



## Myth-Creating as a Way to Develop Modern Mass Conscience

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### Abstract

Presently myth-creating has to be viewed as a versatile characteristic of the conscience, which consists of creating non-explanative vivid descriptiveness. The aim of present article is to analyze the mechanisms of myth-creating, which define certain essential coordinates for the modern humans by developing the personal experience and influencing his conscience through the system of contemporary mass culture. In the article we analyze the changes in the myth-creating process – the myth is created, translated and maintained through technical and informational means. Myth-creating becomes the defining factor of the symbolic space development and the way of influencing mass conscience.

**Keywords:** Myth; Mass culture; Myth-creating; Empiric subject; Mass conscience; Routine conscience; Experience; Cynicism

### Introduction

Predispositions for mass culture development lie in the society structure itself, when “the mass” is the main part of the society. Mass culture is oriented at the individual’s socialization and adaptation to a certain environment, social and cultural conditions. This culture shapes the space, in which the exchange of meanings happens and the comprehension becomes possible. It requires minimal amount of knowledge and personal experience of a human in order to make sense of the reality.

Mass culture is rooted in the stereotypes of a person’s representations and feelings, such as a wish to love, fear of the unknown, urge to achieve success, hope for a miracle, etc. Myth-creating develops on the basis of these representations.

Modern myth occurs not in the conditions of narrow life experience, as a traditional myth, but in the conditions of relatively wide, though divided, applied base, when the urge for ideology synthesis is obvious but there are no means for conducting such synthesis. Commonly the primitive syncreticity of the myth is used as a true unity of the conscience, undivided in the separate parts, or such “syncretisms” are created from the material of the modern

conscience. Speaking of the modern myth and the process of myth-creating, it is impossible to describe it only through the traditional categories and to interpret it in the narrow sense. Because of this, now it is necessary to study myth-creation as a versatile characteristic of the conscience, which creates vivid descriptiveness that lies outside the ranges of interpretation.

The subject of modern myth-creating might be each separate person, who, by creating himself, lives in the myths of everyday routine. Through myth-creating, the individual’s routine conscience searches for stability. Each element of the myth has its own certain essence inside a system. In other words, symbolism and stability of a myth provides clarity and tranquility, which are lacking in the lives of modern people. However, the subject of modern myth-creating uses completed patterns of a mythology, which already exists, adding new combinations of essence and meanings, which are important to him personally and to the society. These patterns present in the form of archaization, re-medievation and orientalization. They might exist in the unconscious (psychoanalytic explanations of the myth-creating), might be given in the texts (ritual-oriented explanations of the myth), in cultural artifacts; or they might be consciously rebuilt for the mass conscience not only by an individual conscience, but also by professional myth-creators.

There are individual and social myth-creating needs of a human. Individual needs include creation of individual myths, which define the essence, meanings and sign constructs of the behavior, speech and thinking. In order to satisfy the social needs it is necessary to have myths, which allow developing an “obedient, easily-managed” citizen in order to reach a successful functioning of the society.

### Methods

Studying the myth as a way of mass conscience development needs to be conducted with regard to the methodologic approaches, which are presented in the works of Naydysh, Cassirer, Moscovici, Kara-Murza and other authors. The basis for the conducted study is the philosophic methodology, which implies the use of the analysis techniques. In order to reveal the characteristics of a myth as a certain type of experience and culture representation, we used the contextual analysis methods, as well as the hermeneutic method, which is used for interpreting philosophic and cultural-studying texts and media information.

## Results

### Myth-creation as orientation towards stereotypes and needs of homogeneous social groups

The phenomenon of myth-creating in mass conscience is based on stereotypes and needs of homogeneous social groups. Contrary to the spontaneous myth-creating of the archaic period (which is limited by the traditions and rules and exists in their frames), myth-creation today is related to the functioning of mass-media and exists on professional bases. Cassirer stated that the XX century was destined to create "a new myth technique, because myths may be created the same way and by the same rules as any other modern weapon, whether it is guns or airplanes" (Cassirer, 1990).

Generalizing the discussion of the mythology, Gurevich notes that the purpose of the social myth lies on "hiding the meaning and distracting from the truth" [1].

Canetti, a well-known psychology specialist of the XX century, stated that "closed" masses of the past (religious meetings, military meetings, etc.) underwent significant changes during urbanization. "...More and more people gathered in the cities and the population grew uncharacteristically fast during the last hundred years, which lead to the development of new enormous masses... All attacks on the outdated rituals, which are saved in the history of religion, are a protest of a mass, which wants to experience its own growth, against the borders, which are pressed on it" [2].

