

UDC 82 - 343: 17.023.36
doi: 10.15330/jpnu.6.2.99-108

Section:

PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSONALITY

THE ETHICAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL CORE OF CULTURE

VIKTORIA LARIONOVA

Abstract: The purpose of this research is to discuss the role of myth in human culture, to define and specify its main functions. The goal is to show that being part of a cultural heritage, myths are an essential part of human culture in any epoch. Mythology provides a true reflection of the moral values of society and aesthetic attitude to reality.

Mythological consciousness is the oldest form of understanding and comprehension of the world, nature, society and people, the oldest system of values. There exists a direct connection between mythological and historical forms of consciousness.

Mythology as a science enhances the research process and allows for the extension of knowledge into other fields, the humanities in particular. It performs the function of explanation and legitimation of social norms.

Myth-making is a property of human consciousness. Myths as products of primary forms of thinking, the oldest forms of consciousness retain their role in all epochs; created and maintained by all generations, they have been preserved throughout millennia.

Keywords: myth, mythological consciousness, mythology, mythogenesis.

In ancient times, the word *myth* (from Greek *mythos* – *story, legend*) was used in the meaning of *word, utterance, story, legend*. **Myth** is defined as *an allegorical story about gods, heroes and other fantastic beings, the special character of their activity, their distinct place in nature and their role in the life of humans*.

Myth is a syncretic form of knowledge about the world that provides answers to a wide range of questions concerning human existence. As a story or a tale, myth is a specific model of historical process; it establishes the algorithm of human behaviour in the real world. Myth has a significant role in people's spiritual life. In archaic society, myth was regarded as a model of human action, it proposed a model of social relationship, explained the world and bound its elements together.

Myth is the oldest system of values. Culture is believed to move *from myth to logos*, i.e. from imaginary things and conventions to knowledge and law. From this perspective, myth is an archaic notion, its values and ideals are rudimentary. The advancement of science and civilization often devalues myth, demonstrates inadequacy of its regulatory functions and values in modern social and cultural contexts. Yet it does not mean that myth has exhausted itself. In modern culture, myth creates means and ways of symbolic thinking; it is capable of interpreting the values of modern culture through the concept of 'the heroic' – it is something science, for instance, could never do. The symbolic layer in myth can be very complex. It is especially important because the same expressive form, having specific correlations with other semantic expressions and material forms, may be a symbol, a scheme, an allegory. In the system of the values of myth, the sensuous and the rational are presented syncretically, as a single whole, which is not characteristic of the 20th century culture. Human

imagination and fantasy make it possible to overcome the incompatibility of meanings and content; that is why everything in myth is conventional and symbolic.

In other words, myth is a source of human wisdom; it is an inexhaustible, universal legacy, the achievement of all humanity.

Myth is a multivalent phenomenon; it may be a view from the past or into the past (the diachronic aspect) and a means of explaining the present (the synchronic aspect).

There are several approaches to the study of mythological material. In ancient times, myth was viewed as an allegorical phenomenon; this tradition was developed in the treatises of G. Boccaccio and F. Bacon. The romantic concept of myth was introduced by German philosophers F. Schelling, the Brothers Grimm; they regarded myth as an aesthetic phenomenon. The two main concepts of the 19th century that opposed each other were the linguistic one (M. Müller) and the anthropological one (E. Tylor, H. Spencer). The 20th century saw the development of the functional concept (B. Malinowski), the sociological concept (L. Lévy-Bruhl), the archetypal concept (C.G. Jung), the structuralist concept (C. Lévi-Strauss). In myths, much attention is given to birth, death, trials, extracting fire, inventing crafts, domesticating animals. Myth is not a primary form of knowledge; it is a kind of world view, an image of the universe and of humanity's relation to it. Myths involve the beginnings of knowledge and religious beliefs.

Mythology is the science that studies myths and legends. In this article, mythology is regarded as the *logos of myths* (the metatheory of myths). At the same time, mythology can be considered as a narrative, a fantastic representation of reality resulting from the personification of nature and the whole world in primitive consciousness. It is a primitive form of human spiritual culture, a form of world perception, an individual's understanding of the world and themselves.

