

Perversion and social innovation: the Minotaur, the labyrinth, Ariadne, Theseus, and Attica

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ABSTRACT. – Psychoanalysis has been interested in myths since its foundation, arousing both interest and criticism from scholars of historical and anthropological disciplines: on the one hand, in fact, the psychoanalytic model allows us to explain the creative processes that generated them and the attractiveness that they exercised on ancient populations, and on the other hand presents limits of congruence with the data that historical and literary research associates with them. This work proposes an integrated analytical approach, which associates historical and literary evidence with an analytic method that integrates the interpretation of symbols, specifically those of perversion, within the narrative structure, considering both elements significant. A decoding of the myth of the Labyrinth and the Minotaur will therefore be conducted, as it was used in that of Theseus, Ariadne and the foundation of Attica.

Key words: psychoanalysis, Minotaur, labyrinth, Ariadne, perversion, Attica.

Myth and Psychoanalysis

Myths are ubiquitous in the human species and had interested psychoanalysis because they could refer to possible experiences and situations (Zachrisson, 2013), although not real. However, the uncritical approach borrowed from classical psychoanalysis (Jones, 1948), which attributes to the symbols used in myths systematic representations of a limited number of repressed and removed contents (such as birth, love and death, Self and blood relatives), can lead to stereotypical and caricatural interpretations when compared with narrative modes that explicitly describe incest, parricide, matricide, and castration (Sels, 2011), rather than veiling them, as happens in dreams and in patients' symptoms. This approach, in fact, leads to the following conclusions:

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- a. since the symbols found in myths can be traced back to a few repressed contents, applying the psychoanalytic method to myths is reduced to a mere and ephemeral intellectual exercise;
- b. since psychoanalytic treatment releases from repression, should lead to the disappearance of symbolic production (including that of dreams and works of art and intellect); and, as a consequence of a) and b);
- c. since it is not possible to psychoanalyze the communities in which myths are housed, psychoanalysis is not a science useful to anthropology, and *vice versa*.

Differently, Jung (1921) assigns the classification proposed by Jones to symptomatic actions, rather than to symbolic productions, which he also distinguishes from semiotic ones for their function of pushing towards psychic transformation, rather than communication, as happens with the signs of language. Symbols are therefore produced when the Ego is absorbed in a strong conflict originating from its own adherence to theses and antitheses that negate each other, until reaching a block of the will that suspends consciousness in favor of an activation of the unconscious that leads to the formation of the symbol through the integration between intellectual functions and lower and more primitive impulses. The symbol thus produced integrates the previously irreconcilable contents, pushing consciousness towards change. Therefore, in this perspective, the symbol represents the instrument for overcoming the psychic blocks that a person or social group experienced at the time in which they were produced.

According to Matte Blanco's proposal (1975), this dynamic emerges from *Ordinary Logic* (OL) and *Emotional Logic* (EL). EL emerges from two principles: the *Symmetry Principle* (SP), which treats every relation as identical to its opposite and explains all empathic phenomena and identifications that manifest themselves in relations and symptoms; the *Generalization Principle* (GP), which includes, through their propositional functions, every percept or mental product in classes with increasing generality tending to infinity and explains the way in which signs, symptoms, and symbols, functioning as a metaphor or an analogy of something else, can refer to different contents, depending on the linguistic relation to which they belong. According to these characteristics, EL cannot pursue any goal, while OL cannot determine any. So, they must be integrated. The difference between sign, symbol, and symptom is therefore given by the linguistic context and by the action of the defenses on the mental processes, while the *Extraction of Asymmetry* (EA) allows us to understand, in terms of the OL, the expressions of the EL present in them, leading to a modality of interpretation that includes both pre- and post-Oedipal stages of psychic development and relations with the contexts in which they manifest themselves and to which they refer.