Le Bon, the author of a book "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind" (1895), which was a hit in the XX century, understood that the industrial age is a transition phase, when traditional ideas and norms partly continue to act, getting weaker, and the ideas of the future start to develop, not being robust, theoretical, normative and conceptual constructs yet. This was happening with the background of the destruction of religious, political and social beliefs, as well as the development new conditions for human existence, which occurred as a result of scientific and industrial discoveries. "The ideas of the past, though being half-destroyed, are still quite strong; the ideas, which have to replace them, are still on the stage of their development – this is why the modern age is the transitional and anarchic time", - said the author of "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind" [3].

Therefore, it is possible to state that the mythology of the transition period depends on the correct work of the media and on what modern marketing consultants and human resources specialists call the system of involvement. Rosen describes a method of working with mass conscience. The marketing specialist claims that the reason lies in the fact that people create masses based on the principle of similarity: Look at the family that is walking on Sunday: mother, father, adolescent son, little girl and a dog. And there is another family walking in their direction: one more mother, father, adolescent son, little girl and a dog. They wave their hands to

greet each other. Obviously, those two families know each other. What do you think will happen when they meet? Most likely, the adults will talk to each other, adolescent sons will communicate together and the little girls will start a conversation. Even the dogs will sniff each other before starting to play.

The urge to establish connections with the similar individuals is set in the human nature. Scientists like to talk to scientists. Rich people interact with other rich people. If we enjoy mountain biking, most likely we will communicate with others cyclists. Such tendency of people to feel attraction to those, who are similar to them, and start relationships with them is called "homophilia..." [4].

People's natural predisposition to choose similar people for interaction (what Rosen calls a playful concept of "hemophilia"), causes the occurrence of people's clusters, inside of which the information is distributed easily and naturally: "Why do bikers travel in groups? Why do second-graders play together? Because people prone to interact with those similar to them. The result of this is clusters – groups of people similar to each other in certain life parameters, which, as a consequence, often involve in communication with each other. Millions of unique clusters are developed on correspondence with such parameters, as age, gender, education, professional activity, social class, field of interests, geography and ethnic origin" [4].

Thus, a brand-manager (this is what a myth-creator is called in the language of a modern market) needs only to choose a required cluster correctly and to tell a personality story based on the stereotypes and needs of the present clusters representatives. Similar rules of information distribution in the modern world are also described by a well-known scientist of semiology and writer Eco when he introduces the concept of an "ideal reader" of a fiction book, i.e. a reader, who, according to the author's thought, ideally deciphers the codes created by the fiction work author [5].

### Myth as a way of suggestion, based on the creation of illusion

Mass media, including advertising, social networks and television, remains an important tool of the modern myth-creation. "Advertising might be called one of the forms of modern myth-creating. Nowadays the creation of advertisement uses "mythological technologies" by which the advertisement gains the functions of myth" [6].

It is possible to trace, on the example of the Russian brands, how the advertisement uses mythological images. During the development of brands of the "Kalina" concern, mythological images of noble natural materials, such as gold, silver and pearl, played a significant role. In the conscience of the mass culture representatives they are related to the ideas of prestige and elitism. Due to this, the brands that became successful were "Golden line", "Silver line", and especially, "Black pearl". It is common for Russian advertisement to refer to the traditional motives and to reproduction of the existing cultural myths, tales and images.

Together with using the traditional images in the advertising, it is possible to note one other trait of the modern myth. In the current myth-creating the technical world entwines with the natural world. The advertisement for "Kabinet" Internet-provider states that a whale is the biggest mammal of the sea, an elephant is the biggest animal of the dry land and "Kabinet" is the largest provider in the Ural. i.e. this provider creates a picture of its natural existence by stating the fact that it is the largest in a certain field of the "second nature".

Modern myths are created in relation to the present tasks from the market, politics, economics and show-business and might exist for a short time, replacing each other. A lifespan of commercial and political myths has decreased drastically. A modern myth exists from one to fifteen years, at average.

