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MYTH IN DIGITAL EPOCH: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH RESULTS

Andrey Stavitskiy (a)*
*Corresponding author

(a) Lomonosov Moscow State University, Branch in Sevastopol, Sevastopol, Russian Federation,, Stavis@rambler.ru

Abstract

The article is devoted to the preliminary results of many years of research on myth, considering the ideas, lessons and achievements of the most prominent scientists who have studied the manifestations of myth in culture and society using various scientific disciplines at different times. They outlined the transition from private research of myth to the study of mythological ontology, based on the basic principle that the whole must be studied in its entirety. And they managed to lay down basic approaches to the study of myth, proceeding from the fact that myth is a universal of culture and its semantic matrix. This approach to the study of myth allows focusing not on the fact that different schools of myth researchers share, but on the fact that they are united. And this allows us to hope for a qualitatively different level of research. The article examined three main approaches to the study of myth that have developed in science and society: classical, philistine, and phenomenological ones. The main causes of mythmaking are revealed and systematized. The main differences between the traditional myth and the modern one are examined, and the fact that it unites them is revealed. The huge role of myth for man and society is analyzed. The importance and significance of further studies of the myth in the digital age are noted.

1. Introduction

The digital era provides the maximum level of generalization of knowledge accumulated by society, which allows returning to mythological ontology again after a long period of studying the particularities of myth and its individual manifestations. Perhaps that is why the myth as a whole in all its diversity is perceived so vaguely and contradictorily that the scatter in its definition from the "unfolded magic name" (Losev, 1999, p. 405-421) up to so-called "flickering structure" has not surprised anyone for a long time. Although, on the other hand, this fact only speaks of inconsistency in approaches and its inexhaustible diversity (Cook, 2018), which allowed the famous myth researcher J. Campbell to note that "mythology is the penultimate truth, penultimate, because the latter cannot be expressed in words. Mythology exists beyond words, beyond representations of anything" (Campbell, 2018, p. 222). As a result, science recognized that the myth either returned, despite the centuries-old struggle of the "reasonable man" with it, or did not go anywhere, and we have only now grown to understand this. But why? Is this myth changed or our ideas about it? What surprises does the myth prepare for us in the light of new research? In any case, we need to proceed from a broader interpretation of the myth, which would include all its manifestations known to us, taking into account the capabilities of digital civilization in order to answer these questions (Fernandes, 2020).

2. Problem Statement

Modern researchers of myths need to find out, understand and justify that from the experience of research on myths over the past decades, it deserves attention now and should be the basis of mythological ontology, which will become the matrix for understanding myth in the light of individual scientific schools and industries.

3. Research Questions

Consideration of the claimed topic involves answers to simple questions.

3.1. Why, despite the huge amount of research, does the myth continue to remain unknown to scientists?

3.2. What is so important and special in the myth?

3.3. How should one approach the consideration of a myth in the light of the knowledge accumulated about it? What makes a myth modern?

3.4. How is a modern myth different from a traditional one?

4. Purpose of the Study

Consider the myth ontologically in its broad interpretation and justify the advantages of a universalistic (phenomenological) approach for understanding and using the myth in the digital age.

5. Research Methods

The basis of this study is the general scientific methods of cognition, allowing us considering myth as a phenomenon in its most broad form. However, a new level of myth research requires such principles and approaches in methodology that will allow summarizing the achievements of researchers working in closed academic disciplines. This allows overcoming their narrow specialization in favor of an interdisciplinary formalized paradigm of post-non-classical rationality, based on the synergetic approach of structural self-organization of the system, as well as systemic and socio-phenomenological approaches in the processes of social communication. In addition, the author used historical, comparative, and structural-functional methods while maintaining the highest possible level of scientific syncretism of methods of social, psychological, etymological, genetic and semantic analysis.

6. Findings

In the digital age, the huge body of knowledge accumulated by researchers of myths forces us to admit that we know much more about various manifestations of myths in various spheres of human life than about myth as such within its wholeness, turning knowledge of details into a kind of "information noise" that interferes understanding myth as a whole (Tobias, 2017).

There are several reasons that allow the myth to remain terra incognito for the science. It is worth highlighting among them:

- universal plasticity and inner infinity of the myth through its inclusion in the constant play of meanings of mythological space, where the myth-drop is able to include the myth-ocean;

- the inability of science to consider myth as a whole by the forces of individual scientific disciplines and its disinterest in recognizing the cultural value of myth for man and humanity;

- the fundamental untranslability of mythological codes into the language of science (Wellerstein, 2018) etc.

