THE IMAGINAL IN CHIVALRY AND THE CIVILIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY
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Introduction

Much may be said and, indeed, much has been said about chivalry. Vast and heterogeneous has been the scientific research put into the subject. At first sight it, therefore, seems somewhat pleonastic to insist on dwelling on the world of chivalry, to ponder on its myths, rites and style. In the present day and age nothing seems further removed from post-industrial society than chivalry, its symbols and the cultural atmosphere which inspired its feats. In truth, chivalry and the civilization it was the image and foundation of have long since disappeared; they are but a distant memory, a terminus a quo irretrievably lost to the culture and style of life as we know it today.

Nonetheless, a curious symbolic survival of the style and world of chivalry does persist in - of all places - the media (television, radio, theatre etc.). Reviving chivalry so that it may perform once again for the use of consumer audiences, they do not hesitate to recall the chivalrous ideal, offering the pattern of that undying struggle which pitches the forces of light and good against those of darkness and evil - unadulterated in structure, heroic values and spiritual dimension. One may be tempted to query the sense and relevance of again and again evoking an ideal whose undying popularity continues to fascinate the western world, in the face of the technological-rational hypertrophy present-day society is immersed in. With a view to comprehending and analyzing this phenomenon and within the scope of this brief and by no means exhaustive essay, it is my intention to trace an imaginal\(^1\) topography aimed at outlining the significance of chivalry for our world, along with a gnoseological and ethical profile\(^2\) to be interpreted as a form of knowledge and relationship with the world.

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1. The term *imaginal* refers to that aspect of the real which becomes evident to the understanding of the subject by means of the imagination and which is expressed in symbols, forms and figures bordering between the simply sensitive and the purely intelligible; cf. H. Corbin, *Mundus imaginalis, or the imaginary and the imaginal*, It. tr. *Mundus imaginalis o l’immaginario e l’immaginale*, in Aut Aut, 258, 1993, p. 120.

2. The term ethic is meant in its widest sense, indicating the behaviour man adopts for himself and for the next man insofar as other from himself.
To penetrate the symbolic world of chivalry and its values is a somewhat arduous task, both with regard to the range of the theme in itself and to the heterogeneity of the various approach methods (historical, economic, religious, anthropological etc.), the latter contributing, each within its own parameters, to offer a complex picture of the subject in question. As already stated, the intention is to pursue an imaginal path whose raison d’etre resides in the language of symbols. In order to do so, and to introduce the subject through a symbolic-analogical paradigm, it may be opportune first to turn to an essentially popular figure in the game of Tarot cards: the Fool. This card, which ranks among the major arcana, is considered as the alpha and the omega of the oracle. It may be the mystery of the beginning or of the end; no numeric value is attributed to the card, or, if it is...then it is zero. Thus, precisely because the card is identified by a cypher which does not stand for a quantity in the true sense but for the opposite (nothing), it combines with the absolute dimension of existence where total harmony of opposites is obtained. In the Fool the finite and infinite converge, as do good and evil, sense and madness. This is why its symbology lies beyond the commonplace, beyond the space of the simply known, beyond common mores and accepted social values. In this sense the figure symbolizes the Absolute endowed with the faculty of assuming every determined form, such as the ability to transfer at will to all possible worlds. The Fool is usually depicted with a knapsack on his back and a stick in his hand. This, clearly, expresses the ideal of an eternal search blending with a particular vision of wisdom. In the Fool wisdom merges with madness, since the two are separated merely by a difference in points of view. Indeed, he who seeks effectively overturns established standards in the way of feeling and seeing. Like the Fool he approaches the abyss of his inner self, this acting as a prelude to an experience defying the confines of time and space in the everyday. In his own eyes the Fool is genuinely wise...only to appear completely mad in the eyes of those who live entrapped in the unidimensional cosmos of accepted common sense.

As may seem at first sight, the choice of an image from the Major Arcana of Tarot cards is not arbitrary, but rather in keeping with an intrinsic logic which, as I shall endeavor to demonstrate, somehow links the oracle (Tarot cards) to a chivalry-based vision of the world.

