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## CONSCIOUSNESS. SYMBOL. MYTH

**Problem definition.** One of the today's most controversial problems is the problem of consciousness. First of all, this is about the fact that the understanding of the anthropological, axiological, ethical and aesthetic, ontological issues depends on solving this problem. No matter how sharp the disagreement is with the nature of consciousness, there are certain characteristics of consciousness that do not allow it to be reduced to the biological substrate. One of these features is the sign-symbolic form of our thinking, which mediates the interconnection of human consciousness with the world. The symbolism of our world perception allows us not only to reflect reality, but to see it from a certain angle of view, giving it some meaning and valuable dimension. Symbolism manifests itself in almost all spheres of human life: science, art, religion, philosophy, literature, mythology, history, etc. It acts as a deep and basic feature of the consciousness itself, which helps a person to manage relationships with the world. However, nowadays there is a tendency for the degeneration of the symbols themselves, its distortion and reduction to the level of signs. The degeneration and loss of the old symbolism creates a situation of symbolic vacuum, which requires a new symbolic content formation that would give meaning to the human existence. Besides, very often in the context of modern society, even the positive symbols in their significance are negatively colored (swastika) and this indicates the considerable changes in the human world perception and signals possible socio-cultural and socio-political changes. The symbolism of thinking closely overlaps with the mythological reality perception. In the twentieth century mankind had survived the explosion of mythological worldview, and it did not always have positive effects. Mythologization has affected, first and foremost, the sphere of political battles, where the myth was used as a manipulation of the people consciousness. In the context of this, the following circle of issues is updated: what is the consciousness and the role of symbolic forms in its formation, a symbol and its distinction from a sign, the erosion of traditional symbolism, and the need for the formation of a new one (meaningfulness), the significance of mythological images in modern society, the importance of myth creation for individual and collective development, the causes and consequences of the mythological images dissemination in society, "mythology" of human consciousness.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the symbolic and mythological nature of human consciousness, to identify the close relationship between the processes of symbolization and mythologization of reality, the conditions' research of the mythological ideas intensification, the significance assessment of the mythological images influence on the formation of personality and society.

Development of issues under research. This topic attracted attention of the German classical philosophy representatives (I. Kant, G. Hegel, F. Schelling), the representative of the Marburg school of neo-kantianism E. Cassirer, his follower S. Langer, mathematician and philosopher A. Whitehead, culturologist M. Eliade, structuralism and post-structuralism representative R. Barthes, Z. Freud, K. Jung, culturologist C. Levi-Strauss, post-modernist J. Baudrillard, soviet thinkers O. Losev, Y. Lotman, M. Mamardashvili, O. Pyatigorsky, Russian art historian M. Khrenov, Ukrainian researcher O. Potebnja etc. The aforementioned thinkers emphasize the uniqueness of human consciousness, which is symbollic in its essence; fix the distinction between a sign and a symbol, linking a man symbolic activity with the diverse culture spheres creation: art, literature, philosophy, music, science, mythology. Many of them paid their attention to the consideration and analysis of the "mythology" of human consciousness, the un-

derstanding of the myth inner nature and its influence on our lives. A characteristic phenomenon is that the works of classical thinkers still determine the movement of modern research in a given subject.