Mythology (from Greek *mythos* – word, legend and *logos* – principle of order and knowledge) is the system of sacral knowledge of different nations based on traditional tales, its distinctive feature being metaphoricity and belief in miracles. The term *mythology* is used to denote both the totality of myths and the science that deals with them. Myths are studied by many sciences; mythology makes use of data provided by history, archeology, anthropology and other sciences.

As a science, mythology makes it possible to increase and improve knowledge of other sciences, the humanities in particular. Mythological materials often provide new directions for research in the fields of history and anthropology. As the collection of myths, mythology makes a distinct impact on artistic culture. Now mythology is part of university curricula, those of Anthropology, History, Psychology, the History of Religion, Political Science, Structural Linguistics.

Among other things, mythology explains the origin and the laws of the Universe, people's place in it, ceremonial acts performed in order to influence it (charms, rituals, rites, etc.). A mythological world view is characterized first of all by complex relations among the elements of the 'nature – society – individual' system, their interconnection, interdependence and interconversion. It is a factor in human socialization: it ensures systemic order – totem, organizes oecumene (a populated universe), creates pantheon (the place of the spirits of ancestors and gods), forms the culture of fear, ritual and taboo.

It is philosophy and a historically determined system of human values that most clearly reveal the significance of mythology. It means that mythology should be seen in all its complex relations with philosophical notions and categories.

Mythology performs the function of explanation and legitimation of *social norms*. A particular mythical version sanctions a corresponding (natural) order: it explains the latter's origin and, at the same time, serves as an ideological justification for its existence and ensures its unchangeable preservation.

A mythological world view is the initial type of world view that may be called a pre-world view. Mythology appears at a stage when humanity tries to answer the questions about its origins and the laws of the universe. Cosmological myths constitute a considerable part of mythology.

Mythological consciousness is closely connected with historical consciousness. Myth is not only the past; it is a universal element of a human world view. At a personal level, its simplicity and ability to give a person a particular idea or picture in their mind, its syncretism and ethic content help to

overcome the inherent narrowness of consciousness, to maintain dignity, to withstand loneliness and alienation, to find an optimal model for interpreting events; myth provides a fictitious, though convenient basis for orientation in the context of the *us/them*, *good/evil* dichotomies. Myth helps to form a view on history where nothing is new, time is reversible, the perception of the world is determined by the formula 'Everything passes and this will pass, too' because 'there is nothing new under the sun', i.e. the world can change in form, not in content.

According to H.G. Gadamer, myths are the original thoughts of humanity. Myths were born at the foot of humanity, when the mind was still in the chains of the two opposites, 'the objective' and 'the subjective', and did not consider the possibility of comprehending a different perception of reality. The mind that perceived the world in mythical and poetic categories identified its instinctive feelings with reality; it put faith and conviction in the same category, and associated practical experience with prediction. Myth as an integrating method of understanding the world has its own logic – it is the identity between an object and a sign.

Myth is not fiction; it has a stable structure, hence it is an important category of human consciousness. The mythological picture of the world forms the first paradigm focused on transmitting social experience from generation to generation. The mythologization of history at an individual's level results in simplification and schematism, fatality, passiveness, insensitiveness, irresponsibility for the future of the human race, which has far-reaching negative consequences. A mythological world view is characterized by the belief in supertranscendence, non-personal, non-social and non-cultural force that determines the fate of the world, its existence, including the fate of human existence, human history. Mythological time correlates with mythological historicism, which may be defined as 'changing invariability'; it makes it possible to transmit social experience from generation to generation.

The linearity of *historical time* is determined by the movement from chaos to cosmos, and the imperfection of social cosmos generates the mythologeme of the Golden Age with a clearly recognizable retrospective orientation. Why is time in myth closed and cyclic? It is so because it ensures stability in change, unites movement and tranquility, a task which metaphysics tries to resolve. The goal of order and the mode of its existence is immutability. Order appears as the ideal and exists as the ideal; this is the dialectics of myth. It is not by chance that R. Wagner, striving to create a universally comprehensible musical language, used myth in order to find 'pure humanity freed from the bonds of conventionality'.

Mythology also reflects people's morality and aesthetic attitude to reality. Art makes a liberal use of mythological ideas and characters. For a person of traditional culture, myth is the only true revelation of reality, while mythogenesis (the production of syncretic knowledge about reality presented in the structural units of myth) is the manifestation of primitive people's perception of their place in environmental, 'natural' reality.

