last centuries it has been studied from scientists, historians and archaeologists, who worked out many different theories; the most recent scientific researches and analyses have substantially confirmed its trueness (authenticity) and it's dating to the period in which Jesus Christ lived and acted. Without any doubt, the image of Holy Shroud's man is a product of an unknown process which cannot be rationally explained; its nature may be associated not only to physical causes, but also to a mysterious energy. In fact we deal with extraordinary phenomena linked to particular powers and abilities which go beyond our normal senses and make us approach to an irrational or also supernatural reality.

Myths and creations of human psyche in the perspective of depth psychology

From the perspective of depth psychology (comprehending Freudian psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology), the concept of Grail can be considered as a fantastic theme or a real myth, as the result of a fusion of syncretical elements and yet as a universal symbol or archetype; it can represent anyway the aim of an individual's inner research and development. We have to bear in mind that according both to Freud and Jung, several productions of the human psyche (that is to say the great variety of different cultural creations like dreams and individual fancies, but also collective myths, fairy tales, or artistic, literary and religious compositions) can find their origin in the unconscious; they are in fact associated by the "original creativeness" and the "poietic potentiality" characterizing them.

Particularly Freudian psychoanalysis considers creations of human psyche as disguised satisfactions of children's unconscious desires suppressed or removed by the individual as opposed to the ideals and the conducts of conscious life. If dreams and myths can be seen as preferential means of fulfillment of the deepest human instincts and needs, their interpretation becomes "the principal way which takes to the knowledge of the unconscious in psychical life" (Freud, 1899).

According to psychoanalysis, the symbol is a visual representation of an unconscious idea; thus it is a phylogenetic inheritance referable to ontogenesis, inasmuch as it is an archaic process of thought preceding the development of individual language. Symbols generally represent unconscious ideas subject to removal that would have no other way of emerging to consciousness; Freud thus grasps the essence of the symbol in the constant relationship between the manifest expression of a dream and its latent reference. In analytical psychology, the symbol takes on a more specific dimension, inasmuch as it is thought to derive from the collective unconscious; archetypes (*a priori* forms common to all of humankind) are thought to find expression (in particular, imaginary creations of the human psyche such as myths or fairy tales) in symbols, which can thus be defined as teleological factors that express meanings that are difficult to know and comprehend from the merely rational point of view.

By developing some fundamental theses worked out by Freudian psychoanalysis, Jungian analytical psychology of depth asserts the complete reality of the psychical human world and the existence of an

ancestral life which goes beyond the individual. Jung works out the concept of “collective unconscious”, that is to say a psychical substratum, a common heritage which every individual psyche is founded on. It is the original source of all forms of knowledge and culture, of the universal human experience: “it consists in the archetypes, that is to say the pre-existing models which can become conscious and give a particular form to some psychical contents” (Jung, 1934). The archetypes are “instinctive patterns of behaviour”, which represent the original source of universal human experience; in fact the unconscious is conceived as a developing creative energy of human psyche, which is in a dialectic relation with conscience. That’s why Jung considers psychical creations as demands of the unconscious towards conscience; they give image and meanings to the deepest human impulses, and they are characterized by a symbolic and archaic language, which is an expression of the original mythological heritage of mankind made up of universal archetypes.

In such an outlook, psychical productions like dreams and myths (in which we can find both differences and analogies) seem at once to reveal and to hide the unconscious; they are marked not only by a dual nature (expressed in the distinction between manifest content and latent thoughts) but also by overlapping layers. The dream is at once memory of the past, awareness of the present and perspectival harbinger of the future; thus it enables self-representation of the unconscious in all its multiple functions. It should also be borne in mind that though classical psychoanalysis considers it an essentially regressive phenomenon, it can nonetheless also acquire a perspectival value, and in this sense instrumental, for the conscious dimension.

First of all, it should be specified that the parallel between myth and dream established by depth psychology does not indicate just a relationship of cause and effect; the fact that we can observe dreamed myths, dreams that contain myths, visionary cults or rites with mythic foundations, that is, the fact that myths and dreams mix incessantly, can be explained by the fact that there is a common substratum represented by a world of the soul that makes itself into image. Thus, we cannot simply assert that myths derive from dreams or vice versa, because a bond of reciprocal dependence between them enables us to trace undeniable similarities, explainable on the basis of their common origin. Myths and dreams would thus be experiences that can be associated with each other because of their very nature (the fact that both are classifiable as “creations of human psyche”), even though

they present differences that do not allow us to overlap them completely (Fromm, 1951).