The distribution mode of the two logics in mental processes and products varies according to the OL possibility of manipulating real objects and the relationships that they have between them, therefore according to the knowledge, contexts, and mental states experienced by the person. It can therefore give rise to discourses, scientific theories, works of art, dreams, delusions, or myths in a non-predefined and controllable way. In fact, although as early as the 6th century BC Pre-Socratic philosophers distinguished *muthos* from *logos*, they supported their philosophical arguments using presuppositions and assumptions inherited from myths (Nunes & de Souza, 2024; Zeleke, 2019), while Plato also used them to persuade and support the understanding of philosophy or fill its limits (Partenie, 2022), and myths continued to be narrated, studied, reworked, and discussed until the early stages of Christianization (Dowden, 2005; Graft, 2011). Similarly, even the most recent Freudian-oriented psychoanalytic developments have recognized unconscious contents different from the classical ones initially proposed for mythical production, broadening their field of action beyond the projection of the repressed contents of the Unconscious, or towards the awareness of the Self and the surrounding world, while continuing to treat myths as if they were dreams (Merkur, 2005).

However, myths are distinguished from dreams and symptoms by the prevalence of a careful and organized use of narrative skills, which can structure narratives coherently with the expectations generated by the changing socio-cultural contexts of reference.

According to Barthes and Duisit (1975), the narrative structure can be decomposed into Nuclei (N) and Catalysis (C). The N are both consecutive and consequential (the existence of an N makes it possible for another to come true), regardless of the logical order in which they are presented, and are both necessary to the narration and sufficient in themselves; the C, on the other hand, are integrative of the N, and describe personality traits, feelings, atmosphere, philosophy, which help to decipher narrated contexts and situations, entering into a relationship with the N in a parasitic and chronological way, expanding their contents. In short, it is not possible to erase an N without altering the narration, and it is not possible to erase a C without altering its discourse.

Ariadne and the Dionysian

The mythological figure of Ariadne has been described by Kerényi (1971) as the *Lady of the Labyrinth*, a structure present in the Royal Palace or in the caves of the city of Knossos and placed in the domain of Dionysus, which includes the *Zöé* (Z), the abstract plant and animal life,

matrix of the *Bios* (B), the individual and historicized life of every living being. Since women are the only ones able to perceive the development of the fetus in the womb and its evolution into a newborn and an adult, the transformation of Z into B is a purely feminine function; therefore, Ariadne, extremely pure (*Ari-hagne*) and extremely clear (*Ari-dela*) in the Cretan language, was the divinity in charge of the government of initiatory paths concerning the development of the Soul.

Ariadne, the labyrinth, and the marriage to Dionysus

Although the first Cretan archaeological evidence of Ariadne dates back to before 1300 BC, the first written myths known to us about her, the labyrinth, and the thread that allows her to escape from it date back to Ovid and Pseudo-Hyginus, a Roman poet and mythographer of the 1st century BC and 2nd century AD. Previously, Greek mythology refers to Ariadne's death by the hands of Artemis, and her being the wife of Dionysus, which is also referred to by various authors in parallel with her romantic relationship with Theseus (Atsma, 2000-2011a). The most important description of this relationship is contained in the *Bibliotheca* of Pseudo-Apollodorus, a mythographer who presumably lived between the 1st and 3rd century AD in a city well supplied with books, of which he left traces in scattered and disjointed writings from the 5th century AC, synthesized and reorganized into a single narrative, which reconstructs the entire mythological conception produced by Greek culture (Acerbo, 2017; Cerato, 2019). The difference that marks a notable gap, compared to the most ancient narratives, is given by the defeat of the Minotaur by Theseus, made possible by the guidance of Ariadne, and by her marriage with Dionysus, which takes place subsequently, signifying a symbolic evolution of the function of Ariadne, whose skills as *Lady of the Labyrinth* are recognized by the myth as more appropriate to integrate, with marriage, the qualities of Dionysus, *twice-born god*, guardian of vegetation, wine, pleasure, celebration, madness, and wild frenzy (Atsma, 2000-2011b), rather than those of Theseus.