The last statement leads us to conclude that the simplicity of the myth is deceiving. After all, it is what we think of it, which means that it is as simple and complex as we are ready to understand it. But it is necessary to understand it. What do we have in this regard? Traditionally, the study of myth is considered from the perspective of various mythological schools, limited to a certain scientific specialization. Although, myth cannot be studied by the forces of one scientific specialization. However, despite this methodologically important conclusion, the situation with the research of myth is almost unchanged. And it is customary to single out abstract allegorical, materialistic, philological, sociological, socio-psychological, symbolic, structuralist, and theistic approaches within the framework of conceptual approaches, each of which focuses on something different in myth. But what interests us more is not that shares these schools, and what they converge on. Indeed, although all the diversity enshrined in various mythological directions reveals the desire to reflect the myth within the framework of its specialization, the preservation of the division of researchers into schools:

- does not allow to consider the myth ontologically.

- cannot be the basis for identifying the basic mythological foundations.

In contrast, all studies of myth can be reduced to three main approaches, where the myth is considered as:

- a legend about gods and heroes.

- the error fixed in consciousness.

- the basic universal of culture, forming a field of symbolically signified meanings.

In this scenario, the first option should be called traditional or classic. The second is profane and philistine. The third can be called universalistic or phenomenological.

The advantage of the first approach is the fundamental research of classical mythology, and the minus is the attempt to cut off the myth from modernity, preserving it only for ancient eras, when the logo was not yet separated from the myth, and there was no science of logic (Simmons, 2018). Although there are also those who admit the presence of myth in modern times among the supporters of this approach. The second approach is the most common, including in science. The advantage of the second approach is the recognition of modern myth as given, and the minus is the complete rejection of the myth in the logic and rationality that only science can possess. Although, it is not very clear how certain recognized scientific theories were "suddenly" declared mythical in the light of this. How this happened, say, with psychoanalysis or political economy. And this list in modern conditions is quickly replenished with other theories. But only the third approach allows considering the myth ontologically in its entirety and integrity. And it is based on the ideas of the most prominent researchers of the myth Losev (1999), K.G. Jung, E. Cassirer, C. Levy-Strauss, K. Hübner (as cited in Naydysh, 2020) and others, each of which brought something special to the understanding of the myth.

In accordance with the third approach, "the process of myth-making is one - it is cognition and reflection of the surrounding reality through symbolic images, metaphors and allegories created according to the laws given by the public consciousness" (Polosin, 2015, p.13), and the reasons for myth-making are simple and comprehensive, covering all areas of human existence, from internal personal experiences to the life of society (Gabrielyan et al., 2019b). Each of the reasons makes a myth vital for a person because it's natural for him to create myths about everything that matters to him.

The basis of total myth creation is the following:

- features of human thinking, which distinguish both rational, analytical, logical thinking, and associative, figurative-artistic, synthetic, mythological thinking. And each of them is necessary for a person to understand the nature of being and its place in the world. That is why, "mythological thinking is what was, is, and is likely to be" (Barkova, 2018, p. 5).

- features of psychological perception, when everything important and significant person passes through the mind, feeling and comprehending reality. Thanks to myth, a person perceives the world personally.

- semantic redundancy of the language, which manifests itself in the fact that words in combination with others have not one, but several semantic meanings. Such redundancy allows us to perceive the world described by words as an endless play of meanings.

- features of the process of cognition, when the infinite world cannot be understood in its entirety and wholeness, but must be explained (Lynch, 2016).

In addition, to understand the nature of mythmaking, it is worth considering that:

- the myth is extremely important as the basis for the functioning of culture, acting as its semantic matrix that is responsible for values (Haynes & Hickel, 2016). Through the myth, a field of significant cultural meanings is formed, its spiritual and moral guidelines are formed and affirmed, a system of cults and taboos is built within the framework of culture.

- through myth, a person satisfies the need for socialization by forming and accepting those social norms and attitudes that are considered correct for society within the framework of general communication.

- since any power is largely based on public opinion, it is worth considering that the support of power by society is built through myths that form power and society about themselves (Hughes, 2017).

So, as we see, the myth is peculiar to man, society and culture at all stages of their existence, because is a necessary basis for the formation of meaning and makes a person's life meaningful (Palmer & Midgley, 1993). However, since the myth turned out to be in demand in our lives, a third, universalist approach compels us to compare two myths - traditional, classical and modern, which can be modern as for the Nambikwara tribe Indian, and for a resident of the American Atlanta only on the basis that they live with this myth, perceiving it as one's felt and meaningful reality (Weigand, 2018). Therefore, we should specifically stipulate that modern myth should not mean myths that exist now (Rivera, 2018). Any myth can be considered modern if they believe in it and they live. But if a myth dies through disbelief in it, then modernity has survived it, and a myth, dying, becomes literature, superstition, and tradition.

How does the modern myth differ from the traditional? The traditional myth is characterized as a fantastic reflection of reality in primitive consciousness and a relic of the past, reflecting the false ideas of traditional societies about nature and society. The modern myth is inherent in man at all stages of his development and a cultural universal changing with him, which is its foundation and semantic structure (Weigand, 2018). According to the classical approach, the traditional myth is the story that is being told (Simmons, 2018). It is false, primitive, and easy to understand, because is based on pre-logical thinking and can be overcome with the help of common sense and logic. In contrast, the modern myth is the reality that lives not in the mass, but in the ordinary consciousness as experienced and felt knowledge. It is:

- simple and complex as much as we are able to understand and fill it with the meaning we need.

