Vampirism and Vampires

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This essay by Julius Evola was originally published in the journal “Roma” on 6 September 1973 under the title “Il vampirismo ed i vampiri”.

This topic is certainly even more relevant today that it was 40 years ago. Although we don’t agree this is the last word that can be said on the topic of vampirism, we will allow Evola to speak for himself and bring in other issues either in the comments or in another post. We wonder, too, if this explains the expression “ride the tiger“.

The Dragon and the Tiger

Recently the “vampire” theme has acquired some popularity through various publications, beginning with Bram Stoker’s famous novel Dracula. Some have given that interest a psychological and psychoanalytical interpretation. The idea of the vampire in itself, however, cannot entirely be reduced to superstition and extravagant fantasy. To be put aside, if ever, is vampirism as grossly physical, with blood taken from the victim by the vampire, sometimes with the goal of prolonging his own life.

Instead, vampirism could be considered in its psychic character and we could bring attention to the phenomena which often is the issue both in popular belief, and in ethnology. We cannot overlook even whatever there is in the childish fables as the type of the “werewolf” and which in ethnology is designated as lycanthropy.

It is about the idea that a human being can in a certain way split in two and that his double can assume an animal appearance and manifest corresponding behaviors. What can there be in that which is real?

In terms of principle, we can respond affirmatively, referring to the following framework. True human evolution must be conceived as the self-differentiation of the human type by means of the exclusion, in the course of the history of the species, of animal possibilities that he included in himself, that he left outside of himself like the wake of a boat, and that already had been realized and established in given animal species. Now, we can conceive a human type in which this differentiation was not sufficiently determined. That occurs especially among primitive and savage populations which are at the stage of so-called totemism, the totem being both the progenitor of a given tribe, as well as the god or demon of an animal species, through which the members of that tribe consider themselves, e.g., as leopard-men, wolf-men, bear-men, and so on.

Now, theoretically, one cannot exclude that in a being, whose personality is not stable enough, this animal potentiality creates, even today, an irruption and is manifested in a corresponding way. It is not the case that the being is then transformed materially or physically into an animal, as in the fantastic case of Dr. Jekyll. One should think instead of a scission of the personality (phenomena, certainly verified by psychology, as in “multiple personalities”) which is developed in analogous terms to phenomena, also verified positively, as in “ectoplasm”: they are the formations that, in extrasensory seances, drew their origin from the psychic-physical substance of the medium.

An ectoplasm that assumes the transitory form of an animal nature through the regressive irruption of a force of animality: this would therefore be the possible explanation of phenomena like the wolf-man and similar forms, possibly including vampiric forms if the animal manifestation includes such behavior. Therefore, it is not a question of a dead person becoming a vampire nor of a person who transform himself into an imaginary animal. From the material gathered by ethnology, there seem to be actual cases of certain persons who are found in a state of deep sleep or catalepsy, while one of their doubles moves about and is seen by others.

The double, as the ectoplasm of the medium, maintains a certain mysterious connection with the subject, because it means that a wound produced in that image would be reproduced in the dormant or cataleptic body.

Finally, we could mention the phenomena of bilocation, and depending on whether one is disposed to admit it on a higher plane (bilocation of certain Christian saints, Islamic sheiks, Hindu yogis, etc.), they could also come into question as explicative elements for this rather sinister field.

Naturally, in wolf-men and similar creatures, the possible manifestations do not have the erotic setting that certain “dark” literature often likes to attribute to the vampire. Through this setting, we have to move into a rather different domain, that of an essentially psychic vampirism that can be real that is confirmed in more than a few traditions, which sometimes even indicate the technique to actualize it.

Moreover, ethnology has recorded the belief that certain shamans have the power to vampirize living beings to the point of reducing them to a type of bare nothings [I presume “zombies”]: they seem to have been left traces of that in the black practices of the Voodoo of Haiti. Regarding properly erotic vampirism it is instead the case when the subtle vital force of a woman is fed with the goal of strengthening one’s own vitality. That seemed to be the case in the Old Testament, with King Solomon who lay down with naked young girls, “without knowing them”: all the more that an analogous procedure is likewise attested to both in central Asia and ancient China.

Regarding the former, Alexandra David-Neel who stayed there for quite a while, recounts that one of the methods “to increase one’s own life” and maintain one’s own youth would consist in using young women to come to orgasm without however participating in the pleasure. More or less the same procedure is again found in ancient operative Chinese Taoism, in the play of the Dragon with the Tiger (the Dragon representing man, the Tiger the young woman), meant to guarantee “eternal life” to the one “who has knowledge”. Here, sometimes, it would seem to be about a pure masculine vampirism (having as its object not blood but a vital subtle substance) not only because, rather unfairly, the young women should be kept in the dark about the hidden goal of the union for fear that, by knowing it, they could take the lead, inverting the roles and exploiting the man who would like to vampirize them, but also because it is recommended to use different ones sequentially, a text saying that the best result is obtained when one is matched with as many as ten girls in one night.

That, however, does not represent a barely credible masculine tour de force (especially if the designation of the woman as “tiger” was not just a manner of speaking), because, at the same time, it is prescribed not to ejaculate (“rigid organ without ejaculation”), which relates to what the method required to strengthen his own life, again evidently requiring the renunciation, on the man’s part, of the pleasure that man experiences when he pours himself without reservation into the woman’s flesh.

This is, more or less, all that can be said about vampirism, while also bringing back ideas from a rather distant domain of ordinary existence, but not for that reason, by way of principle, deprived of every reality.