Theseus

In Greek mythology, Theseus was the hero of *Synoecism*, the process of unification of the cities, territories, and cultures of Attica into a single nation, which took place between the 6th and 5th centuries BC, when each tribe, city, and ethnic group in the region defined its own identity through myths about its origins, founding heroes and tutelary deities, places of

worship and rites (Anderson, 2003; Linn, 2015): the capacity for personal and generational memory is in fact limited to a few years, and, since their sum cannot build the collective one, the myth, placing the events in a previous time frame, could present them as credible documentation, although formulated on an emotional basis. In fact, poetic and philosophical creations were believed to be produced by the action of divinities, who transmitted their contents to poets and philosophers, who assimilated them, immersing themselves in *mania*, and recomposed them, using *memory* (Ustinova, 2012).

Theseus's origins and mythological arrival in Athens

The first archaeological evidence on Theseus dates back to the 7th century BC, and the historian Plutarch (Adriani, 1859), after many centuries, while declaring to separate the fable from the historical data, attributes to him the feat of the descent into the Underworld and places his existence in the mythical time that Hesiod attributes to the fourth lineage of men created by the gods. Hence, he does not escape the myth, although he rationalizes that of the Minotaur. The mythographer Apollodorus is therefore more reliable: the congruence and coherence of mythological narratives must in fact be sought under the profile of the underlying symbolic contents and not of the facts to which they refer.

N/C

Aegeus, king of Athens, had no children by his two wives and feared that Pallas's sons, his brother, would kill him. He received from the oracle a verdict that he did not understand: "*The foot that protrudes from the wineskin, O best of men, do not loosen, before you reach the summit of Athens*". Aegeus reported the verdict to Pittheus, king of Troezen, who understood it and deceived Aegeus, inducing him to lie with his daughter Aethra. Aegeus suspected a pregnancy, so he left his sword and sandals under a large hollow rock and told Aethra that if he should have a male child, and in his manhood, he would be able to move it, to send him secretly to Athens with the objects hidden by him, without telling him who his father was.

EA

Aegeus conceives a son without having intended it (*not to ejaculate in any womb, before Athens has reached its splendor*) and subordinates his recognition to the possession of qualities that he will have as an adult, prefiguring an ideal and imaginary son, rather than co-structuring his identity through a symmetrical process of mutual recognition. Pittheus, instead, plans to build a political relationship with Athens by structuring a kinship with Aegeus, independently of his will.

N/C

Aethra gave birth to Theseus, hiding from him his father's identity, while Pittheus and Connida raised him.

When he came to adulthood, Aethra led Theseus to the hollow rock, which he raised.

EA

Theseus grows up in the certainty of his maternal origin and uncertainty of his paternal one.

Great deeds can be accomplished when one is ready to do so.

N/C

Aethra revealed to Theseus the name of his father and recommended him to go to Athens by sea, since it was dangerous to go by land because of the many evildoers who guarded the territory, since Hercules, having killed Iphitus in a fit of rage, could not oppose them, because he was serving a term of slavery with the queen of Lydia, Omphale. Pittheus also tried to persuade him, but Theseus decided to emulate Hercules, ashamed to present himself to his father without having given proof of his value, and left by land.

EA

Theseus decided to identify himself with a hero, Hercules, rejecting the defensive avoidant character structure embodied in Aethra and Pittheus, and using the legacy of Aegeus to identify himself in the role of traveler (sandals) and warrior (sword). He therefore started a cultural challenge, planning to make himself worthy of the love of an imaginary, unknown father.

N/C

Apollodorus says that Hercules killed Iphitus in a fit of madness, even though he was his friend. The oracle prescribed three years of slavery to Omphale, justifying the sentence in the same way as had already happened for his previous twelve labors, when Hercules killed his children in a fit of madness caused by Hera, and the oracle assigned to King Eurystheus the task of prescribing the labors that Hercules would have to perform to atone for his punishment and gain immortality.

EA

Hercules' heroism originates from the atonement for the guilt due to his fits of madness.

N/C

Ovid (1st century BC) narrates that, in the service of Omphale, Hercules wears bracelets and gems, adorns his hair, hips, and neck, spins wool, and tells stories to a woman who has subdued him and who shows herself sitting on the lion skin he usually wears.