- is built based on figurative-artistic (associative) thinking.

- has its own special truth and logic, helping a person to know and organize the world, adapting it to oneself.

The latter circumstance is especially important. After all, it is myths that make us who we are, which means that who controls the myths rules the world. Consequently, the myth as the basic cultural universal is:

- a way of spiritual existence, correlated with the highest world and human values, understood and realized in accordance with the present moment.

- a complex self-developing sign-symbolic system that provides a hierarchy of structures coding a person through which there is constant social, national and cultural identification.

- a way to understand the environment around us in its entirety and significance.

- the form and method of human experience, which is typical and, therefore, repeating.

- a model and partly an excuse for everything that a person does in his life.

- a form of collective thinking in the general history of thought.

Within the framework of sociocultural existence, the myth:

- expresses the collective experience of mankind and offers the experience of social survival.

- provides a process of spiritual self-organization of society, harmonizing relationships, identifying and assimilating social values and priorities, combining mind and subconsciousness, logic and feelings, embodying them in a special psychophysical state of unity with the world that makes the world humane.

- arouses a sense of cosmic unity of the world and man through experiencing a personal situation and comprehending the universal.

- supports the formation of human consciousness and the socialization of personality

- expresses a connection with the deepest sources of life, which attach importance to human existence.

- gives a sense of understanding of what is happening and causes an eternal experience.

- forms the spiritual foundations of social being and the field (matrix, program) of the value-based meanings of culture and consciousness, including models of social behavior (Gabrielyan et al., 2019b).

It is especially worth mentioning the structure of the myth and its functions. Researchers habitually refer to the ideas of K. Levy-Strauss (as cited in Naydysh, 2020) on the first question. However, recent studies show it is wrong, since the myth should be considered as a cultural universal, and not a linguistic object. Moreover, by virtue of its universal plasticity, myth does not have any one structure, assuming the structure of what it mythologizes. But what structure should a myth have if it can be expressed in a sign, word, phrase, or narrative? It does not need a structure as such, but it can have them in such quantity as the most different approaches require, because it has no limitations.

The question is, can a person do without myths? Of course not. But we can convince ourselves that we can survive without myth. Although this will also be just another myth. No more. But if we cannot do without myth, can it be time to admit that myth is a great creation of man, created at the dawn of mankind and expressed in the ability and need to create meaning where necessary? At the same time, we note that myth is indifferent in relation to human needs. And therefore, the meanings created can be any, depending on the motives of people: gloomy or bright, spiritual, or vicious. The myth will serve everything and everyone to the extent that a person needs (Gabrielyan et al., 2019a). That is why the myth is like the Aesopian language: it creates the best that is in human culture, and the worst. But it's not the myth that is guilty of this, but the person whose myth serves the requests, because the better and more spiritual the human thoughts, the more beautiful and majestic the myths to explain these thoughts will be.

7. Conclusion

The myth plays a unique role in society being the basic cultural universal, which no science can replace. And this is normal because they have completely different functions and tasks. But now we can perceive and explore the myth as it is in its entirety and integrity, without giving it to the various scientific branches. After all, integrity must be studied as integrity. And only philosophy is fully capable of this. But even the latter basically drives the study of myth in a circle, repeating sometimes the patterns of a hundred years ago without additional motivation.

Of course, science and philosophy can continue to neglect the myth, not taking it seriously and completely ignoring the results and conjectures of the most prominent researchers of the myth, including

interesting and deep ideas of Russian scientists Lobok (1997), Polosin (2015), Naydysh (2020), S.A. Malenko, A.G. Nekita, brothers A.A. and P.A. Gagaevs (as cited in Gabrielyan et al., 2019a). However, the digital era has made such changes in global processes that it has become more expensive to ignore the myth. And this is due to the fact that the myth from the problem has moved into the category of mechanisms for solving problems in the new conditions of global civilizational competition. It turned out that the myth not only transfers civilizational interaction into the sphere of symbolic influence (Lumsden & Morgan, 2017), but is also a powerful tool for influencing culture and even weapons of mass destruction. But not lethal, because the object of its influence is the consciousness of people, which, under favorable conditions and the absence of opposition, is able to completely change and even transcode. The danger of such an impact is that the myth works like a virus or radiation and is not recognized by its objects of influence (Hughes, 2017). However, it is worth emphasizing that the myth itself is not evil or good. It is simply a universal mechanism, an amazing tool in its effectiveness, which people have been using since ancient times, far from always realizing it. However, there is hope that these omissions soon will be able to be overcome by joint efforts.

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