A distinctive feature of consciousness is its sign-symbolic nature, which most fully manifests itself in the processes of cultural development. Consciousness always deals with the implementation of their own activities results in a sign. The main function of the sign is pointing to something, a presentation of something. The sign can be anything: word, image, sound, action. As characters, a person perceives everything that is happening around her. The sign is always a combination of the signified and the signifying, in this sense, it is closer to the symbol. However, a sign and a symbol can not be identified. Despite their superficial similarity – the indication of what they are not – the sign has no internal unity with the signified, since it can denote anything. In addition, the sign is transparent and open, devoid of interpretation ambiguity [1]. The symbol is inherently connected with the signified. It includes the depth, the identification of which requires the internal effort of man. Therefore, the sign is always clearly attached to a particular local situation, while the symbol is always wider than its volume and meaning and "carries" in itself more than we can see at first glance. If you compare a symbol and a sign with modern technology, then the sign can be equated to 2-D images, flat and non-figurative. The symbol is associated with 3- and 4-D images, multidimensional in its nature. The symbol may have a material embodiment, but in its essence it is ideal, it has deep meaning. The symbol is a breakthrough in the spiritual universe of man. Therefore, it is always emotional in its sense, value-loaded, not indifferent to a person, and directed to the depths of his spirit. Consciousness handles not only signs (animals can operate signs too), but also symbols that make up its base. "There is such a special human ability – the ability of human thinking, the ability of human invention – to be at the level of symbols" [2, p. 182]. The realization forms of the consciousness symbolic activity are myths, fairy tales, literature (prose and poetry), music, architecture, science, philosophy, religion, history. "Man, unlike all other animals, uses "signs" not only to point to objects but also to represent them... These signs do not announce things, but remind them... They are more likely to give us the opportunity to develop a characteristic attitude towards objects in their absence, which is called "thinking about..." or "reference to..." – to what is not here. The signs used by this person's ability are not symptoms of phenomena, but symbols" [3, p. 32]. Consciousness symbolic activity is connected with the fact that it does not reflect the surroundings, but represents and changes it. When a person perceives the data of the external world, he does not perceive it objectively, in the pure state. Signals always pass through the prism of human interpretation. They are always superimposed on previous experience, individual peculiarities of perception, imagination, analytical-synthetic processes. For example, if we are talking about works of art, they are never identical to the reflection of reality, and are always interpreted by the artist, who emphasizes certain nuances, peculiarities, things that have affected his soul. The architects operate with images, forms, ideal in essence, and organize the experience according to them. Scientists, recognizing nature, distinguish the exact models and with its help form a reality, as if they impose on it an intellectual net. Such models are main requirements for transparency and comprehensiveness of all world processes. Even when we simply perceive the world with our five senses, we do not perceive "naked" data, our senses are always supplemented with theoretical material, indicating that the natural

data pass the screen of human consciousness. The doctrines of world religions are also penetrated by symbolism, which “opens doors” into the world of absolute, transcendental values. Myths are saturated with symbolic images that denote the versatility of reality, the richness of its interpretation by man, the contradictions and complexity of the man inner world, the possibility of personality free choice and the unpredictability of the consequences of his activities. Accordingly, “the symbols represent not the objects themselves, but are the carriers of a certain concept of objects...” [3, p. 57]. So, we can conclude that when a person operates just with signs – this is the most elementary form of his interaction with the world, which fixes a certain state of things. This ability equates human activity with the animal. However, human activity is always manifested as symbolic. S. Langer notes that exactly need for symbolism is the basic need of the person himself, as well as the need for food, orientation in space and survival [3, p. 41].

The processes of symbolization are intensified when a person ceases to evaluate the world from the point of view of practicality and primary physiological needs satisfaction, and on the foreground comes the problem of inner self-realization and the desire to leave his marks. Not without reason, the researchers believe that the time of the beginning of culture (~100 thousand years ago) is the time when man brought into the world something absolutely new, aesthetically and creatively experienced (using jewelry, amulets, earrings), the appearance of the first graves (testimony of human thoughts about afterlife, actions and responsibility for them). The origin of culture is associated with the first rock paintings (30 thousand years ago) – evidence of deep intrinsic processes that excite the human world.

