ABRAHAM’S SCENE

Introduction

In the Bible and in the sacred texts linked to it—true precepts of Western culture—there is an unquestionable theatricality, not only for what will come out of their stories thanks to the revival made by great paintings, visual material for the rebirth of the stage and of the Medieval and Renaissance drama, but also for other reasons. If every theatrical act consists of giving space to the words, if the theatre is among all the arts the closest to religion, considered as a favourable place where the dead can speak, then every mythical character that occurs the Bible achieves a route into drama and can rise again as an archetype in new incarnations. Here I concentrate on Abraham, the prophet who establishes the anthropological unity of the Israelite people.

Abraham’s Biography

We know almost nothing of Abraham’s childhood. We know him as an adult; only his genealogy is told: he is a descendent of Shem, one of Noah’s sons (Genesis 11). His father’s name was Terah. He had no childhood because, in reality, he remained a child; or, rather, he behaves like God’s child. In fact, in his entire story, the relationship between Abraham and God is based on a continuous exercise of subjection, a show of totally dogmatic passivity. Their bond is one between a master-father and a slave-son, and the climax of this Hegelian dialectic is exalted by the test of his capacity for obedience. “You shall not have other gods besides me” is the theme of all the episodes. Only one God, only one Son, in almost symmetric corollaries. When He reveals Himself to His Son and his descendants, God introduces Himself as Abraham’s God, and in exchange He asks them to recognise Him as such (see Genesis 28). Typical of a patriarchal and monotheistic culture, especially one in competition with the contemporary polytheisms and pagan idols, a young and invisible God rejects the cult of images, in that He reserves the space of cult and devotion for Himself. In a word, He asserts the concept of monotheism, and His uniqueness, which is a mirror to that of the Chosen People.