### Mythological congestion of the mass culture

The difference between a modern myth of mass conscience and a myth of the archaic age consists not of its structure or its conflict-content base (which is created the same way as in the era of the first written texts, which were preserved until our times), but of the way to translate and distribute the information and of the fact that modern people rarely pass the myth as an inheritance to the future generations but perceive, memorize, translate and forget the myths much faster. Consequently, modern myths are much harder to be formed into myth systems (mythologies). The conscience of a modern mass culture representative, contrary to empirical subjects, who perceive the myths in a traditional society, is more mosaic and less integral. Moreover, it has to deal with a larger amount of information sources: myths attract attention and attempt to intrude in the conscience from different sides. If we consider each advertising message to be equal to a short modern myth (or neo-myth, as they are called sometimes) and calculate the amount of such myth, which compete for a conscience of a usual person on the street of a metropolis in a span of one minute, it will become clear that a certain empiric subject is not able to perceive and comprehend all of the attacking myths. Furthermore, not all of the modern myths are intended for each empiric subject.

On the one hand, a myth, as a certain way of escaping reality, has such positive functions as stabilization (stable state of affairs in a society, due to which a society is able to overcome the critical stages of its development), isolation (human mind defense from the moral shocks) and defense (creation of an example for positive thinking without showing aggression helps feeling secure). However, the influence is often aimed at the lower-level human needs and aggressive urges, e.g., sex, feeling of property, desire of fame, money and luxury. It exploits the natural human needs: need for food, security and society, because, the larger the audience, the more versatile the used targets have to be; a more specific audience requires a more accurate approach to its traits. Other versatile stimuli also include pride, urge for pleasure and comfort, wish to have a family coziness, job promotion and fame [7]. Schiller notes that "ways of manipulation imply prior preparation of opinions and wishes, their consolidation in a

mass conscience or in the representations of a single person, in order to make referring to them possible" [7].

Muzykany confirms it in his studies on the advertisement genesis, concluding that "there is a mass stimulation of the primitive human needs, which blocks a possibility for their spiritual raise and causes the simplification of the social taste. All of this limits their top limit of the mindfulness and, therefore, allows reaching an image of fame with less effort and live comfortably without an extraordinary talent" [8].

### Myth as a seduction from the modern culture

Lipovetsky's paradigm declares that the post-modernist society is regulated by a new strategy – a strategy of seduction. He notes that mass culture is attracted to seductive figures, which induce admiration and worship in the society – stars and idols. In the modern time seduction is translated through Internet communities and Internet technologies, as noted by Rusakova. "Massive information technologies development caused a new wave of seduction - the seduction with interactivity, personal involvement in the information product creation, the seduction with one's own significant in the Internet space" [9].

Involvement if media- and Internet-technologies lead to several consequences. Firstly, Jaron Lanier, in his manifest "You Are Not a Gadget", suggests that social networks and blogs lead the humankind to the wrong path – instead of creation and individuality, shallows statements and the speed of content generation and consumption are rewarded [10].

Secondly, as noted by many researchers, using the opportunities of the Internet worsens the shaped opposition between a machine and a human, which is noted by a well-known German philosopher and cultural scientist Sloterdijk: "There are machine media, which translate the programs, and there are personal media- interpersonal communication environments, i.e. the people, who are able to feel involved, to some extent, in the tasks of the era and moods of the time and translate them. If we integrate these two concepts of "media" and turn them to performing their true role, it will be possible to suspect even yourself - and are you sure you are not just a machine, just a translating technical mechanism? Newest theory of literature and theory of media speak of the author as of neurotic typewriter – and sometimes in certain situations it strongly corresponds with the personal experience. I would have preferred to compare myself to a piano, which suddenly starts to play on its own, to a certain automatic piano of a spirit of an era. I can easily fell the mood – but I quite accurately select, which mood I want to feel" [11].

A way to overcome these negative consequences of the Internet-technologies "seductiveness" should become the development of cynical skepticism in the society. In his lecture "Free thinking and the official propaganda" Russel claimed that the habit of analyzing the facts and not accepting the statements as true without bases should be taught in school. He discussed the need to teach the school students the art of reading newspapers by seeing the event from different perspectives, thus learning to understand that what's written

in the newspapers is more or less a lie. The result of such learning will be cynical skepticism, which will protect in the future life from the appeals for idealism, used to summon respectable people to cooperate with the plans of villains and rascals [12].

### Myth as a constituting element of a person's life world

As a versatile ability of the conscience, myth-creating not only develops the routine conscience, but also constructs the reality, which surrounds the individual, through it. Through the prism of the routine conscience a myth translates its phenomenal side, which is primarily subject-centered, to the world. Because of this specific trait, as well as of demonstrative-sensory vividness, a myth may be consolidated in a person's conscience rather strongly by maintaining in the images and values. Myth consolidation in the routine conscience has certain basis.