See illustration at the end.
As Wirth claims: *The Fool, indeed, stands for everything beyond the intelligible, hence the infinite beyond the finite, the absolute enwrapping the relative.*

The Fool, as a symbol of the Absolute, plays a distinctively positive role, given that he not only marks the enclosing limits in the plan of everyday existence, but he also shows the wise man the path leading to that wisdom, which in its depth declares the nullity and the void the personal Ego and the cosmos derive from. “The wise man does not allow himself to be deceived by words; rather than outwardly objectifying the verbal negation of Being, he seeks out the Fool in himself, becoming aware of the void in the restricted human personality — occupying such a great space in our worthless preoccupations. We, hence, learn that we are nothing, and the Tarot cards have probably revealed their last secret to us”.

With the depicting of the infinite as a bottomless pit, a mere nothing enwrapping every single item, placed in the human inner self behind the mask of the personal Ego, this card traces an *imaginal* bridge between the cosmic order and the self-aware subject, thus introducing the theme of *creatio in nihilo*. This term expresses the idea that the Subject and the Object of creation blend into the mere nothingness, which everything originates from in the undifferentiated void, which the dyad Ego-world is based on and which lies in hermetic-set gnostic systems. In other words, in the shape of the Fool as the zero mystery, Tarot cards present the cosmogonic idea of harmony between Being and Nothing, God and his creation, the Act of being, Being and the existent (what exists in that it is finite), in the dimension of the infinite indeterminate Void. Hence, from a theological point of view it is as if God issued himself from non-existence to existence through the creation of something emanating from God himself, only to reject that same something since existent in the dimension of the finite and fullness as opposed to empty, infinite nothingness. Such a claim clearly contradicts *creatio ex nihilo*, where God the person, a Being, creates from nothing and precedes that same nothing without sharing in it. A striking analogy is drawn between sacral gnostic cosmogony and the

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6 Ibidem, p. 268.
origin of the universe described by particle physics, where the void releases itself first into the light and then into the duo matter/anti-matter. If the discussion so far embraces the positive, luminous and creative side of the mystery's symbology, then the disconcerting, obscure side cannot be discarded either. The Fool is the vagabond, the one who sets out - eyes fixed on something afar, according to Wirth's interpretation, he may also lend himself to blind instincts, appetites and passions, thus embodying the negative tryad of irresponsibility, alienation and madness, becoming the archetype of inadequacy in self conduct, the inability to resist impulsive influences. From this point of view the card forewarns whoever seeks knowledge, hinting that wisdom is akin to a tight-rope walker whose cord is suspended across an abyss, the risk being a headlong drop into the infinite. The Fool, hence, also stands for man's inability to contemplate his own inner nothingness and the void the cosmos comes from, the difficulty in comprehending the numinous ineffable face of God - reserved, without fear of loss of reason, for but a chosen few. The claim is Dante's – the poet himself given the grace to behold the face of God in the Divine Comedy: “As one, who versed in geometric lore, would fain measure the circle; and, though pondering long and deeply, that beginning, which he needs, finds not: e'en such was I, intent to scan the novel wonder, and trace out the form, how to the circle fitted, and therein how placed: but the flight was not for my wing; had not a flash darted athwart my mind, and, in the spleen, unfolded what it sought.”

An examination of what has been briefly stated on the symbology of the Fool reveals how much in common exists with the search for and conquest of the Holy Grail. 

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9 Cf. M. Cassé, *Du vide et de la création*, Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, 1993. Even if on his own admission M. Cassé constantly refers to measurable physical dimensions, including the void as dealt with in the treatise, in my opinion this does not preclude the possibility of tracing, through the language of symbols, an analogy between this physical void and the metaphysical void in gnostic tradition. One has only to consider that in the case of the void as an absolute nothing reference is made to the qualitative aspect of the object in question, which transcends the simple material phenomenon placing itself into the metaphysical dimension of the ineffable.


