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, culturalist M. Eliade, structuralism and post-structuralism representative R. Bar, Z. Freud, K. Jung, culturalist 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. Potebnya etc. The aforementioned thinkers emphasize the uniqueness of human consciousness, which is symbolic 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 understanding 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 cannot 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 and meaning. 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 in 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 symbols in the same way as 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 depth and incompleteness of a person. M. Mamardashvili fixed the symbols rather than conversions just as 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 (14,000 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 are new forms of our psyche, to which we are not accustomed, which we can't 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 symbols 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 superficial form, but also their cause, and it is not certain into 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 symbols, we are not capable to offer new, normal and viable ones. As A. Whitehead said: "Symbolism is no mere idle 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 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]. 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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, literature, cinema, 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 through which 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 mythological, 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 other question arises: what is the fountainhead of human consciousness? Basis. 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.

Conclusions. It is clear from the foregoing that our consciousness appears to be an extremely flexible tool for perceiving and understanding reality. 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 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 the 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.

References:

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 quality 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.

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