Firstly, routine conscience is such conscience, which pays attention only to the object and not to the subject's attitude towards the object. This characteristic was revealed by the German romantics. Schelling integrated routine conscience with an artistic and aesthetic world reflection. For him, routine conscience is the conscience, which is "at the lowest stage of abstraction" [13]; it is not able to distinguish between "the object of influence and the influencing or the acting" [13] and is non-reflective.

Secondly, the connection of the routine conscience and myth-creating is conducted through the concept of the "life world". For Husserl, the "life world" (Lebenswelt) is a concept that reflects the circumstance that the conscience functions not in an abstract space of psychological forms, but in real life conditions, thus being a mean of solving the constantly changing relationships of a subject (which has certain needs, interests, ways of their satisfaction, etc.) and the environment (material, natural and social). Life world is a certain sub-system of a routine conscience representing those deep essential connections (needs of a human as a bio-social creature, motives, interests, etc.), by which the subject is inevitably and necessary integrated into the world, "implanted" into it, and thus, becomes an inseparable from the being. A person's life world is inevitably mythologized.

It is possible to say that a myth serves as a constituting element of a person's life world. In some sense, it is a ground, on which the essential conscience is developed. Along with the values and emotional experiences, a myth becomes included in the experience of a person as an individual subject, as well as a historic one (by being translated through the generations).

## Discussion

Myth carrier is an individual subject, as well as the society. It is in the society that the myth representation and translation to the next generations in case of mythological structure robustness occurs. Because of this, exploring the myth should start from studying the phenomenon of the crowd – the

carrier of mass conscience. Describing the phenomenon of the crowd, Le Bon noted that one of its main traits is the susceptibility to suggestion. "Always lingering on the border of the unconscious, easily complying to various suggestions and having wild feelings, common for those creatures, which cannot conform to the influences of the mind, the crowd, which lacks any critical skills, has to be highly gullible. Impossible does not exist to it, and it has to be remembered, because it explains that unusual easiness of creation and development of legends and the most unbelievable stories" [3]. It is one of the bases for a myth's success. Analyzing the reasons of social disturbance, Bloomer defines the following significant signs of social disturbance: agitated feelings, which promote the distribution of gossip and exaggeration, as well as irritability and increased suggestibility, which leads to psychological lability and inconsequential actions. "Their state makes them far more susceptible towards the others, but also less consistent and firm in their mood and type of actions. To understand that increased lability and the feeling of disturbance means to understand why people in a state of social disturbance are so suggestible, react so easily to various new stimuli and ideas and also are more flexible" [14].

In the context of the studied topic it is necessary to explore the myth-creating specifics in the traditions of Russian mythologists, who separate three main characteristics of myth-creating.

The first one is that "a myth is always pre- and extra-theoretical generalization of the world" in a sense that mythological conscience is always integrated in a strict mythological coordinates system; "a myth was just a way of generalizing all that experience that was constantly accumulated in the practice" [15]. And it was exactly that way in the archaic communities, as noted by the multiple ethnographic studies. Is "pre- and extra-theoretical generalization" a trait of modern myth-creating? The borders of this concept implementation are unclear and are rooted in the "life experience", "routine"; due to this fact, this myth-creating trait can provide very little for the analysis of modern creative processes.

The second trait of myth-creating is that "the mythological image, produced by the mythological activity of the conscience, has its specific characteristics as a type of generalization. In such image two main functions of the conscience – knowledge and experience – were not separated; they were integrated together. And this results in the fundamental impossibility to interpret the products of myth-creating" [15]. Consequently, mythological images are experienced by the conscience but are not explained or interpreted by it; this is the way that the desirable is presented as the real. We can only partially agree with this statement. Myth-creating actually includes large scales of emotions, the fantasy and the imagination work; but these psychological dominants accompany any creative process, including research activity. "Ernst Mach's principle of the economy of thought plays a great role in the critique of language and its mythological part in particular. As language critique begins with violation of the traditional triad "reality–idea–statement



[word]“, the reality appears in absolutely unearthly light, which is conditional due to impossibility to go outside complex of sensations. Scientific theories with their all value and importance do not change or disclose the secrecy of the hidden, do not influence the mystery of the psychic reality, finally they all deal with all the same – with elements [16].