EA

Submission to a woman and the assumption of feminine roles and functions are mythologized according to the same scheme that generated the previous twelve labors; therefore, they represent the thirteenth labor of Hercules.

N/C

- On the way to Athens, Theseus killed Periphetes, a lame man nicknamed Corunes because of an iron club he used to kill passers-by, which Theseus stole from him, making it his weapon.
- Then he killed Sini, called Pythiocante, reserving for him the same fate that he reserved for the passers-by, forcing them to bend the pine trees and hold them until they gave in to the effort and died, being thrown far away.
- He later killed the ferocious sow Fea of Crommione, who was apparently a woman with a bloodthirsty and dissolute lifestyle who murdered passers-by.
- Then, using his own technique, he killed Sciron, who forced passers-by to wash his feet and kicked them off a promontory into the sea, where a giant sea turtle devoured them.
- Then he killed, while wrestling, Cercyon, a wrestler who challenged travelers to fights and killed them.
- Finally, he killed Procrustes in the same way he killed the passers-by whom he made lie down on his beds of different lengths, shortening the bones of those who were too tall and lengthening them until they broke of those who were too short.

EA

Theseus integrates his warrior identity due to his father's legacy, combining the sword of Aegeus with the club of Corunes, which he acquired independently.

The rejection of the avoidant character structure allows Theseus to deal with the sadism of the defeated characters by symmetrizing their asymmetrical relationships with passers-by, that is, those lacking the symmetrical understanding and sharing of the needs and desires of the other. By restoring the absent emotional symmetry, sadistic relationships are regulated, allowing the sociability derived from the safe journey by land. The internal security of a community, according to the myth, is therefore based on the symmetrical/emotional regulation of the relationships that lack it, which is accessed by freeing oneself from the avoidant defensive structures and making oneself autonomous from paternal legacies.

N/C

When Theseus arrived in Athens, Medea, who had convinced Aegeus that she could make him have children by using potions that instead caused illnesses, made him believe that Theseus was plotting against him, so Aegeus, not yet knowing that he was the father, asked him to go to Marathon and kill a dangerous bull that was terrorizing the city, which Theseus killed.

EA

Medea uses asymmetrically the symmetrical identification with the fears and desires of Aegeus, projecting her plot onto Theseus: unlike sadistic perversion, the lie consists in an asymmetrization of a symmetrical understanding, manipulated in accordance with one's own desires, and foreclosing those of the other.

N/C

Medea persuaded Aegeus, who was worried about the dangerous discords in the city, to offer Theseus, who had returned from Marathon, a cup of poison, which Theseus was about to drink, offering the sword he was using to cut the flesh, which Aegeus recognized as his own. Aegeus publicly recognized Theseus as his son and threw the poisoned cup away.

EA

Aegeus recognizes his sword, rather than Theseus' value, subordinating his love for himself to that for his son, without developing a relationship based on symmetrical identification with him.

N/C

The Cretans came to demand, for the third time, the payment of the tribute owed by the Athenians to atone for the treacherous killing of the son of Minos, king of Crete, who had demanded the payment of seven Athenian girls and seven Athenian boys to be fed, once a year and for nine years, to the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull, locked in a labyrinth designed by Daedalus. Theseus volunteered to pay this tribute. Aegeus tried to persuade him to resign and asked the ship's pilot to hoist white sails, in case he returned from Crete, rather than the black ones supplied with the ship. Theseus recruited, to guide the ship, a pilot and a helmsman from Skyros and Salamis, since the Athenians were not yet experienced in sea travel. Upon his return, he built ships and established the festival of *Cybernesia*, dedicated to the mastery of navigation.

EA

Theseus does not find in Aegeus the father he had imagined, and his heroism is aimed at conquering the real Athenians, rather than the imaginary ones. Aegeus, on the other hand, proves to be an inadequate ruler for the city oppressed by a heavy tribute, subordinating it to his love for Theseus, which, however, reveals itself as love for the signs of his own past, therefore as paternal inadequacy. Theseus autonomizes his identity as a land traveler, assimilating that of a sea traveler. Even the Athenian identity is redefined by the mastery of navigation. The transformation of interpersonal relationships between desiring people also involves social transformations.