12 Ibidem.

13 Ibidem


culmination and embodiment of the most profound meaning of the *imaginal* world of chivalry. In effect, the Holy Grail symbolically represents that form of wisdom which, passing over the limits of life and death, gains the secret of eternity and imparts wisdom because it illuminates the spirit and makes invincible\(^\text{16}\). It is, hence, not a material object to be possessed like any consumer good; rather, it is an *imaginal* object reflecting the sense of the search itself. As Markale claims: “It seems that the Holy Grail as an object in itself is nothing. Whoever strives to find it will never give up his attempts. ...This means that the Grail is of little importance and that the essential is in the search itself. What matters, subsequently, is to ponder what might be the sense in this search\(^\text{17}\)”. At this stage it is quite clear that, in the conceptual framework traced so far, the Fool stands for the seeker and the Grail his object, in the *imaginal* sense. Indeed what gives life and death, what is eternal, what everything springs from, the secret of immortality and absolute power are all no other than the infinite Void nothing, which is reflected in the Grail and the wisdom symbolized by the Fool. As a matter of fact, the symbology of this mystery fits perfectly with the style and the actions of one of the heroes in *La Quête*: Perceval. Not unlike the Fool, he “is a witless one who will gradually *get wiser* with every adventure that befalls him. But in himself he possesses no sense of the search he is conducting. His wandering is anarchic. He never knows where he is going\(^\text{18}\). At one point, nevertheless, this senseless wandering, father of all ineptitude, sign of irresponsibility, is illuminated by the light of absolute wisdom which, like the infinite void, shows the Fool-Perceval not only that *enantiodromically*\(^\text{19}\) every thing tends to its opposite, but that *complexio oppositorum* resides between the absolute and the relative, the eternal and the transeunt, the finite and the infinite in the pure *imaginal* nothing of the Grail. Now it is clear that if, in one way it is a philosophically fascinating idea to

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\(^{16}\) The principal virtues of the Grail may be summed up as follows: Virtue of light, i.e. illuminating virtue. ... Besides being light and illuminating supernatural force it gives nourishment, it gives *life*. ... The gift of *life* in the Grail however manifests itself also as the virtue in healing mortal wounds, renewing and prolonging life supernaturally. ... The Grail induces a force of domination.” (J. Chevalier-A. Gheerbrant, *Cup*, in *Dictionary of symbols*, op. cit., p. 314).


\(^{19}\) The general meaning of the term *enantiodromic*, from the Greek ἐναντίος - *enantios* (opposite) and ὁδὸς - *drômos* (running), is everything that exists in becoming and which tends towards its opposite, “what opposes converges, and beautiful harmony from the discordant” (Heraclitus, *Cosmic fragments*, edited by A. Tonelli, *Dell’origine*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1993, p. 54. Fr. 11.).
affirm the reality of *creatio in nihilo*, to hold that everything is founded on the empty nothing the world and man draw origin from, in another way to live such a truth in imaginal terms means to come through a complete state of ecstatic madness so as to attain the wisdom of such a vision. Indeed, it is one thing to think something as a cold idea distant from the conscious subject and to believe it while it remains clearly entrenched in the safe domain of rationality - it is another to live and share in the same idea in the synthesis of knowledge and action. The second case, which is the one of *La Quête du Graal* and which the Fool advocates through his symbology, is a veritable fragmentation of the conscious Ego dominated by appearances, losing itself in the infinite void to recompose later in the apparent reality of the everyday, brimming over with new and profound wisdom. To find the Holy Grail, to pursue the way of the zero Arcanum means to have the courage to dive into the unconscious, to come out of it, to discover that its disjointed images are merely the drawing of the infinite Void into existence and, finally, to be born again in an *elsewhere* from which daily life and the Ego are observed under a new light.

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Up to this point I have tried to show briefly how the ideals of chivalry are inscribed in the figure of the Fool and in the search for the Holy Grail. It is, hence, hardly ill-founded to claim that such symbolic elements trace the sapiential boundary within which the structure of the *imaginal* world of chivalry lies. Consequently, its origin and completion are decided by initiation to the secret of the Void, generator of the cosmos and the psyche. This claim is justified by the fact that the main themes of the symbolic epic revolve around the search for the Holy Grail and that the knight, the hero of such a feat, may be compared to the ideal-type of the Fool in Tarot cards (the one who loses himself and, then, finds wisdom)\(^\text{20}\). As indeed testify the romances of the Cycle of the Round