In the 20th century, mythology is often used in order to emphasize values, mostly hypertrophying and fetishizing them. Myth makes it possible to highlight this or that aspect of a value, to hyperbolize and to stress it, even to make it bulge. Evidently, myth, as a way of thinking and perception, once was more important than the rational awareness of reality. According to M. Eliade, myth 'is the first manifestation of a thing that is significant and valid' [10, p. 34].

The irrational experience of humanity is also a product of culture. Myth is a phenomenon of general culture. It is a historical necessity, a perpetually changing form of culture. The reason for the reproduction of myth is collective negative feelings and worries. The problems of existential plane are regarded as something beyond the boundaries of culture. People often do not know how to find a way out of a situation. In ancient times, natural catastrophes were believed to be the gods' punishment, while now people realize that ecological disasters are consequences of their own actions.

Myths 'obscure' the essence of a situation; it is an attempt to survive in unbearable conditions.

There exist *catastrophe myths*, a human form of self-punishment: this is how people become aware of negative consequences of their actions. Yet people try to withstand such consequences and unite their effort.

There exist *myths of the tyrant and the Savior*. The Savior will take on all the problems and will die, the tyrant will bring order. Both are viewed as a necessity.

There is a distinct group of *SF myths* of destructive cosmic forces. They are full of darkness and fear; for example, the possible collision of an asteroid with Earth (a cosmic disaster).

In any case, we can speak of the universality and the historical tenacity of myths because they are based on the interaction between the conscious and the subconscious, the rational and the irrational.

Myth is a multilevel system with many functions. The main ones are discussed below.

- *The axiological (value) function*. Myths involve a qualitative assessment of an object or an idea.
- *The semiotic (sign) function*. Comprehending mythological texts requires knowledge of the specific sign language.

- *The gnoseological (cognitive) function*. Myths accumulate the experience of generations, store human knowledge of the world.

- *The communicative (knowledge transmission) function*. Myths are the mechanism of transmitting experience from generation to generation, the social memory of humanity. Myths mould life as unity, i.e. they ensure the unity of the subject and the object on the one hand, and of view and action on the other.

- *The energetic function*. Myth canalizes accumulated social energy directing it towards appropriate objects. German sociologist F. Afshar compares this function of myth with the function of laser, which concentrates energy. Consider a simple everyday life example. Planning a trip, one has to choose a means of transport: train, car or plane. Each of these means has a matching set of ideas shaping a particular myth, which may be called the rail communication myth, the car communication myth, etc. These myths channel the energy of a traveler, direct it towards a particular purpose and free them from the necessity of solving the problem each time they want to travel. Myths connect subjects and their intentions and with objects.

- *The function of creating collectives*. Multitudes of individuals group into collectives, from factory work brigades or hockey teams to a nation fighting for its independence; myths ensure situation-specific coordination of their perception and behaviour. Each of such collectives relies on a particular myth: the myth of production line effectiveness, the hockey myth, the myth of national freedom and independence. These myths are also historical: the myth of production line is a recent phenomenon; the hockey myth is one hundred something years old; in the mid 20th century, there was no myth of freedom and independence as the right to create your own ethnic state.

- *The function of shaping identity*. Myth shapes collective identity as it ensures case-specific coordination of the perception and behaviour of individuals. Collective identity is realized through values and norms. On the one hand, it is a tool to connect the collective subject with an object; on the other hand, a tool to connect intention with action. For instance, in Ukraine throughout the last decade, they have been trying to create the ‘middle-class’ myth, which presents the middle class as a successful and reasonably conservative part of society, a hallmark of their ideology being career, family values and consumption.

- *The function of the reproduction of collective identity*. The preservation of collective identity is conditioned by the preservation of myth, whose disappearance leads to the collapse of corresponding collectives. For example, when the myth of state independence disappears, the corresponding collective identity disappears as well as it happened many times in history.