The Minotaur

The defeat of the Minotaur represents the turning point that started the process of mythical unification of Attica by Theseus. Apollodorus (c. 3rd century BC) reconstructs the history of this monster, from birth to death.

N/C

When Asterius, king of Crete, died, Minos claimed his throne, which was denied to him. Therefore, he claimed to have the approval of the gods, declaring that he could obtain anything from them, and performed a sacred rite, asking Poseidon to send him a bull as a gift, which he would sacrifice in his honor.

EA

Taking on the leadership of a kingdom requires the possession of transpersonal skills, based on the congruence between the Natural Order (Poseidon/sea) and the Social Order (island lifestyle of the Cretans).

N/C

Poseidon brought a beautiful bull by sea, and Minos obtained the kingdom; however, he kept the animal for himself and sacrificed another bull.

EA

The sea represents the signifier of the Cretan islander identity, and Poseidon's gift represents the congruence between the Natural and Social Orders. By keeping the bull for himself, Minos desecrates the relationship of significance between the Cretan identity and the Sea/Poseidon and perverts it, supplanting gratitude with greed: the symmetrical/emotional reversibility between the Natural/Sacred Order and the Political/Social Order is not generated.

N/C

Minos conquered almost all the islands of the Aegean, but Poseidon, furious at his betrayal, made his wife, Pasiphae, fall in love with the bull.

EA

The transformation of the enveloping and nourishing relationship of Crete by the sea into its domination makes the symmetrical exchange between the Natural and Social Orders impossible, leading to repercussions in intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions.

N/C

Pasiphae asked Daedalus for help to satisfy her desire for the bull, so he built a hollow wooden structure that he covered with a cowhide, placing it in the meadow where the bull grazed. Pasiphae entered the hollow structure and was impregnated by the bull.

EA

The relationship between Minos and Pasiphae is not based on mutual desire for the other: as Minos' wife, Pasiphae symmetrically identifies herself, in the feminine, with Minos' desire for possession of the bull, and, desiring to be possessed by it, colludes with Minos' desecration and deception.

N/C

Pasiphae gave birth to Asterius, a man with the head of a bull, whom Minos had locked up in a labyrinth designed by Daedalus, from which it was impossible to escape.

EA

The Asterius's head of a bull represents his identification with the collusive relationship of his parents. Having to take care of him, Minos inverts the direction of the paternal function and inhibits Asterius's ability to socialize, confining him in the labyrinth: the perverse relationship between Minos and Pasiphae prevents their son's Z from becoming B, making it impossible to identify and socialize. The Minotaur, or the perversion, is therefore a Z (bull's head) incompatible with B (man's body).

N/C

Minos betrayed Pasiphae, who, resentful, organized a curse that caused poisonous beasts to ejaculate in the wombs of women possessed by Minos, who died.

EA

Perverse relationships are maintained with perverse strategies, harmful to third parties.

N/C

With the help of the sorceress Circe, Minos overcomes Pasiphae's curse; however, his son Androgeus is killed.

EA

Perverse strategies are surrounded by other perverse strategies.

N/C

Having gained control of the seas, Minos wages war on Athens, but the city does not yield, so he prays to Zeus, who causes famine and pestilence in the city. The oracle prophesied that this condition would cease following the extinction of an ancient debt of the Athenians, to be obtained in exchange for the payment of the pledge established by Minos.

EA

The political and governmental insolvency of Athens has serious consequences for the community.

N/C

Minos demanded the sacrifice of seven boys and seven girls to be offered, unarmed, as food to the Minotaur.

EA

Perversion (Minotaur) devours Athenian youth.

The labyrinth, Ariadne, Attica

The defeat of the Minotaur and the birth of Attica

N/C

Plutarch narrates that Theseus chose two good warriors with feminine faces, whom he trained to behave like women, adorning and dressing them as such, and mixing them with the other five girls to be fed to the Minotaur. Upon his return he instituted the festival of the *Oscophoria*, in which young men adorned in this manner honored Dionysus and Ariadne.