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\(^{20}\) Adhering to Markale’s conviction, I consider only Perceval and not Galahad as the typical hero of the search for the Holy Grail. I feel the second is a creation contrived by monks determined to claim ideals not too consistent with the true sense of the search. “Inventing Galahad they created the model of a priest…even if too good to be true. Thus doing they considerably reduced the importance of the search; rather than a slow initiation, a long exhausting journey of the soul through dangers, straying and the traps of life, the search was to change into the simple stroll of a superman… While in the ancient search the warrior aspect was inseparable from the sexual aspect, this now disappears. In a word, by releasing the *damseIs*, Galahad closes the brothels and sets up convents in their place. …The great innovation is that the mechanism unleashed by Galahad means the recovery of sexual and warrior-like energies to serve
Table, the knight destined to complete the feat (the conquest of the Holy Grail), not unlike the Fool, is obliged to undertake numerous tasks, wander around the world and continually regain his lost reason. Apropos, as Wolfram von Eschenbach\textsuperscript{21} narrates, Perceval, forgetful of himself out of love\textsuperscript{22}, actually reaches the point of challenging some of the Knights of the Round Table without realizing who they are. At this stage it is quite clear that thought and action are never separate in the symbolic reading of chivalry, but are simply depicted as two moments of the \textit{imaginal} dimension the theme of the Holy Grail develops within. The path leading the chosen one, the knight worthy of contemplating the mystery of the Sacred Chalice, to the conquest of eternal wisdom is at the same time inner and outer. This is where external events correspond perfectly to the level of inner purity attained by the knight and vice versa; he is reflected and conditioned by the external actions undertaken. This, in turn, reflects the \textit{enantiodromic} principle regulating every event of the outer macrocosm and inner microcosm, by which every thing tending towards its opposite ends up by seeming what it most genuinely is; the seeker is shown the path leading to the essence of himself and, ultimately, of the cosmos. As Arthur claims in Michel Rio’s masterly interpretation: “L'ideé pour l’être et l’idée pour elle-même… La Table et l’empire ne sont pas une idéé abstraite. Elles sont l’homme de Logres, l’homme poussé à changer selon le rêve de Merlin, mais l’homme et rien d’autre\textsuperscript{23}.”

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Having thus completed the albeit brief examination of symbols relevant to chivalry in itself, I shall forthwith endeavor to demonstrate the relevance the subject may have for the technology-based civilization of today. Up to this point this study seems apparently extraneous to the specific dynamics regulating the existence of contemporary society. But, this continual yearning of the mythology of chivalry for the search of the Holy Grail,

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\textsuperscript{22} “And the hero’s eyes were measuring how the drops had fallen, two on the cheeks and one on the chin. It was true unwavering love that he felt for her. His thoughts then began to stray, to the point of complete bewilderment: he was smitten by the strength of love.” (\textit{Ibidem})
in its turn associated to the arcanum of the Fool, since therein is drawn the horizon of the most genuine search for the meaning of individual existence and of the world, can never be without reflection on freedom and its significance. This issue, typically essential to the themes of chivalry, stands as a crucially important question for contemporary society. One of the most interesting aspects in mythical-symbolic sagas concerning chivalry is the theme of freedom from control, supervision and social conditioning. As a rule, every knight challenges accepted common sense, shared morality, the rules of normal social living; at times he behaves as a madman prey to a delirium of omnipotence. The tales are, therefore, disturbingly and immediately topical; they seem to speak to the present world, reminding it of the enormous danger inherent in technological control. As Jünger profetically wrote in 1980: “The planetary order is by this stage complete, both in model and in achievement. It awaits recognition, its declaration. Its taking place might be imagined like a spontaneous act, of which there are numerous examples in history, or it might be reached driven by the force of a series of events. … The ulterior extension of the great spaces in the world order, the extending of world powers towards the world State, or better still, the world empire, is linked to the fear that perfection gains a definitive form at the price of free will.” Perfection as mentioned clearly reflects an urge to regulate every single thing, be it the sphere of man’s relations with his peers, be it the laws studying natural phenomena (they too are basically submitted to an absolute discipline of rationalization and control), be it the field of exploitation of natural resources. In our age the last mentioned defines the dialectics of man-nature, where the second term merely stands for a huge reservoir from which to draw energy destined for production of newer and newer consumer goods. It is, however, thought, with its nightly dreams and imagination, that the civilization of technology really thirsts to control and regulate. Real control, which modern society dedicates its most strenuous efforts to, has less to do with domination of physical bodies, which has already been largely achieved, than with colonization of every form of