- *The function of the formation and structuring of space*. Each myth forms its own space with the centre, periphery and different degrees of remoteness from the centre. As a rule, the periphery is the space of struggle between myths. Space structuring is especially evident in geopolitical statements. Geopolitics may be regarded as a higher-level myth that determines the space of other myths; first of all, national ones. The latter ensure the realization of geopolitical ideas and guarantee the identity of the collective subject and its inextricable link with the object, i.e. territory. At the same time, these myths energize collectivity ensuring the unity of thinking and action.

What is the role of myths and myth-making in the history of human society and human culture? In their own way, they explain the world, nature, society and the individual. In a specific and very

concrete way, they establish connection between the past, the present and the future of humanity. They are channels used to transmit experience, knowledge, values, cultural legacy from generation to generation.

Mythogenesis is a general property of human consciousness. We all are tuned in to myth-making, thus interpreting our past and expressing our vision of the future.

Myth-making, fantasy, fabulation are an inherent ability of human beings, as well as intellect, defensive reaction to depressing or disastrous things.

Myth is not confined to fantasy or faith, or knowledge, or superstitions; these elements are interwoven in myth. This tangle results in one of the most important characteristics of mythological thinking – syncretism, i.e. fusion of different views on the human world and the forces that govern it. These views may be naïve, but they are a specific form of mental outlook reflected in myths. At the same time, myth is a specific vision of social and natural phenomena.

The rise and flowering of ancient civilizations, the whole epoch of human spiritual life was connected with classical mythology. Imagination is a great gift of nature, a precious ability of the mind, human creative energy. Its creations are the *Iliad*, the *Ramayana*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Aeneid*, the Parthenon, majestic Egyptian pyramids – before they appeared as the facts of reality in words and stone, they had already existed as a dream in the imagination of their creators.

The imagination of ancient people created the kingdom of myth. People tried to solve philosophical problems, the mysteries of the universe, human beings and life itself. When reality failed to provide answers, people turned to their imagination. The latter satisfied aesthetic needs as well. Consider Zeus, the highest god of the Greek pantheon. He is regarded as the ‘father of gods’, he controls all celestial phenomena, thunder and lightning. He is responsible for the change of seasons. At the same time, Zeus is the personification of these phenomena, their understanding and experiencing; he is thunder and lightning himself. Zeus as a mythological character and a concept is not a mere ‘fantastic’ representation of natural phenomena or social events; he is the product of imagination of a countless number of people that has developed from their concept of another reality [4, p. 220–221].

There are almost no logical or rational elements here. Rational knowledge comes much later, at the stage when philosophy was separated from mythology. That was a long process. Now it is unanimously recognized that myth is one of the oldest components of human culture and its universal attribute.

The first attempts at rational interpretation of mythological content were made in the ancient world, where there prevailed the allegorical interpretation of mythology (the Sophists, the Stoics, the Pythagoreans). Plato differentiated between mythology and its philosophical and symbolic interpretation. Euhemerus (late fourth century BC), originator of the later popular ‘euhemeristic’ interpretation of myths claimed that mythological tales can be attributed to historical persons and events. Medieval Christian theologians discredited the ancient mythology. The interest in it was revived by the Renaissance humanists, for whom myth was the expression of feelings and passions of an emancipated individual.

The discovery of America and the Native American cultural studies stimulated the development of comparative mythology.

G. Vico’s philosophy correlated the ‘divine poetry’ of myth with the specific elementary forms of thinking that can be compared to children’s psychology, thus giving rise to almost all the later approaches to the study of mythology.

The French Enlighteners thought that mythology was the product of ignorance and superstition. The romantic philosophy of mythology (G.F. Creuzer, F.W.J. Schelling, J. Görres) regarded mythology as an aesthetic phenomenon, which involves the symbolization of nature, and myth as a phenomenon that occupies an intermediate position between nature and art. The romantic philosophy replaced the allegorical interpretation of myth with the symbolic one.

From Romanticism on, myth was viewed as an inherent element of human culture. The Romantic consciousness criticized the illusions of the Enlightenment and presented myth as the bearer of its own truth, which speaks with the voice of a wise and distant past cannot be comprehended through rational

knowledge. Homer, for instance, revealed the wisdom of the mythological interpretation of human existence, the great spiritual and moral forces of life. F. Schlegel believed that 'the innermost depths of the spirit' would shape 'a new mythology', whose ideas, in his opinion, were related to realism. According to A. F. Losev, romantic aesthetics was a universal mythologeme.