Dreams differ from myths first of all because of their purely individual character and because of the regressive tendency that can be found in them (which emerges in the Freudian conception of oneiric phenomena); on the contrary, mythological creations are distinguished by a collective dimension and an essentially progressive tendency, inasmuch as they are oriented more towards the future than the past (as the Jungian theory shows). Thus, while dreams appear principally suited to represent and interpret individual experiences and fancies, myths flow from the projection of certain oneiric images on the life and the lived experience of entire social groups; they are collective fantastic creations, in which we can identify the model of a culture or of the common destiny of the whole mankind. Psychology of depth asserts the living and acting presence of myth in man's thoughts, through the various ages and civilizations; it can be re-emerging in present-day man's life. Mythological tales take origin in man's need to express his hidden and often unconscious desires and sometimes to communicate them by their transposition into a narrative form.

According to Drewermann (1987), the myth is born when the dream, the vision, the poetry of the individual rise to the rank of great dream, because in this case the symbolic language of oneiric images does not mirror only the sediment of individual experiences, but at the same time condenses the living experiences of a vaster human group, interprets them, or anticipates them. This outlook makes it possible to pass from the individual dream to the collective myth. Thus, in the perspective developed by depth psychology, the dream becomes "model" not only of myth but also of other narrative forms that can be related to it (such as fairy tales, sagas, and legends) and that nonetheless have far from negligible differences. For example, unlike the myth, which, tending to the divine, the religious, is thus by nature non-historic, the fairy tale also expresses atemporal truths, but ones that are "human" and thus not transcendent.

The relationship between individual and collective productions of the human psyche that both Freudian psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology identify seems definable essentially as a "relation of conjunction," inasmuch as it supports the associability of these two phenomena both on the level of the meaning and function they carry out, and on the level of the structure and language used. This is a "biunivocal relationship," or we could say bi-directional, in

the sense that one can find a relationship between myth and dream, as already mentioned, based on reciprocity: in fact, it is possible to identify the presence of mythological motives in dreams, but at the same time many collective mythological creations seem to derive from individual oneiric experiences. Even so, the similarities between these two complex realities (dream and myth) and the parallelism identified by depth psychology permit us to assert that “all myths are first of all ‘great dreams’ of single individuals and, vice versa, all ‘little dreams’ also have in themselves the power to become the great myth, similarly to the way poetry is truth.

As we have seen, we can observe a relevant difference of approach (essentially causalistic and deterministic as we have seen for Freud and the Freudian school, and in contrast finalistic and perspectival inasmuch as it is oriented towards the search for meaning for Jung and his followers), and a partially different theory developed for oneiric experience (owe can speak of “dream as symptom” for Freud and instead “dream as symbol” for Jung). Anyway, it should be observed that both acknowledge that the dream has typical characteristics, shared more in general with the processes of the unconscious, the most important of which seem to us to be atemporality and the substitution of external reality with that of psychical reality.

Psychology of depth asserts the existence of a common substratum, of an original collective heritage: in oneiric phenomena and mythological creations is dealt the complex “world of man’s soul”, which becomes an image. Naturally, we must keep in mind that – as they have in common the original creativeness and the essentially “poietic”, transformative potential that marks them – both of them can be analysed and interpreted only through their narrations; hence, the importance of the role played by the language they use, which is first of all a figurative one (metaphorical and symbolic). In fact, in all psychical productions, we can find a figurative language, characterized by a use of symbols and images and so by a great multiplicity of meanings: in all mythological creations, is dealt the complex “world of man’s soul” which becomes an image.