24 It should be remembered that human life never excludes the question: *Cur aliquid potius quam nihil* (why does something rather than nothing exist)?


thought, so as to subordinate each single thing to the demands of the smooth functioning of society. At this point in time not one single individual belonging to the western world can consider vanishing, as they were wont to say, changing his life, creating a new identity, or simply doing something without leaving a trace. For example, everyone knows that when one uses an ATM to withdraw money or when one pays with a credit card one is effectively leaving an electronic trace, information being released which may easily allow to reconstruct one’s movements. This banal example clearly shows how the future holds in store a progressive reduction of freedom in favor of control, portraying a society where every body-self - become a type of cybernetic terminal - always leaves a trace of his actions, with the latter having been registered in some electronic databank. In this obsession for control thought is crucially missing - fleeing from technological colonization, partly rendering vain the attempts made to complete domination over the body-self. The imaginal world of the search for the Holy Grail and the deeds of knights, born from the collective unconscious in the lyrics belonging to medieval troubadours, concerns precisely the ideal of total absence of control, where the imagining thought potentially enables each and every individual to set out on an inner journey. A journey which is both awareness of the necessity of one’s often immutable destiny and the desire for infinite freedom to creative thought. In this sense, such a mode of thinking and of relating to the world constitutes a true challenge for the modern logic of control. Somehow, like a ghost from the past tormenting the dreams of the present, the imaginal world of chivalry horrifies the intrusiveness of modern civilization. This is so because it incessantly addresses the consciousness of bodies-machines, exposing it to an alternative reality - at times paradoxical but radically different from the normal routine of life.

It is, however, necessary to better specify the dialectics proper to the juxtaposition of the world of chivalry-based imagery and the present state of affairs: in my opinion, ultimately to be evaluated in the fundamental dimension of human living - Time. The

27 After the fashion of Jung by the term collective unconscious I mean an unconscious psychic substratum belonging to man as such and, therefore, irrespective of single individual experiences and whose constituent elements are called archetypes. “Archetype is a paraphrase of the Platonic eidos. As far as we are concerned, such a qualification is pertinent and useful since it means that, in reference to the contents of the unconscious collective, we are dealing with archaic, or better still, primigenial types, i.e. common images that have existed since remote times.” (C. G. Jung, Archetypes of the collective unconscious, It. tr. by E. Schanzer and A. Vitolo, Gli archetipi dell’inconscio collettivo, Boringhieri, Torino, 1992, p. 17).
search for the Holy Grail and the zero arcanum of Tarot cards (the Fool) depict a discontinuous consciential structure of time, made up of flights, rhythmic alternating between the daily temporal dimension and the imaginative dimension. Apropos, two different temporal levels may be distinguished: the first of Time that flows quite uniformly, marked by the collective rhythms of work and social life, the second which relativizes the temporal flux operating a type of punctiform reduction and qualifying itself as Instant\textsuperscript{28}. Fundamentally, the \textit{imaginal} experience, which belongs to this discontinuous and instantaneous modality, sacralizes, thus, a portion of the everyday as consciential verticalization, where every Instant becomes the fragment of a little eternity and if nothing happens, then Time itself comes to a halt. Of a completely different order, conversely, are the temporal experiences of the technological world. Here the ordinary perception of Time is founded on duration (the uniform calculating of Time), i.e. on a measurable quantity giving an account of the essential relationship man-machine. Duration is vital to the potential of the \textit{performance} and of the efficiency of a given technological act - the more duration can be reduced, the greater value the act will have. For example in information technology, the capacity of the machine to reduce the duration of operations and its level of technological evolution are often directly proportional advantages. Consequently it is easy to deduce that the logic of control is based on a philosophy of duration, while the syntax of \textit{imaginal} freedom, the reign of the Holy Grail, is based on an absolute relativization of duration. The latter finds its raison d’être in the simple here and now (the present from which past and future generate), which tends to the absolute infinity of the Instant, through which freedom is released from every possible control. Nevertheless, in the relationship man-machine the subtle strategy of the \textit{technological Leviathan}\textsuperscript{29} (the contemporary media society) tends to reduce the waiting time, tends to progressively diminish, to the benefit of the consciousness, the response time of the machine which offers the illusion of instantaneousness since it seems to be endowed with immediacy. It is also necessary