Only one more step was necessary in order to understand that myth is the vital factor in any culture. It was F. Nietzsche who came up with the idea. Nietzsche claimed that culture could develop in the space defined by myth. According to him, the excess of history, like an illness, destroyed this closed space because human thinking is determined by the constant renovation of values.

C. G. Jung believed myths to be part of the structure of the human soul. He considered world mythology as archetypal products (universal mental patterns) of the collective unconscious.

One of the two major 19th century schools of mythological studies was that of *comparative historical linguistics*; its representatives (A. Kuhn, M. Müller, W. Schwartz and others) developed the linguistic concept of myth. According to Müller, the cave man signified abstract notions through concrete attributes in the form of metaphorical epithets; if the initial meaning of the latter was lost or dimmed, semantic shifts resulted in the creation of myth. Despite being rejected as unconvincing, this concept was the first attempt to use language for the purpose of reconstructing myth.

The second school, called *anthropological*, or *evolutionist*, appeared in Britain; resting on the first achievements of comparative ethnography, it viewed mythology as animism, the primitive man's idea of the soul that rises from their thoughts about death, dreams, diseases. Mythology was identified with some kind of primitive science; with the advancement of culture, it was losing its positions. The concept was considerably improved by J.G. Frazer, who interpreted myths not as a conscious attempt to explain the surrounding world, but as the mould for magic rituals. Frazer's ritualistic theory was further developed by the Cambridge school of classical philosophy.

Then the focus of myth studies shifted to the sphere of the specifics of mythological thinking. L. Lévy-Bruhl suggested that primitive thinking was 'pre-logical', and collective ideas, as the object of belief, became moral imperatives. According to him, the 'mechanisms' of mythological thinking involved non-compliance with the law of excluded middle (both *p* and *not p* can be true, i.e. there is a third or middle true proposition between them), the law of participation, the heterogeneity of space, the qualitative idea of time, and other concepts.

C. Lévi-Strauss, ethnographer, anthropologist, researcher of modern tribal cultures compared myth to a crystal. He viewed myth as a cocoon containing all historical and cultural phenomena, the major characteristics of world culture. For a modern reader, myths are something like fairy tales, while for a primitive man, they were the truth.

Yet it does not imply that myth is simplistic and primitive. We cannot but agree with Lévi-Strauss, who states that mythological thinking is triggered by our awareness of the existence of certain opposites, and it moves on to resolve other ones. It means that mythological thinking and conceptual thinking perform the same operations; the former, with the help of sensory images; the latter, with the help of abstractions. In other words, mythological thinking is both dialectical and conceptual. Ancient Greeks and their descendants comprehended the world through opposites: Chaos – Harmony, Day – Night, Love – Hate, Ocean – Earth, etc. Unlike science and philosophy, myth tries to resolve opposites rather than to realize them. Myth is the concentration of opposing general concepts. For example, gods are both horrible and wonderful; they are immortal, but to remain so they have to eat the apples of youth, etc. The opposites themselves are concrete, often they are images, characters with individual features; for instance, the Hecatoncheires (hundred-handed giants).

M. Eliade regarded myth is a sacral event of special importance. One of the basic concepts of his theory was a peculiar connection between manifestations of archaic religions and mythology. It is myth that makes a person what they are; of special importance are cosmogonic myths and rituals that emerged as existential experience of primitive people, who did not lose themselves staging a myth or taking part in a ritual; on the contrary, these actions helped them to comprehend cosmic realities as an integral part of their own existence [7, p. 142–150].

E. Cassirer's symbolic theory of myth provided understanding of the intellectual nature of myth as an autonomous symbolic form of culture that models the world in a specific way.

Human communities always needed strong, heroic leaders capable of defending a clan, a tribe, a nation. Human dream, imagination responded to this need and created such heroes: Heracles, who completed his Twelve Labours; Rama, who killed his antagonist Ravana, demon king with ten heads; Gilgamesh, who built the city walls of Uruk to defend his people. Ideal heroes sacrificed themselves; their heroic deeds were glorified by poets.

