

# “Lifeworld” and Mythmaking\*

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**Abstract**—The “lifeworld” can be considered as the ontological basis of myth-making activity of consciousness. The deep basis of ordinary consciousness is myth-making, based on the unity of the image (perception and representation) and meaning (values, beliefs, etc.). The ordinary consciousness should not be seen as an exclusively conservative force. Thanks to the mythological basis, it has rich creative possibilities. Ordinary consciousness is capable of producing visually sensual imagery, the proliferation of uninterpreted images, metaphorization, the establishment of associative connections between visual images, etc. We should expect the increasing role of folklore in the system of ordinary consciousness.

**Keywords**—“lifeworld”; mythmaking; ordinary consciousness; sense; needs; cognitive; meaningful reality

## I. INTRODUCTION

The application of the ecological approach to the analysis of social systems involves the use of concepts that link the paradigms of environmental and socio-humanitarian knowledge. Such a connection is based on the idea that a person not only opposes the world as a special part of being, endowed with consciousness, but to a much greater extent he is immersed in the world, “implanted” in the world, inseparable from being, connected with nature by a variety of real connections, relationships. One of these concepts is the concept of “lifeworld” (Lebenswelt).

The concept of “life-world” appeared during the first half of the twentieth century in biology, and then received a generic interpretation and were included in philosophical anthropology (E. Husserl, M. Heidegger, M. Merleau-Ponty, H.-G. Gadamer, A. Schütz, J. Habermas, J. Derrida, J. Deleuze, etc.) and in ecology (human ecology, social ecology) [1]. In philosophical anthropology, this concept allowed to reveal new aspects of natural and cultural foundations of human life. In particular, a new look at ordinary consciousness (because the world of life is reflected in the structure of consciousness), the ontological foundations of myth-making activity of consciousness [2].

## II. “LIFEWORLD” AND MEANINGFUL REALITY

The origins of the concept of “life-world” go into the history of biology. Since the XV century, in biology

clearly distinguished two different approaches - evolutionary and structural-functional. The existence of such approaches is determined by both the evolutionary and systemic nature of the object of biology (the world of living, organic phenomena). As E. Mayr noted, there are two biologies – the functional biology and the evolutionary biology. The functional biology asks direct questions, and the evolutionary biology asks the final questions: “The two biologies that are concerned with the two kinds of causations are remarkably self-contained. Proximate causes relate to the functions of an organism and its parts as well as its development, from functional morphology down to biochemistry. Evolutionary, historical, or ultimate causes, on the other hand, attempt to explain why an organism is the way it is. Organisms, in contrast to inanimate objects, have two different sets of causes because organisms have a genetic program. Proximate causes have to do with the decoding of the program of a given individual; evolutionary causes have to do with the changes of genetic programs through time, and with the reasons for these changes” [3]. The history of biology, especially since the XV century, can be presented as a constructive, mutually enriching interaction of these “two biologies”. One of the fruitful episodes of such interaction “two of biology” is the concept of the unity of organism and environment German biologist J. von Ikskyul (Uexküll) [4] [5] [6], which is based on the concept of “life-world”.

J. von Ikskyul criticized the interpretations of the perfection of biological organism that have developed in evolutionary biology. They identified the perfection of the biological organism or its complexity, or a measure of compliance of the structure of the body to its needs. According to J. von Ikskyul, the problem of perfection of a biological organism should be solved differently - based on the comparison of the “structural plan of the body” (Bauplan) with how it is implemented. It is “the structural plan of the body” determines the functionality of its organs and the nature of its life. At the same time, J. von Ikskul also revised the concept of the body's needs. It shows that the body's needs are not set once and for all, regardless of the animal, and formed by the “structural plan of the body”. In the course of its life, the body “cuts out” for itself in the surrounding natural environment certain integral areas, which constitute what is called “the life world or the external world of the animal” (Umwelt) [4]. Thus, the “life-world” is the result of active actions of the body (Aktionsdinge), its

\*The publication has been prepared with the support of the «RUDN University Program 5-100».

bodily and nervous organization. "Life- world" is an area of the natural environment (including other organisms), which has a direct value for its life. It focuses everything necessary to meet its needs (in other words, "valuable" for the body), it is maximally adapted to it. Every biological species, and even every animal, has its own life- world, i.e. live in their own reality.