When we talk about the symbolic activity of human consciousness, we must realize that the symbols are not one-dimensional. They function on the verge of different worlds: ideal and material, sensual and supersensible, conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, giving the psyche integrity and completeness. On the one hand, they are conscious elements that are the condition and result of the world comprehension. They are embodied in a certain material form, hinting on the contents hidden by the shell. On the other hand, the symbols are manifestations of our psyche deep unconscious processes, the bizarre forms of our experiences, hidden desires, attractions, intuitions, expectations, etc. They are messengers of what may haven't yet come into the scope of reflexive acts, they remind us what we have forgotten, about the hidden possibilities and potentials of ourselves, they allow us to look into the abyss of our being and help to find ourselves. “The symbols can't be “invented”; they are not created as products of conscious effort, since they would represent only signs in this case, the discovery of conscious thoughts. Symbols come to us spontaneously, as it happens in dreams, they are not thought up, but are presented to us” [4, p. 207]. On the edge of real and ideal, conscious and unconscious, the symbols are those structures that are capable of giving integrity to our existence and contributing to our self-determination, helping to find the orientations that harmonize our relationship with ourselves and the universe. Due to such internal dynamics, the symbols are not the subject for the scientific research that tries to classify and decompose everything. Through the prism of symbolic activity, scientific knowledge appears dead, distant and unviable. The symbols can be felt, comprehended, but not known. When we begin to decipher the symbols, we automatically desymbolize them, deprive their inner depths, secrecy, and sacredness [2, p. 101–102]. In this way, we simplify the symbols by limiting them by our reflexive procedures, giving them clear lines. We are convinced that they should help us to know and disclose ourselves. At the same time symbols rather are not aimed at self-knowledge, but at identifying the inner depth and incompleteness of a person. M. Mamardashvili fixed an important problem of a modern man, which dilute symbols, turning them into culture signs.

In classical philosophy symbol possessed the ontologic depth and displayed inside life potentialities; not everybody

could interpret it properly (it was experts' task). Symbol became like rhizome, but it expanded deep into of human existence, and was closely connected with intellectual reality and its valuable aspects. We can remember mediaeval thinkers who used Christian symbolics widely and this understanding opened to the person the way of salvation and inside regeneration (divinization). In nonclassical period (namely postmodernism) symbols become relative, unstable, lose their inside depth, begin to move not deep into reality, but on surface, indicating and “jumping” to other symbols. They possess not only a shaped form, but also verbal, so their coexistence turns into a certain game, no longer meanings, but words that one can give meaning arbitrarily. On the one hand it can point to variety of symbol interpretation. On the other hand, that symbol transforms from the intellectual reality messenger to the puppet in other men's hands. Symbols lose their valuable ground. They turn in simulacrum. We live in the period of loss of symbolism, in the superficial period of reality perception, which denies depth and infinity. In the current context everything that was previously considered sacred (home, family, values, beliefs) loses its significance. However destroying old symbolics, we are not capable to offer new, normal and viable ones. As “nature abhors a vacuum”, the place of old symbolism is taken by various hybrid religions, mythologies and doctrines, that take up human self-affirmation function [3].

The processes of symbolization are closely interwoven with the myth-making human consciousness activity. Above, we noted that the person initially perceives the reality symbolically, as well as the data of the senses are not “pure” and devoid of symbolism. As A. Whitehead said: “Symbolism is no mere idle empty fancy or corrupt degeneration: it is inherent in very structure of human life” [5, p. 46]. The mythological worldview itself also appears as a result of the consciousness symbolic activity, denoting the way a person sees the world. And it's necessary to be aware of the position that myth can not be reduced to a symbol as such, since the myth does not point to a certain hidden reality, does not veil it, but it appears to be the reality itself. Zeus Thunderer did not symbolize lightning, but he was it. For an archaic man, a myth is an objective reality beyond which the person can not identify itself [6]. The problem of numerous trends that investigated the myth nature (allegorical, euhemerism, romantic, structuralism, etc.) was that they approached the myth study from a modern man position and reduced the myth to allegories, symbols or cultural codes [7; 8, p. 277–373; 9]. All of them, in one form or another, did not take into account the fact that myths were not symbols or allegories, they did not symbolize reality, but they were the reality. If we aspire to understand the myth nature, we need to consider it from the myth position, allowing its own logic and structure. The myth totally covered the whole human being existence and modified it according to clear rules and laws that had the necessary character. The mythological worldview was the very first form of the world human perception, within which a person felt confident and protected as an inseparable part of the nature.