Both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology have contributed to recognizing an “original importance,” restoring a deeper value also on the cognitive level, to all the manifestations (individual and collective) of culture, in particular to the products of the unconscious, among which an essential role is played by dreams and myths. From analysis of how depth psychology views myth and dream, it emerges that both

psychoanalysis and analytical psychology have established a relation of conjunction (analogical for Freud and his school, more clearly dialectic with Jung and his followers) between myth and dream. As we have seen, they have elements in common both on the level of structure and of language, and symbolism plays a fundamental role in both. One of the essential merits of depth psychology is having indicated the essential function of symbolic language found in all creations of the psyche.

On the basis of the association established between dream and myth by depth psychology, it seems possible to us to trace in the latter a value that is hardly negligible on the cognitive level, more accentuated in the Jungian conception than in the Freudian one. In psychoanalysis, myth seems essentially the gratification of removed unconscious desires and the expression of the deepest human impulses that the conscious tries to ignore in order to control them, but that re-emerge in dreams on the individual level and in mythological creations on the more collective one. In contrast, according to analytical psychology, it is not limited to being a kind of substitute satisfaction, but reveals its capacity to express the complex inner reality of a person in all its multiple components, also providing access (inasmuch as it configures as a kind of self revelation) to transcendent truths, and thus enabling the individual to progress in awareness of himself or herself and of the world.

The myth is simultaneously connection between the individual and the collectiveness, the present with the past and the future, and finally, the human being with external reality and internal reality; it enables a unitary vision of nature and culture, of the divine and the human, the eternal and the temporal: all these characters and elements are particularly evident, for example, in the extremely complex and articulated "myth" of the Holy Grail, also in its interrelation with Templars' history and events. We can see it as a fantastic theme or a real myth, the result of a fusion of syncretical elements or yet a universal symbol or archetype: it represents anyway the aim of an individual's inner research and development. Otherwise, we can say that in the outlook worked out by depth psychology, psychical creations can be seen as the dialectic synthesis between individuality and totality, determined and undetermined, *logos* and *mythos*. They seem to be able to represent a sort of "reason which goes beyond reason"; in such an outlook we can say it's just through such fantastic

creations that we have the opportunity to approach the deepest nature of the universe and some of the loftiest concepts.

CONCLUSION: THE CREATIONS OF HUMAN PSYCHE IN AN ONTOPOIETIC PERSPECTIVE

The poietic and transformative nature typical of creations of human psyche find foundation in the phenomenology of life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, which opens the possibility to grasp the *logos* first in its constructive impetus and then in its unfolding in life, which self-individualizes precisely on the measure of the *logos*. The *logos* of life, in fact, refers to the creativity of the human condition and the creative act, inherent in our condition, taking part in the deepest intense activity of life, and reveals the original “modelling” of the preconscious and reflective functions that characterize human nature in its most intimate essence.

The human condition offers us the key to access being in its living fabric that is, continually becoming, productive of increasingly more articulated and diversified forms. In fact, human beings not only follow the spontaneous and already traced patterns of universal life, but also incessantly invent and produce new ones, creating devices for life, products of work, works of art, exalting and transfiguring the tremor of existence into the throb of creation. Opening itself to the perspective of the human creative condition, the conscious, which in turn has discovered itself living and vital, thus finds it witness to the very emergence of life, and at the same time involved in it. When it reaches the level of the human creative condition, therefore, life no longer limits itself to reproduce itself, but in the acts of life of human beings always interprets itself in existence, giving rise to forms of life that not only are new and unimaginable previously, but also are congruent and suitable to the becoming being of life, of which it alone holds the key feature.

According to Tymieniecka, the *logos* that is intrinsic to life has manifested itself as “a primogenital force striving without end, surging in its impetus and seeking equipoise”: it promotes “the constructive prompting” that determines “the progress of life” and “it prepares its own means/organs for its own advance” (A.-T. Tymieniecka, 1998). Paradoxically the human being appears to be integrally part and parcel of nature yet reaches levels “beyond nature”, levels of life that endow the human being with special unique significance that is no longer simply vital but is also spiritual. The appearance of the living human

being sets off in natural life “a watershed event, essentially a transformation of the significance of life”: the “enigmatic” surging of *Imaginatio Creatrix* in the middle of onto-poietic sequence, surging freely as it floats above the inner working of nature. Within the creative modus of human functioning in its specifically creative orchestration there occurs a metamorphosis of the vital system of onto-poiesis, towards the universe of human existence within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive.

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