\textsuperscript{28} By Instant I mean the external limit on time itself representing the perfect converging of eternity and becoming. In this sense it must be distinguished from the simple now which is the internal limit on time, the durationless present giving origin to the past and the future. Clearly the contemplation of the instant presupposes the now as a fleeting moment consenting us to reach the contemplation of the deception in the passing of Time; cf. P. Bellini, \textit{Autorità e potere (Authority and power)}, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2001, p. 36-47.

to consider that communication and information, on which common views are formed, use the technological tool as a natural vehicle. The illusion of instantaneousness has the effect of drawing the individual consciousness towards an equally illusory world of images acquired passively, assimilated, so to say, without any intentional effort. The passive *imaginale* of a technologically-dependent society is, thus, defined as a place of spontaneous assent, where the sense of desire is nullified, as is the interest in an inner exploration apt to consciously enrich the experimenting subject. In a word, the effect is regressive, tending to entrap every individual in an unconscious dimension characterized by a womb-like passiveness, where we sleep and dream in unawareness.

In other words the ill-fated action of the archetype of the Great Mother. As Neumann writes:

“Every time the pernicious character of the Great Mother is predominant or equal to the creative positive side, every time its destructive aspect appears, in the guise of phallic male element next to the womb which conceives and generates, Uroboros is still active in the background. In all these cases the adolescent stage of the Ego has not yet been surpassed, nor has the Ego yet become free of the unconscious”. …“The domain of maternal Uroboros, comprising also the fearful aspect of the Great Mother, is marked by the fact that male traits, later to be attributed to the father, are still evident as parts of the uroboric nature”

In my view everything is based on the temporal dimension of the relationship man-machine, where the duration conferring upon itself the illusion of the instant operates non-stop. Nor could it be any different, since symbol-laden *imaginale* Instants are dense with meanings, possessing an active dimension incompatible with the passiveness characterizing the duration of the mutual relationship between the consciousness and the machine. The Instant is, therefore, reached precisely because it is experienced through meditation, by way of imagining with eyes shut, where the inner dynamism overwhelms an external world crystallizing in total motionlessness. Different is the case of the external dimension, involving a swirling succession of stimuli induced by the machine on the psyche, triumphing over the psychoenergetic movement necessary for meditation, obliging the inner symbolic landscape to crystallize in artificial motionlessness. In other words the search for the Holy Grail gives way to external
swirling reality, constructed on the satisfaction of needs (material and spiritual) whose true protagonist is the dyad man-machine; the consequence is the need for ever increasing control aimed at optimizing and integrating the two still separate elements in the same operating thought processes.

The two dimensions (the *imaginale* world of chivalry in the Holy Grail and technology-based civilization) herein compared hence reveal, in the game of juxtapositions and analogies I have tried to illustrate, two substantially opposite ways of rapporting with the real, where each is characterized by the dialectics Instant-duration. It could be supposed on closer observation that this antagonism, which has a substantially descriptive character, induces to reflection on the conditions of opportunity for tendency inversion. The question posed is, hence, whether a conscious antagonist subject may take form who, without having to give up the enormous advantages of the world of technology, may establish forms of collective aggregation capable of eluding control, or at least, of overcoming its intrinsically rigid logic. The problem, in my opinion, is of an exclusively anthropological nature; it is a question of seeing whether a human type of this kind may materialize in the immediate future. Leaving all possible conjecture to one side, it is clear that such an antagonist subject cannot dismiss technology as an essential element for survival, i.e. he cannot simply seek refuge in the *imaginale* world of the Holy Grail or admire existence forms immune to the strengthening of the integration man-machine. I personally believe that such a solution would be completely impracticable and counterproductive - the destruction of human civilization. On the contrary, in order to safeguard the inner freedom characterizing man, qualifying him as such, a sort of regeneration, of overall rethinking of the relationship man-machine, is required. The true antagonist subject is an agent of transformation, metabolization, capable of considering the *imaginale* dimension of freedom in relation to the process of integration between the organic and the purely inorganic technological. In this sense, such a subject, devoid of both class and group character, must be conceived simply as the union of all those individuals who are perfectly aware of what is happening and who