EA

The integration of the feminine components in the young Athenian warriors' identity serves to defeat the perversion/Minotaur.

N/C

Ariadne falls in love with Theseus and, betraying her brother Asterius, reveals to him the instructions obtained from Daedalus on how to orient in the labyrinth using a thread.

Theseus ties the thread to the entrance of the labyrinth and unrolls it, going all the way to the bottom, where he kills the Minotaur with his fists and then returns following the thread. Then he embarks for Athens, in the company of Ariadne and the Athenian youths.

EA

Liberation from perversion requires breaking the code of family belonging.

Maintaining a subtle love relationship with a woman, who is outside the labyrinth that contains perversion, helps to orient oneself within it. Using himself as a weapon, Theseus defeats the Minotaur/perversion, thus freeing himself from the form given to his psychic structure by the relationship between his parents: Aethra and Aegeus, in fact, generate a child without intending to and postpone the mutual recognition of characteristics that the child will have to assume in the future.

N/C

Returning to Athens, Theseus makes a sacrifice to Apollo and establishes a dance, danced with the young people who have returned from Crete, consisting of pirouettes and changes of direction, imitating the movements made inside the labyrinth.

EA

Overcoming perversion releases creative energies that produce music, song, dance, and poetry, which are pleasing to Apollo (Atsma, 2000-2011c).

N/C

Among the many versions (reported by Plutarch) of the return to Athens, one says that, encountering a storm, Theseus left Ariadne, pregnant, in Cyprus, and was carried back to sea by the storm in an attempt to save the ship. Ariadne died before being able to give birth.

EA

Liberation from perversion involves separation from the maternal object and abandoning oneself to the uncontrollable and unpredictable events of life.

N/C

Returning to Cyprus, Theseus offered a reward to those who had helped Ariadne. In Athens, a festival was established during which a young male simulated the pains of childbirth.

On the way back to Athens (according to Apollodorus), Theseus stopped at Naxos, where Dionysus fell in love with Ariadne, kidnapping her and having sex with her.

Saddened by the loss of Ariadne, Theseus continued sailing, forgetting to hoist the white sails. Upon arriving in Athens, Aegeus, seeing the black sails from the top of the Acropolis, threw himself down and died.

EA

The imitation of childbirth by a male symmetrically represents both *giving birth*, in the feminine, and *coming to light*, in the masculine; therefore, the separation from the original maternal symbiosis.

Ariadne's method of regulation in the labyrinth/vicious circles of thought integrates the Dionysian Order.

Theseus had pursued the conquest of an imaginary father and had never developed a relationship of mutual identification with Aegeus. Therefore, his forgetfulness represents the resolution of a bond of belonging that had never consolidated, rather than a camouflaged aggressive attack on the father. Theseus' mourning, in addition to the loss of Arianna, is therefore due to the separation and autonomy from Aegeus, who ends his life, overwhelmed by the emotion of having lost a son he had only imagined, without having recognized him and by whom he had not been recognized. Theseus and Ariadne, at the conclusion of their enterprise of defeating the Minotaur, free themselves from the bond of family belonging and from the kingdoms connected to it: one frees himself from belonging to the kingdom of Troezen and Athens, of Aethra and Aegean, to build that of Attica and reign there, and the other frees herself from belonging to the kingdom of Knossos, of Minos and Pasiphae, to reign over the Dionysian one.

N/C

Athens mourns the death of a king and rejoices at the birth of another king, Theseus.

EA

Social change is due to deaths and births.

N/C

Theseus unifies the people of Attica by persuading both the poor people, who were well disposed to unification, and the wealthy, who appreciated the prospect of a popular government, also using military power against the opponents of Synoecism and the conspirators who opposed Aegeus. He then reforms Athenian laws and institutions and institutes the *Panathenaic festival* in memory of the unification of Attica.