There is a prevailing belief that the myths lived their time and turned into fabulous stories about the past. Through the prism of such reflections, mythological renaissance, that can be observed throughout history, especially in the XX–XXI centuries, becomes unclear. The mythological outlook collapse did not cause the complete and absolute disappearance of the myth from our lives. “After all, the myth is never completely destroyed, suppressed. It is always somewhere nearby, is looming in the background and waiting for its time. This hour's coming whenever other forces – bonds of public life of people weaken and lose the ability to block the myth demonic forces” [10, p. 115]. History shows a certain cyclic pulsation of the mythological worldview. The mythological heritage activation is often a reaction to significant socio-cultural, socio-political changes in society, closely intertwined with the loss of human ground under his feet and confidence in the future, the desire of the man to find clear directions that will make sense to his life. “Getting in a despair state, a person will always resort to

desperate means. Such are our contemporary political myths. When the mind betrays us, there is always an ultima ratio, the power of the mysterious and the mystical" [10, p. 114]. Not least the myth dynamics is due to the excessive life rationalization, a certain neglect of the inner, mental and spiritual processes, their displacement in the unconscious sphere, "the project of Enlightenment" failure [11]. The words of O. Spengler about civilization as a decline of culture become topical [12]. In this context, the phenomenon of the mythological Renaissance testifies to the attempts of people to find internal stability, to catch Being in the process of Its becoming. Modern mythology fulfills the axiological function, helping people make sense to the events in which they are involved, contributes to their holistic worldview formation. Mythological images are embodied in literature, cinema, religion, traditions, television, etc. However, such a return in "time it" is not always perceived positively. This is explained by the fact that modern myths fulfill the function of not only world orientation, but mass manipulation, which can be traced in the following examples: advertising, media activity, political battles. Accordingly, it can be argued that, despite similar features, the modern person myth-making differs from the myth-creativity of the archaic man. For archaic human myths have become an objective reality, within which human existence was closely interconnected with the natural and social existence. Myths were the result of spontaneous creative processes, they had no authorship, and their authority spread to all activity spheres. Myths fulfilled ideological and axiological functions. In the modern world mythical representations are transformed, acquire new features and nuances. First of all, they have no less ideological significance, but they have not so all-embracing and necessary character. Myths relate to a specific sphere of human life and are local in nature. In particular, they become part of the culture sphere (for example, cinema). Secondly, for modern humans myths are closely related to the moments of suggestion and manipulation by the authority. The modern myth-making is often stimulated by individuals, parties, organizations, and the media for the uniting people around a particular idea [10, p. 117–118]. Therefore, modern myths are ideologically loaded and have a mass character [13]. Coming under their influence, we lose our individuality and the ability to think critically. It is extremely difficult to resist the myth, because it appeals to our subconscious impulses and it's practically impossible to refute it with rational means. As a result, it is not surprising that E. Cassirer notes that people "...ceased to be subjects of freedom, of individuals. By performing the same rituals put on them, they begin to feel and think the same, they begin to say the same thing" [10, p. 122]. Thirdly, mass consciousness becomes a field of the modern myths' functioning, which are always emotionally strained and oriented to the satisfaction of the hidden, irrational desires and needs of man. The myth promotes the standardization of the modern person views and the formation of certain common behavior norms and principles. Accordingly, it becomes a powerful tool for controlling mass consciousness by the government authorities. Besides, we are capable to mythologize the reality ourselves. R. Barthes wrote in the "Mythologies" that even the names of Tour de France riders became epic and allowed us to link certain race events to character-essences: the riders' names were read as symbols of bravery, masculinity, meanness, betrayal, etc. [14, p. 176–177]. Fourth, the modern myth feature is that it's not the primary reality itself, but it deforms reality. According to R. Barthes, the myth is a stolen word. Why? Perceiving any word, we are able somehow to deform its original content and introduce it other nuances. "I kidnap a saluting Negro, a white-brown house, a seasonal cheapening of the fruit, but not to make examples or symbols from them, but in order to naturalize the Empire, my love for the Basque style, or the Government through them" [14, p. 291–292]. Such deformations need not necessarily be taken negatively, they can be completely innocent, such as the inspiration people to certain deeds and accomplishments. However, such deformations can be dangerous as they relate to the morality, freedom, political