The third myth-creating trait is subjectivity-“vividly expressed interest in the products of subject’s myth-creating; his voluntary intensions are directed at them and they are the object of subject’s volitional self-determination” [15]. However, this characteristic also does not provide an opportunity to strictly reveal the specifics of the studied process, because the scientist, as well as a painter are interested in the emergence of their creative product, thus using volitional self-determination (it is known that a picture might be created many years in a row and laboratory experiments require multiple repetitions and trials).

In the article “The modern day culture hero: from cynicism to infernality” the authors point out that “mythological creativity of mass media is directed on establishment of new meanings, guided by the logical networks of thinking which are already set by antiquity, simply reconstructing them according to the changed meanings. Myth-making does not pass through stages of intuition, guesses and experiments. The myth does not look for truth, does not reflect, it states, structures, orders, clears up and by that provides rest, the happy end of all unsolved conflicts” [17].

Thus, myth-creating is a process is the process of emergence of the new essence. The act of birth of something new might be comprehended here as a space-time localization (in the space and time of the conscience) of the essence-making flow. Because of this it is important to consider that both archaic conscience and modern myth-creating are different in a way of creating new essences of human existence as a separate individual, as well as the society. Myth-creating might be a result of the unconscious imitation and conscious reconstruction, a consequence of suggestion of myth-creating representations of the reality or indirect integration of the completed myths, built by the ideologists and proposed for mass consumption, in the conscience.

Working with the concept of a “myth” it is necessary to understand that it does not have an unambiguous definition. Myth as a way of experiencing and explaining life, as a certain experience and myth as a fictional construct, myth as a product of collective creation and myth as a product of individual creative fantasy, archaic and modern myths are fairly different things, which cannot be considered the same. However, it is possible to compare them by already having hypothesized about common traits of those myth-creating means. These traits include the following:

Simplicity, presence of a certain logical pattern, which presents through symbols that gain their significant essences in different cultural realities.

Phenomenality of the explanatory patterns: appearance and essence are almost the same in a myth, causal links are highly

simplified, a part replaces the whole and the shallow connections might be mistaken for the deep ones.

Anthropomorphism.

Dualism and thought dynamics through binary oppositions.

Extra-historical presence (perception of a myth and giving senses to the world as the only possible and constant flow of the events and as the only correct representation of those events).

Orientation at panacea. Essences of a myth allow finding firm bases of the being and instructions for the practical actions in the world.

Escapism as a flight in the illusory worlds.

Non-catastrophic view: orientation on the events with a good outcome (“everything is going to be good and excellent with us”).

Thus, myth-creating is a cultural universal, which a significant part of the modern mass and individual conscience.

## Conclusion

The beginning of XXI century is signified by the expansion of Internet-technologies, which greatly multiplies the opportunities to manipulate mass conscience. Because of this it is necessary to note the transition from cultural de-mythologizing, which was generally common for the XX century, to its re-mythologizing.

The purpose of a myth in the modern society is narrowed to the specific tasks; primarily, it is manipulation with the aim of obtaining a certain result.

This is confirmed by multiple studies. Moscovici notes that, instead of cooperation between opinions and the mind, there is a competition, which constantly grows. The power of communication tools becomes the power of the social opinion [18]. Kara-Murza found the fundamental changes in the conscience and thinking in the transition to the new way of obtaining information – not from a page but from a screen. The book civilization makes place for a new text carrier – a screen (TV or computer), which leads to the excess of information and increased speed of new type of reading – reading-consuming, as opposed to reading-dialogue and reading-creation. “A text on a screen is constructed as a flow of “micro-events”, and that lead to a crisis of “macro-text” that explains the world and the society” [19]. Kirillova states the emergence of a new type of intellectual reaction: “Tomorrow’s culture will be less bookish than yesterday’s one. Since the discovery of book printing the thoughts have moved using signs, symbols and letters as a reference point. From now on it is based mainly on an image”.

Analyzing further perspectives of the humankind J. Ellul comes to an unambiguous conclusion: “A person of our society turned from obsessed with work into a person, charmed by the variance of pictures, intensity of noises and information flow. Even if he does not like the television, art and science, he will not escape the influence of the technical means” [20].

Influence on the mass conscience might happen through the reference to the individual by using the social networks. As a result, various media events are organized, while sometimes their authorship is anonymous.

As Lipovetsky states, "people's socialization through traditions, religion or morals is replaced by the influence of media and information flows" [21,22]. Nowadays it is possible to observe a very interesting phenomenon—a myth is translated, created and provided to the masses through technical and informational means. Therefore, myth-creating becomes the defining factor in the development of symbolic space and the way to influence the mass conscience.

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