30 E. Neumann, *The origins and history of consciousness*, It. tr. by L. Agresti, *Storia delle origini della*
consciously maintain the need to safeguard, with sagacity and realism, their most intimate human essence. Recalling his experience on board a supersonic fighter (image of the dialectics man-machine), Mishima relates: “I was set inside, just like a spermatozoon. I was to experience the sensations of a spermatozoon, at the moment of ejaculation. I believe that there is no doubt that the furthest, peripheral sensations of the age we live in can be traced to the G point which inevitably accompanies space travel. There is no doubt that the most remote daily sensations of the age we live in fuse into G. We live in a period in which what in the final analysis is called psyche is in its final nucleus G. Every love, every hatred which cannot grasp G is, in some beyond, ineffective. G is a coercive divine force practiced physically, it is an inebriation diametrically opposed to inebriation, a limit of the intellect diametrically opposed to the limits of the intellect.”31

This parallelling of organic and the purely technological (the plane which becomes the place where the sensation of the spermatozoon during ejaculation is experienced), where Mishima re-echoes ideas dear to Futurists, must not induce to consider the question as if it were a re-edition of Marinetti’s Steel alcove32. The antagonist subject, some of whose characteristics I should like to better specify, boasts an attitude fundamentally recalling the recovery of the contemplative aspect of existence. As in the case of Marinetti’s Futurism, it is not a question of a human type leaning exclusively towards the performances of a demiurgic power apt to dominate the cosmos. On the contrary, in order to produce a true regenerating action, revolutionary by present-day standards, such a subject would have to relinquish the anthropological type of homo faber. His opposition to control should be of a different nature, in that he should not utilize a machine as the extension of his own denied virility; conversely, he should seek his own power in meditation and inner self-awareness. In short, the human type I am outlining uses technology, contributes to scientific progress, but seeks himself out in the authenticity of a more articulated relationship with things. The dyad man-machine, in this case, would be replaced by more complex dialectics synchronically placing man into relationship with nature (what has not been created by him), his inner self and, also, machines. In this sense the true antagonist subject would be the centre of a dialectical

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32 Cf. F. T. Marinetti, L'alcova d'acciaio: romanzo vissuto (The steel alcove), Mondadori, Milano, 1927.
movement shown in continuous harmony with a contemplative attitude, with the active performance-oriented aptitude typical of technological man. I am referring to an equilibriant, harmonizing, anthropological type who could ideally exist, but of whom not even the minimum trace can be found in the present world.

At the beginning of this brief paper I in fact explicitly justified the importance of philosophical research into chivalry, claiming that the ideal of chivalry reappears in our society by way of the media. I believe that from what has been written it is easy to understand how the nature of this revival in chivalry is, however, completely different from the markedly spiritualized atmosphere surrounding the feats of the heroes of the Holy Grail as we know them in the traditional sense. Today the civilization of mass communication is certainly pervaded by heroes of every type - including also those borrowed from epic sagas. But their meaning is merely virtual, appreciated at a level totally unaware unto itself. The dreams of men undoubtedly continue to teem with heroic images; however, the way in which they are experienced pertains undoubtedly to the chaotic and protean. Indeed, in the attempt to defend itself from the centrifugal impulses determined by widespread dissatisfaction resulting from at times cruel mechanisms, modern society, by way of consumer narcosis and a plethora of goods, tries to exploit to its own advantage even the symbols of chivalry. Rather than surprise, this ought to lead us to reflect that the indissoluble contradiction between the sad reality of things and virtual fiction is generated unconsciously – imposing on the collective attention meanings often extraneous to and irremediably distant from the style of life today. Therefore in order to be an antagonist subject the individual should first of all question within himself the virtual totalitarianism of which contemporary civilization is a victim and of which the use of epic sagas acts as a mere detail. Only thus will it be possible to lay the foundations for escape from the obsession of technological control.

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Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
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