Ancient art, the realm of ideal heroes, aimed at creating a model of the person at their best, an example to follow. The most popular was the ancient Greek epics about the war of the Greek kings against Troy, the main poems being the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* attributed to the blind poet Homer. For several centuries, Homer's poems had existed in oral version. In the 6th century BC, the written version appeared in Athens; so they became literature. They were taught in all schools of Greece; later, in the schools of the Hellenistic states, the educational institutions of the Roman Empire.

Another outstanding achievement of ancient Greek literature was the *Theogony*, a poem by Hesiod (8th – 7th century BC) describing the origins and genealogies of the Greek gods; it was composed about 700 BC. In the preface to the *Theogony*, Hesiod says that his poetry was inspired by the Muses, who appeared before him when he was pasturing sheep and told him to speak on their behalf. In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod earnestly advises a reader to devote their life to honest work, gives practical pieces of advice concerning agriculture and marine navigation, and some moral advice; he also retells myths. The *Theogony* is an attempt to systematize various myths about the origin of about 300 Greek gods and their descendants. Hesiod gives the names of the nine Muses, the inspirational goddesses of literature, science, and the arts. They were the daughters of the great Zeus and the goddess of memory Mnemosyne. There is something deeply symbolic in the fact that the second Muse, Clio (literally, 'made famous' or 'to make famous') is the muse of *history*; it means that studying history, as well as poetry and eloquence, is a divinely inspired activity.

Many myths are mentioned in the works of 'the Father of History' Herodotus (about 484–425 BC). Most of the works by the 5th century BC playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides are artistic interpretations of legends about gods and heroes. Myths are mentioned in the lyrical poetry of ancient Greece, in the works of Greek and Roman authors of the Roman Empire; for example, in the famous *Geographica* by Strabo (64 or 63 BC – about 24 AD), Greek geographer, philosopher, and historian, who lived in Asia Minor during the transitional period of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. The *Aeneid* by the Roman poet Virgil tells the legendary story of Aeneas, who travelled to Italy after the destruction of Troy by the Greeks.

Ancient mythology is a great human heritage. The world has changed. The gods and heroes of ancient times are not part of it anymore; but as literary characters, they remain unsurpassed.

Mythology is a most interesting and mysterious phenomenon in human culture, including modern one. In the 20th and the 21st centuries, the notion of myth has considerably extended and become rather controversial. Now it is used as an umbrella term for beliefs and conventions, as a euphemism for lies and wrong propaganda. The majority of modern scholars share the opinion that mythological consciousness is the most ancient form of knowledge about the world, nature, society and people. Myth has emerged from the ancient people's need to understand the laws of their natural and social environment, to comprehend the essence of human nature.

In myth, people do not separate themselves from their natural environment; nature, society and individuals merge into a single whole. There are no abstract notions in myth, everything is very concrete, personified, spiritualized. Mythological consciousness operates with symbols: every image, hero, character is the signification of an underlying notion or phenomenon. Myth exists in its own time, that of 'primary principle', 'initial creation', where the human idea of the flow of time is inapplicable.

Myth thinks in images, lives by emotions; the arguments of the mind are nothing to it; it explains the world in terms of faith, not knowledge. Our interest in myth is the interest in the deepest layers of culture; it is evidence of the fact that myths are the expression of the fundamental principles of the universe and human existence, unknown to modern people or forgotten by them. And we see our

inability to live in universal harmony. That is why consciously or subconsciously, we rely on myths as on stabilizing primary principles. In this sense, myths remain the basis for the comprehension of nature and society, the regulators of their relations, a factor in efficient self-organization of society.

Some 20th century *literary trends* evince interest in mythology; they interpret various traditional myths and create new myths, poetic symbols coined by authors (J. Joyce, Th. Mann, J. Cocteau and others).

The role of myths and mythogenesis is crucial to understanding human history and human culture:

- myths provide specific explanation for the world, nature, society and people;
- in a specific and very concrete form, they connect the past, the present and the future of humanity;
- myths serve as channels for transmitting experience, knowledge, values, cultural heritage from generation to generation.

According to H.L. Bergson, the function of mythogenesis is to help people to overcome the fear of death and to facilitate the consolidation of society. Myth helps to distinguish between tradition and disorder, poetry and science, symbol and statement, the usual and the original, order and chaos, etc. Myth may even be used as a programme aimed at disorganizing mass consciousness. Myth identifies dreams with reality. The relations between 'mythological thinking' and essence are eidetic; they vary from 'meeting with essence' to the greatest deviation from it. Literature consciously creates fictitious worlds, while myth represents the reality of the world as its own phenomenal world.