events spheres. They can obscure the reality by distorting the actual history.

Consequently, nowadays myth operates on the contradiction verge. On the one hand, it becomes a salvation of people and stabilizes their lives. In addition, the myth penetrates everywhere: in politics, tradition, literature, art, and even science. Well-known cultural scientist M. Eliade notes that religion (in particular, christianity) is imbued with mythological, archetypal stories that give the person stability elements in a changing world [15, p. 129; 16, p. 162–180]. Our ceremonies that we perform each year on Christmas or Easter are the evidence of a return to "time it". On the other hand, the modern myth is covered by the mass perception, the lack of critical thinking and deep reality deformation. If we perceive the human consciousness myth-making as a continuation of the symbolic activity, we will come to the conclusion that the myths suffered the same fate as the symbols. Symbols have become impoverished, turned into shadows of themselves, devoid of the connection with reality, simulacres. Myths also lost their identity and became distorted images of themselves. But they could be the "keys" that would disclose the most our hidden recesses of consciousness, the peculiarities of its work, introduce into the sphere of values and ideals, pull together conscious and unconscious reality dimensions.

Among the well-known modern myths there are myths about superheroes, anti-heroes, vampires, aliens, eternal return and golden age. Morality is colored extremely mythologically, based on its people identify events from the standpoint of Good and Evil. Such modern trend as transhumanism is also saturated with mythical images inspired by the superman idea. So observing this dynamics of myth-making processes, it can be argued that they penetrate our existence, are aimed at the world picture building, the part of which we are considering ourselves. Accordingly, it makes sense to talk about the "mythological" nature of consciousness activity itself.

However, the question arises: what is the fountainhead of a man symbolic and myth-making activity, radically different from the animal and bridging the gap between man and animal as species? Of course, this activity unfolds on the human consciousness basis. So, the question should be sharper: what is the beginning of the consciousness functioning itself? Philosophers and researchers couldn't reach a clear conclusion on this issue. At present, there are many theories of the consciousness beginning, among which we can mention religious, dualistic, evolutionary, substantive, etc. Each of them fixes the fundamental moments in understanding the consciousness nature, but none is able to give a final answer to the origin of consciousness phenomenon. The consciousness nature continues to be the greatest mystery, the solution of ontological, epistemological, anthropological, ethical and axiological issues depends on its understanding.

Conclusions. It is clear from the foregoing that our consciousness appears to be an extremely flexible tool for perceiving reality. And that is the instrument, which doesn't perceive the "naked" reality, objectively granted. Our consciousness is a priori refracting, distorting reality, thus blocking its one-dimensional and monotonous perception. This opens the way for the original and creative vision of reality and forces the thinkers to realize the consciousness symbolic nature, which turns into a symbolic form any existing material. This ability is one of those that distinguish us from animals. The realization forms of the consciousness symbolic activity are language, fairy tales, literature (prose and poetry), music, architecture, science, philosophy, religion, history. The result of the consciousness symbolic activity is also myth, fixing the way a person sees the world. However, the myth should not be equated with the symbol, since it does not indicate reality, but it is reality itself. Myths saturate and embrace it. And while the modern man feels that they are an archaic man fairy tales, he does not notice how close they are tangent to his own life. Myth did not disappear from our lives, it simply accepted other forms. Such myth viability is about the fact that it is able to give people self-confidence in the future, to deprive a person