He also supports immigration with the offer of civil equality and establishes the *Metecia festival* (transfer to another home), recognizing the specificity and dignity of the various professions and social classes. The oracle of Delphi, emanation of Apollo, supports him in his enterprise:

“O of Aegeus, o of the daughter of Pittheus noble scion, your beloved land to many others my father a terminus made. However, strengthen your tired courage, that you will not have an outrage like a wineskin in the sea”; while the Sibyl, a prophetess possessed by Apollo (Pincherle & Turchi, 1936), prophesied for the city of Athens: *“It will be bathed without submerging the wineskin”*.

EA

Freed from perversion and from the bond with his father, Theseus redefines his own behavior, regulating it according to a transpersonal ethical code, capable of constituting and governing Attica.

The demographic growth of Athens is encouraged, and the immigration is celebrated as a positive social factor.

“O Theseus, political/cultural change has expanded the borders of Athens, incorporating those of other lands. So strengthen your courage, and you will not be incorporated”.

“Athens will be fertilized by other populations, containing them without being contained by them”.

Discussion

There is no single referent for the word *myth*, which indicates various stories produced and narrated in ancient times, which, although not true, were enticing, inducing entire societies to believe in them (Dowden, 2005; Dowden & Livingstone, 2011): the language used was evidently able to indicate contents different from those explicitly narrated, coming both from the projection of unconscious contents and from the relationship with real external contexts. In fact, OL cannot establish moral rules, which can arise spontaneously from within family and friendly ties, but not in wider group contexts; furthermore, it cannot develop a political theory valid for everything and for everyone. Therefore the social cohesion that characterized ancient civilizations, although written codes and control apparatuses were already present, must be explained differently (Scarnera, 2016): through the unconscious action of the SP and GP, the language and symbols of myths can arouse both psychosocial identification between people who would otherwise be destined to solitude, limiting the development and enjoyment of the human possibilities typical of sociality, and intrapsychic identification with the characters with assimilation of the contents indicated by the narration, and prove to be more effective, compared to ordinary language and the OL that derives from it, in creating social cohesion.

From a psychosocial perspective, the mythical unification of Attica began with the conception of Theseus, which represents both a transgression of the birth regulation code and a validation of those that occurred out-

side it, supporting Synoecism with the demographic growth it required. In fact, in Ancient Greece women were considered to lack the ability to give or deny consent (Sorkin Rabinowitz, 2011), and they got married once they had started menarche: since marriage was considered an obligation that guaranteed the prosperity of cities through the procreation of legitimate children, who inherited their father's assets, fathers could make promises of marriage without consulting them (Smith, 2005), while for people of low social rank there was no single ceremony that could make marriage and procreation official, although they could access it (Larsson Lovén, 2010).

From an intrapsychic perspective, the avoidant character structure inherited from Aethra and Pittheus is rejected, as an adult, by Theseus, because it is incompatible with the task at hand, and the resulting deconstruction is oriented by the decision to conquer an imaginary father, organizing the personality through its identification with Hercules, an effeminate hero. The integration of the feminine components in male characters is also exalted in the strategies of defeating the Minotaur and in the mimesis of childbirth by males. References to relational symmetry are also redundant at pre- and post-Oedipal levels: they appear in the defeat of the sadistic characters, where emotional symmetry is absent; in Circe's lie, where it is used malignantly; in the relationship between Minos and Poseidon, where their expectation is betrayed; and in Pasiphae's zoerasty, where it represents the mirror inversion of Minos' desire for the bull. Such redundancies provide a well-defined indication of the underlying meaning (Longo, 2003), because, unlike the mere and identical repetition of linguistic strings, the re-presentation of similar contents in different contexts and syntactic and semantic forms helps to disambiguate their understanding, especially if the contents are new and unusual (Barrière, 1994). The relationship between the inadequacy of identification with real objects for adaptation, such as that between Theseus and Aethra and Pittheus, and the role of imaginary objects for its overcoming, such as that between Theseus and the imaginary father, has been exhaustively explored by Lacan (1957), while the lack of symmetrical concordance of desires in perverse relationships has been described by Nagel (1969) and Hyldgaard (2004), and traced back by Rothenberg and Foster (2003) to a pre-symbolic stage of development, in which the inadequacy of the paternal function allows a vague perception of the limit and of castration, which however does not allow separation from the mother, giving rise to a form of sociality that cannot be articulated due to the paternal inadequacy, as it originates from forms of enjoyment generated by the original fusion with the maternal object, incompatible with the openness to the world of sociality.

