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## Book Review

### **The Bible As Dream**

by Murray Stein. Ed. by Chiron Publications, 2018

In the text written by the Jungian analyst Murray Stein, entitled "The Bible As Dream", p. 209, published by Chiron Publications, 2018, the author makes use of the discoveries of Jung in the theological and biblical field to give life to a work that is both original and fascinating.

As is evident already starting from the title, Stein decides to interpret the Bible through psychological lenses. By trying to offer such a reading, the Author suggests that the interpretative key can only be the same used for dream interpretations.

From this point of observation it would be possible to detect elements from the unconscious in the Bible. More precisely, Stein not providing the Bible as the oneiric product of a single psyche, compares the sacred text to the manifestation of a process in the collective unconscious, filtered through the experience of a particular people and guided by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is able to confer an unique intonation to the collective personality.

Taking advantage of his experience as an analyst, the author assumes that the dream registered is characterized by divergent points compared to the dream

lived. Once the text is elaborated, it is as if the dream undergoes in reality a rationalizing transformation by the ego. It can therefore only be ordered, modified, sometimes censored, like the biblical documents which have been put in order and remade over the course of two thousand years.

In the analysis of the Bible as a dream proposed by Stein, the Author invites the reader to hold the contents of the Old and New Testament, correspondingly related, in order to highlight its evolutionary meaning, because only through this link is it possible to discern the individuation process that underlies the entire biblical dream. According to the Christian doctrine, Stein proposes above all to consider the Old Testament as revealing God the Father, the Gospels as revelators of God the Son and the history of the Church as revealing the Holy Spirit.

Stein selects seven thematic nuclei around which he rotates his interpretation: the theme of creation, the problem of shadow, the individuation process, the concepts of animus and anima, the theme of election and the relationship royalty / servitude.

Using Jungian analytical lenses, it can be seen how the first steps of the Bible, adhering to the theme of creation, turn out to be the most archetypal. Here the image of God can be considered a proto-egoic image, a support on which the ego will be built over time and after many phases. At the same time Jesus appears to be the final point of the development of Yahweh, the one present at the beginning of the logical-evolutionary thread of the recorded dream (in the Jungian conception it is possible to notice how the individual's personality exists in its entirety already from the beginning, but only in power).

Although the story about ἀρχή may not have really been written before the others, the recorded dream places it at the beginning, giving us the impression that the ones telling us this story are endowed with a rational and well-organized personality.

Yahweh as creator represents the archetype that is impressed in the personality that is coming to be structured. Creating Adam and Eve, he creates himself in

nature and in human culture. With Adam we could say that we are before the first form of an intrauterine ego. Adam receives the imprint of Yahweh, but does not understand His power. «In Adam, the Biblical dream depicts its own earliest self-awareness of being sentient, contained in the mother, innocent of danger, without want or need. Adam does not ask for Eve; Yahweh sees his need for a companion and fulfills it. Eve, coming from Adam's side, represents an anima, the first differentiation of the feminine from the masculine side of self-awareness and identification. Eve is other and vaguely associated with the animal instincts, i.e., closer to the unconscious and therefore a potential mediatrix to the unconscious, to its potential rewards and dangers».

In the biblical narrative the female image is often referred to the image of the anima (which in the Jungian theory, as Jung himself states in *Psychological types*, is equivalent to the principle according to which the anima of a man is complementary to the external character of the same) or to the maternal image, promoter instead of care and adaptation.

In this case, the complementary character of Eve in Adam facilitates the process by which the child ends up disobeying the father. «In the drama between Yahweh and Adam, we see the dynamic of a parent-child separation/individuation process at work. Adam disobeys and is removed from the warm nest in Paradise. Having to leave the garden, never to return, is an event of ego alienation from the maternal unconscious as well as from the protection of the parents in the state of childish innocence. Adam is forced to leave the nest, and the pain and regret he faces is a bit harsh, but normal for the development of a masculine ego that must realize its capacity for endurance, suffering, hardship, and limitation». The knowledge of the good and evil that Adam and Eve received by disobeying the Father's orders causes the limited knowledge of the conscious ego to develop.

Therefore, it is possible to detect it immediately that from a polar point of view the terms of obedience / disobedience will be constant throughout the biblical journey, gradually revealing the faces of Moses, Job, Satan, until they reach

Jesus. «Yahweh's urgent demand for obedience creates the central dynamic of the dream, which is the constant tension and interplay between obedience and disobedience. This, in turn, creates the distinctions between purity and pollution, innocence and guilt, and honor and shame [...]. In the biblical dream, one of the first and most crucial events is, in fact, the act of disobedience. It is this act that sets the whole ensuing drama into motion, culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus to redeem the sins of the world». With Jesus, however, with respect to Adam and Eve we are witnessing something revolutionary: He manages to dialogue with his shadow (Satan) by putting forward, after having elaborated it, obedience to the affirmation of Self. The analysis of the Bible as a dream presented by the Author offers many ideas that are able to make this interpretation a real methodology for the study of sacred texts.

Given the depth and richness of the contents of the Stein's essay, reading is also recommended to an audience whose formation is not Jungian.

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