of the internal anxiety for his own existence. The myth, like before, carries an axiological and ideological function. We also mythologize the reality in which we live even when we do not realize it. This suggests that the human consciousness activity is not only symbolic, but also mythological. Of course, the modern myth differs from the myth-creation of an archaic man. In particular, it acquired ideological characteristics and political color, turned into mass manipulation means and became a mass culture part. Myth has lost its sacredness and mysteriousness, became a toy in those people hands, interested in its distribution. E. Cassirer and R. Barthes believe that fighting myth is difficult because it will constantly acquire new forms. However, it is possible to overcome the mythological renaissance negative influences only through a critical comprehension of this phenomenon and close attention to it.

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#### Summary

**Stebelska O. I. Consciousness. Symbol. Myth.** – Article.

This article is devoted to the comprehension of the symbolic nature of the human consciousness activity. This is the quali-

ty that distinguishes a person from an animal and sets an abyss between them. The emphasis is placed on the fact that human activity always appears as a symbolic, aimed at realizing the internal potential of a person. Language, philosophy, science, religion, art, music, literature, mythology, history are its results. One of the manifestations of the consciousness symbolic activity is a myth. Despite worldview changes of the human thinking throughout history, a man continues to mythologize reality. But in the context of contemporary cultural and socio-political events the myth acquires new forms and accents. The article reveals the conditions for the mythological dynamics strengthening and its influence on the formation of both an individual and a society in general. As a result of the critical analysis, the symbolic and mythological character of the human consciousness functioning is confirmed.

**Key words:** consciousness, sign, symbol, myth, mass consciousness, self-realization, values.

#### Анотація

**Стебельська О. І. Свідомість. Символ. Міф.** – Стаття.

Стаття присвячена осмисленню символічної природи людської свідомості. Це є та якість, що відрізняє людину від тварини та прокладає між ними прірву. Акцентується увага на тому, що людська діяльність завжди постає в якості символічної, спрямованої на реалізацію внутрішнього потенціалу людини. Мова, філософія, наука, релігія, мистецтво, музика, література, міфологія, історія постають її результатами. Одним із проявів символічної діяльності свідомості є міф, що відображає особливості людського світобачення. Незважаючи на світоглядні зміни в мисленні людини впродовж історії, вона продовжує міфологізувати реальність. Проте в контексті сучасних культурних і соціально-політичних подій міф набуває нових форм та акцентів. У статті проаналізовано умови посилення міфологічної динаміки та її вплив на формування як окремого індивіда, так і суспільства загалом. У результаті критичного аналізу стверджується символічний і міфологічний характер функціонування людської свідомості.

**Ключові слова:** свідомість, знак, символ, міф, масова свідомість, самореалізація, цінності.

#### Аннотация

**Стебельская А. И. Сознание. Символ. Миф.** – Статья.

Статья посвящена осмыслению символической природы человеческого сознания. Это то качество, которое отличает человека от животного и прокладывает между ними пропасть. Акцентируется внимание на том, что человеческая деятельность всегда предстает в качестве символической, направленной на реализацию внутреннего потенциала человека. Язык, философия, наука, религия, искусство, музыка, литература, мифология, история являются ее результатами. Одним из проявлений символической деятельности сознания является миф, отражающий особенность человеческого мировоззрения. Несмотря на мировоззренческие изменения в мышлении человека на протяжении истории, он продолжает мифологизировать реальность. Однако в контексте современных культурных и социально-политических событий миф приобретает новые формы и акценты. В статье проанализированы условия усиления мифологической динамики и ее влияние на формирование как отдельного индивида, так и общества в целом. В результате критического анализа утверждается символический и мифологический характер функционирования человеческого сознания.

**Ключевые слова:** сознание, знак, символ, миф, массовое сознание, самореализация, ценности.