The concept of "life- world" J. von Ikskul complements the concept of "inner world" animal (Innenwelt) (i.e. neuromodel of objective reality), in which it identifies two subsystems. The first provides orientation in space and time; reflects characteristics of the life- world by the receptor system, allows to perceive the life- world (Merknetz). The second directs the body's actions; it is the apparatus of effectors, operations by which the body affects the outside world (Wirknetz) [7]. These two subsystems are links of a single closed circuit, functional circle (Funktionskreis), in which the meaningful reality is born. The meaningful reality arises in the transition from the apparatus of reflection to the apparatus of action, from the perceptive to the operational part of the functional circle, from the image of reality to the choice of the corresponding actions of the actor in this reality. Meaningful reality is a special need-motivational state of the organism, which occurs in the interaction of the "life- world" and "inner world", on their border, and expresses the moment of their compliance or discrepancy. Meaningful reality connects the "life world" and "inner world", perception and action, gives them selectivity, gives nature meanings, relevance of the event to the subject.

The development of the concept of the life- world in philosophical anthropology has made it possible to clarify the multiple connections and relationships that man is included in natural and social systems. Thus, it is shown that the human life world (Lebenswelt) embodies an intuitively functioning horizon of its historical and cultural experience and corresponding to such experience of sensory and emotional experiences. In addition, the human life- world expresses the boundaries, bases and background of the subject's existence as a body-biological, organic, vital being included in the system of natural relationships. In the life-world embodied the basis of the ability of the subject to act in the world, to change it and "located" in it. The concept of the life- world also implicitly contains an idea of the limits of communication, mutual understanding of subjects, the boundaries of their social experience and experienced time [8].

The core of the human life-world - needs; they "center" the human life- world, give it integrity. The ratio of individual elements of the human life- world to its needs is regulated by meaningful reality. Meaningful reality is an integrative (emergent) system property of the human life-world. Through ordinary consciousness the world of meanings encodes and regulates the connection of the elements of the life- world among themselves.

Finally, the life- world can be considered as the ontological basis of myth-making activity of consciousness. The transformation of ordinary consciousness in the

postmodern era contributed to the manifestation of this side of the human life- world.

### III. THE POSTMODERN ERA AND ORDINARY CONSCIOUSNESS

In the postmodern era, a new historical type of consciousness is formed. It is characterized by the increasing role and importance of ordinary consciousness in the system of spiritual culture. This is manifested in such features of consciousness as disregard for the discursiveness, rejection of the principle of rationalism, remythologization consciousness, pluralistic, polysemantic picture of the world, the uncertainty of the ideals of culture, the substitution of purposeful activities that require intellectual effort, meaningfulness, fun game, etc.

Indeed, the postmodern personality is ill-suited to the absorption of higher, professionalized forms of spiritual activities. Motivations of postmodern personality are determined by the consumer society, "the society with reduced requirements, which deprives people of tension" [9]. It is guided by the underestimated criteria of cultural creativity, momentary, often utilitarian and pragmatic interests; focuses on mass culture and loud-colored glamour. In everything about the assessment of cultural achievements, past and present, it is in a state of uncertainty, which is partially covered by cynicism and irony. Derationalization of consciousness leads to its remythologization, i.e. the manifestation of the deep archaic mythological layers of culture. At the turn of XX-XXI centuries in daily life re-entered the seemingly long-vanished pagan superstition, occultism, magic, spiritualism, witchcraft, etc. In the ordinary consciousness of the world again (like hundreds and thousands of years ago) was filled with demons, supernatural beings, the "evil force", etc. At the same time, increasingly there are voices that ordinary consciousness has become the main line in the system of spiritual culture. All this requires a serious adjustment of the point of view that the ordinary consciousness has outlived its usefulness, has exhausted itself, has no cultural and historical prospects, and the future belongs only to highly professional forms of culture (science, art, technology, etc.). The structure of ordinary consciousness, its creative possibilities, its history should be viewed from new positions.

The main characteristic features of ordinary consciousness, in our opinion, can be expressed in the following provisions.

First, ordinary consciousness is a level, layer of consciousness, focused on the reproduction of the phenomenal side of existence (the sphere of the phenomenon). Therefore, it is fundamentally subjectcentric.

Secondly, the cognitive component of ordinary consciousness is represented by ordinary knowledge, and the value component is represented by common sense (values, beliefs, norms, etc., orienting the behavior of the subject in the structures of everyday life). As the historical development of everyday knowledge is enriched by the results of professional spiritual production, and common

sense is saturated with objectivity, enriched and tested daily practice.

Third, the most important characteristic of ordinary consciousness is the dominance of semantic, value factors over cognitive, common sense over ordinary knowledge.

Fourth, the deep foundation of the ordinary consciousness is myth-making. This circumstance allows to explain those features of ordinary consciousness, which for a long time remained not clarified, including the reproduction of visual- sensual imagery, a powerful creative potential of the ordinary consciousness, etc.