In the perverse condition (Stoller, 1986), since there is no separation from the maternal symbiosis and primary identification with female components for both sexes to be subsequently reworked in a differentiated manner, com-

plete immersion in Oedipal dynamics is impossible. In this way a personality structure is formed (Masud Khan, 1969) that includes neurotic and psychotic characteristics, and that adapts to reality through detachment and dissociation from one's own perverse acts, using a considerable amount of alienating and mortifying mental care and work, which, although it makes perversion more similar to cultural artifacts than to neurotic or psychotic conditions, devours internally, like the Minotaur who devours the young Athenians from within the labyrinth in which he was locked up by his father.

In strictly clinical contexts, the Minotaur is often presented as archaic and primitive parts of the self, bearers of instinctual forces that press from the unconscious, or as negative mental activity, which differs from the perceptive and representative one, being energy not saturated in affections, perceptions, and representations, while the labyrinth is a representative of intrauterine psychic life (Jones, 1999-2020) from which one can escape through psychotherapeutic work. The symbol of the labyrinth can, however, also refer to post-Oedipal stages: in fact, it was used by Socrates to indicate the condition of mental disorientation that affects people who experience the skeptical refutation of their own arguments (*Euthydemus*) and that experienced by participants in *rites* when they rely, blindfolded, on a guide among the many branches that characterize the path to follow (*Phaedo*) (Sanasi, n.d., a, b), described by Plutarch as similar to dying before waking up in an enlightened condition, participating in the *Eleusinian Rites* (Clinton, 2007).

According to Potamianou (2016):

“The thread or *mitos* (μίτος in Greek) that unravels in the labyrinth is not simply part of an action that leads Theseus to the exit. The presence of the thread is the result of a thought that has set in motion a mental process capable of determining the use of the thread. And it is no coincidence that the word *mitos* is also used in reference to the activities of thought: *kata miton* (κατά μίτον in Greek) means ‘in the appropriate order and/or in detail’.”

In more general terms, the defeat of the Minotaur represents, for the author, the struggle of the human race to overcome animality, and the mating between Pasiphae and the bull represents a primitive humanity, indistinct from animality. Apollodorus' mythical narration, instead, suggests a different reading, since it places the birth of this monster in the displaced and collusive desiring relationship between parents: it therefore indicates the genesis of the psychic formation symbolized by the Minotaur. Furthermore, historical research has revealed that symbols and characters from myths have been used in different narratives and images, even in modern and contemporary times (Ogden, 2008; Wilk, 2000), indicating a use aimed at declining their sense and meaning in accordance with cultural changes and expectations of those who use them (Bunia, 2012). Therefore,

further symbolic developments and interpretations are possible between the meanings of the labyrinth expressed by the aforementioned philosophers and the one extracted from the myth narrated by Apollodorus: the impossibility of Z to become B may concern developmental difficulties in different age groups and social disorders of various levels and complexity, even current ones. Attention to relational symmetry and the commitment to overcoming the relationships of belonging narrated in the myth could support facing current social challenges, dramatically represented by bloody wars and economic and ecological crises of a planetary order, contrasted by nationalistic attitudes, mostly aimed at the appropriation and exploitation of natural resources, inadequate to overcome them.

Even Ariadne and Dionysus's marriage is indicative of social transformation, as it symbolizes the birth of thought from the labyrinthine disorder that characterizes the Dionysian kingdom, made possible by the guidance of Ariadne. This marriage was in fact symbolically celebrated with a mystical ritual within a festival called *Anthesteria*, where all participants were more or less drunk, erasing distinctions between roles and social statuses (Freeman, n.d.; Harrison, 1922), thus suggesting a possible function of the festival in supporting psychosocial changes. Similarly, the present examination suggests that the language and symbols of myths can be used in psychotherapy, using their capacity to project unconscious contents and structures to support intrapsychic and relational, hence social, change.

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