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Linguistic Myth in the National Mythology

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Abstract

The article deals with the linguistic component of the national myth, its ethnodifferentiating and ethnointegrating functions. Special attention is paid to linguistic myths of primordialism (anciency, complexity, richness) and their presentation in Russian mass media, their role in metonymical identification of personality.

Keywords: Nationalmyth, Constructivism, Primordialism, Metonymical Identification.

Introduction

In a naive, ordinary consciousness, myth means fiction, and this understanding is reflected in the vast majority of uses of the corresponding word in various Russian discourses today. The myth turns out to be opposed to some kind of true knowledge, and the myth itself is the property of a "dark", "undeveloped", "unenlightened" consciousness. Moreover, this approach to myth and mythology as a whole is characteristic, of course, not only for naive consciousness, but is reflected in numerous scientific works. The philosophical encyclopedic dictionary indicates: "<...> In general, mythology has historically become obsolete; in a developed civilized society, mythology can be preserved fragmentarily, sporadically at some levels"[8: 379].

This understanding of myth is opposed by a different point of view. "The myth is not something long ago obsolete, a kind of fiction, but it is logical, that is, first of all, the dialectically necessary category of consciousness and being in general"[5: 25]. "The myth can adapt to new social conditions, to new cultural trends, but it cannot completely disappear" [10: 176]. You can recall a large number of works on contemporary political mythology, research on the mythological structure of such ideological systems as communism and fascism (e.g.: E. Kassirer, E. Fromm, B.P. Vysheslavtsev, S. Moskovichi), etc.



Before continuing further discussion, let us dwell on the essential property of a myth, in the absence of which in a particular message it is senseless to speak of it as a myth. E. Leach: “The specificity of the myth is that it is divine truth for those who believe, and a fairy tale for unbelievers” (cited in [9: 31]). The problem is that talking about a myth just like a myth is possible only if one believes in it. For a myth to be truly a myth, it is necessary to consider it “not from the point of view of any scientific, religious, artistic, etc. worldview, but exclusively from the point of view of the myth itself; <...> a myth is (for mythical consciousness, of course) the highest in its concreteness, the maximum intense and most intense reality” [5: 23-24]. For example, the afterlife for a believer is not a fiction, not an abstraction, but a vividly experienced reality, the concept of karma for a person of the Hindu culture is not questioned and determines his specific actions; for a person who loves his homeland, the latter is not exclusively a geographical term, a certain territory, and talk about its special purpose is fiction, he feels a magical connection with his native land, painfully experiences separation from it; a cosmopolitan who believes in universal human values is also keenly experiencing these values, etc. etc.

So, without faith, without a specific personal experience, the myth is dead, it is no longer a myth, just like a mummy is not a person.

On the question of the functions of myth, the approaches of researchers are not so different, a certain unanimity is observed here. Almost all researchers distinguish two functions of the myth as the main ones. EAT. Meletinsky: “The mythological symbol functions in such a way that a person’s personal and social behavior and worldview (an axiologically oriented model of the world) mutually support each other within a single system. The myth explains and authorizes the existing cosmic order in its understanding, which is characteristic of this culture, the myth thus explains to the person himself and the world around him in order to maintain this order” [6: 169–170].

M. Eliade: “The function of myth is to give models and, thus, give significance to the world and human existence” [10: 119]. C. Flood: “The myth provides us with an explanation of what the world is and how it happened that it turned out to be just that. <...> A myth is both a reflection of reality and a model for it” [9: 32].

Thus, the myth 1) explains to the person the world around him and himself, 2) authorizes and supports the existing order in the form in which it is reflected in the myth, 3) sets the paradigm of social and individual behavior (mandatory, desirable, undesirable, forbidden actions).

So, while we have come to the conclusion that myth is a supreme truth not subject to reflection, personally and specifically experienced by an individual, explaining to him the world and setting patterns of behavior in this world, it is almost impenetrable for empirical experience and “pure” logic. L. Phillips and M.V. Jorgensen point out: “The myth, on the one hand, is a distorted idea of reality, but, on the other hand, this distortion is inevitable, because it sets the necessary horizon for our actions. <...> One of the goals of discourse analysis is to accurately identify and analyze the myths of society as an objective reality, which is implied in conversation and other actions. <...> Using a discourse analysis, you can analyze how various social figures fill myths with meanings in the struggle to make their views on society prevail” [7: 69–70]. Thus, our social life, which is a struggle and the interaction of various discourses, can be considered as a struggle and the interaction of various myths. At the same time, one of the central places in this struggle is the national myth.



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