#### IV. MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF ORDINARY CONSCIOUSNESS

In philosophical literature there are different approaches to understanding the essence of myth as a form of consciousness [10]. Among them, two main ones can be distinguished. The first connects myth-making with the cognitive functional of consciousness, the cognitive component of consciousness. Here the myth is interpreted as some form of knowledge. The second approach sees the essence of the myth in the value-semantic component of consciousness. From the point of view of this approach, the myth is first of all the meaning (of image, knowledge, action etc.). From our point of view, every completed act of consciousness is a unity of cognitive and value. Knowledge and values, image and meaning should be seen in unity as integrity, not as opposed to each other. Therefore, the essence of myth-making is a syncretic unity of knowledge and experience, image and meaning. Myth-making (in all its historical forms) is based on the close connection of figurative (perception and representation) and semantic (values, beliefs, etc.) moments of consciousness.

Myth is always an image taken in unity with its meaning (semantic image). Between the figurative and semantic components of mythological consciousness there is a dynamic tension. After all, the meanings are more variable than those images. The meanings are constantly changing along with the changing needs, motivations, interests, goals, etc. of the individual. Meanings acquire complex, branched, indirect forms, allowing the subject to set and implement more and more distant goals, to direct and control his "life-world", etc. Therefore, the unity of image and meaning is the basis of the creative potential of mythology.

The increase in the importance of ordinary consciousness is a characteristic feature of critical periods of social and historical development, which are associated with the breaking of old traditions (paradigms, values, meanings, etc.) and the formation of new ones, replacing the old ones. Moreover, the new traditions and values are maturing in many ways in the depths of ordinary consciousness. After all, ordinary consciousness is not a static, frozen, but a dynamic system, the changes of which reflect the development of forms of activity and ways of communication of people. In the ordinary consciousness there are new and disappear old meanings, concepts, values, norms, beliefs, needs, interests, etc., new connections between them are established. Such connections are becoming more and more mediated and

multi-link. The processes of differentiation are complemented by integrative trends, which give rise to (sometimes unusual) cultural syntheses. Including "spiritual centaurs" of the visual-figurative and abstract-conceptual, rational and irrational, etc. As a result there are opportunities of emergence of the most various tendencies in spiritual culture. As deviant lines of spiritual culture (which are characterized by the absence of historical roots, understated criteria of professionalism, etc. [11].), and the deep synthesis of the history of culture and its modern layers. Ordinary consciousness has the ability to stimulate the "vertical" integration of spiritual culture, i.e. to promote the involvement (of course, in a transformed form) of historically early, including ancient, layers of culture in modern culture.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Thus, it would be wrong to see in the ordinary consciousness an exclusively conservative force, a "mundane" sphere of spiritual culture. In the ordinary consciousness there are rich creative possibilities. It is impossible to ignore the creative potential of everyday consciousness. It contributes to the emergence and creation of new forms of culture. This, of course, requires appropriate social and historical circumstances and structures of everyday life. For example, in the conditions of modern Russia such circumstances are the processes of democratization of social life, the development of elements of civil society, the statement in the forms of spiritual activity of critical and rational principles, the formation of an atmosphere of free creativity, etc.

What determines the creative potential of ordinary consciousness? In our opinion, it is determined primarily by the myth-making component of ordinary consciousness. It is the impulse of creative processes such as the production of sensory-visual imagery, the proliferation of uninterpreted imagery, metaphorization of consciousness, the establishment of associative connections between visual images, etc. All these processes are clearly evident in postmodern culture. Thus, reproduction in the activity of consciousness of visual-figurative, myth-like, artistic-figurative structures becomes no less important than its abstract-conceptual, rational activity. Literally our eyes are born not interpreted neo-mythological forms of spiritual culture – a quasi-scientific myth-making, parapolitical, quasireligious, mythologized mass-media. The role of advertising in modern culture is growing. Any advertising is an artificially created myth, aimed at transforming the needs of the individual by semantic means. In other words, the myth-making is once again becoming a significant part of the modern spiritual culture.

We can suggest that we should expect the growth of importance in the system of ordinary consciousness and folklore. Folklore is also a historical form of myth-making. It inherited from primitive myth-making such features as improvisation and non-interpretability of the sensual images. As in primitive mythology, in the act of folk art the image and its meaning are not separated, represent a syncretic unity. Folklore images are created by the subject directly in the acts

of their reproduction. This gives folklore consciousness the ability to catalyze the integration processes, to create new connections between forms of consciousness, to saturate them with imagery and semantic wealth, metaphoricity, to support the emotional, sensual and affective attitude of a person to the world, to reduce the intensity of actual contradictions of man and the world, natural and cultural, etc.

The richer, fuller "life world" of the individual, the thinner and more diverse the subject must control the conditions of his life, including in sensory-figurative forms. This is the ground for the reproduction of myth-making forms in spiritual culture. Myth-making in the human mind never disappears completely.

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