In his study *Die Wahrheit des Mythos (The Truth of Myth)*, K. Hübner says that specific signs contained in myth help to connect the outer world of events and human consciousness. There is no reality beyond myth; so-called reality is the interpretation of signs [6, p. 71]. There exists a different point of view. R. Barthes states that myth is secondary to reality, the nature of things; it is a superstructure that distorts primary content. This is why he calls myth 'stolen language'.

Myth expresses and codifies beliefs, it gives prestige to tradition, governs practical activities and teaches norms of behaviour. According to the philosophy of myth, general norms of human behaviour are of divine origin; norms of human communication (permissions and prohibitions) are determined by wider global relations, universal (cosmic) processes and the order of things (with some changes and modifications). These ideas retain their significance at the later stages of social and state development.

In the context of mythological interpretation, the victory of goodness over evil is significant for human relations, which, according to myth, are regulated by divine justice. Hence the victory of justice is presented as establishing lawfulness and law, as the victory of the truth over untruth. So, myth maintains the divine origin, source and nature of justice and law as the basic principles behind the relations among gods and people.

Knowledge, political and legal skills come from a superhuman (divine) source of authority. In a number of mythological legends and songs, gods are presented as the proponents of justice, the defenders of the weak and the oppressed; they punish everything that is evil, vile, unjust and morally wrong. According to the ancient conception of law, an inescapable punishment awaits a person suppressing the truth, justice and law. According to A.F. Losev, myth has a very rigid and stable structure; it is a logically (dialectically) necessary category of consciousness and general existence, a generalized representation of reality.

The mythological mode of comprehension, a feature of mass consciousness, gives us the picture of the world from a gnoseological perspective. The reality of myth originates from prehistoric times; thanks to its unique properties, the myth itself remains unchanged, yet it makes an important impact on the development of cultural forms. In a symbolic form, myth defines and expresses the values of a social community or culture. This was and remains the main function and property of myth.

The approach under which the development of culture is viewed as movement from the primary, mythopoetic period to the scientific/logical one can be called into question, especially in what concerns the periodization into pre-logical and logical modes of thought. Some features of mythological thinking are preserved in mass consciousness, along with the elements of scientific and philosophic knowledge, and compelling logic. The function of such myths is to remind people that they are not omnipotent.

Throughout history, culture has been, in one way or another, related to the mythological heritage; it has always been trying to illuminate the core values of myth with its own intellectual achievements. This permanent interest in myth as a factor that unites people is one of the major plots in the philosophy of culture.

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Address: Viktoriia Larionova, Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, 57, Shevchenko Str., Ivano-Frankivsk, 76025, Ukraine.

E-mail: victoriia.larionova@pu.if.ua

Received: 14.05.2018; **revised:** 18.09.2018.

Ларіонова Вікторія. Етико-міфічне ядро культури. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, 6 (2) (2019), 99–108.

У статті досліджено особливості функціонування міфів у культурі. Визначаються основні функції міфу. Доведено, що міф – не лише минуле, а й складник світогляду в будь-яку епоху. У міфології відбиваються також і моральні погляди, і естетичне ставлення людини до дійсності.

Аргументовано, що міфологічна свідомість є найдавнішою формою розуміння й осмислення світу, розуміння природи, суспільства і людини. є найбільш давня система цінностей. Простежено взаємозв'язок міфічної свідомості зі свідомістю історичною.

Міфологія як наукова дисципліна дозволяє уточнювати, поглиблювати і розширювати дослідження з інших галузей знань, передусім гуманітарних.

Обґрунтовано, що міфологія виконує функцію пояснення та легітимації соціальних норм, у ній відбиваються також і моральні погляди, і естетичне ставлення людини до дійсності.

Доведено, що міфотворчість є властивістю людської свідомості взагалі. Міфи – результат первинних, найдавніших форм свідомості пронизують усі епохи, зберігаються тисячоліттями, створюються та підтримуються всіма поколіннями.

Ключові слова: міф, міфічна свідомість, міфологія, міфотворчість.