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Myth as a key tool of mass media in popularization of science Tomsk Polytechnic University

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Abstract

This paper briefly deals with the history of mythology and the causes of the myth appearance. It also discusses the manipulative nature of myth, its impact on the spiritual and cultural human life. Moreover, it discusses the level of involvement of myth in describing scientific achievements; based on the analysis of scientific papers on the topic, the main aspect of the work is determined: whether the myth is a key tool of myth creation in the media in describing scientific achievements. It also provides a brief overview of the place of myth in political activity and expert opinions on the interaction of representatives of science and the media.

Keywords: Myth, myth-making, mass media, television, culture, society, manipulation, science;

1. Introduction

Mythology is a historically developed form of spiritual culture. It started to develop at the earliest stage of social development. The emergence of mythology is explained the fact that in ancient times, people with the help of myths tried to explain what could not be gripped by the mind. The great importance in the myths was given to different stages of human life, aspects of birth and death, the meaning and purpose of existence, as well as the various vicissitudes of fate that awaited a person on his/her way. Along with these issues, another issue in mythology began to appear. This issue was based on cosmology, with which our ancestors tried to shed light on the structure of the universe or manifestations of certain natural phenomena.

The myth itself is the first form of cognition of the spiritual world. In the work "From the myth to the logos", F., Kessedi defines the myth as a kind of attitude, non-standard, figurative and sensual representation of natural phenomena and social life in general, as the most archaic form of social consciousness [3]. Myth, as an instrument of understanding the world, in its essence is based not on logic and rationality, but on the emotional and sensual nature. It is aimed at the formation of figurative and symbolic system of development and world understanding; it promotes the development of worldview, and is used as a tool to influence the behavior of social masses.

2. Analysis of the essence of the myth and its use as a tool of manipulation

In terms of understanding the world, the myth is usually identified with the archaic form of culture. This is due to the fact that the history of the myth stretches from the distant past, when

the ancients tried to explain all questions that disturbed their minds. But this does not mean that the myth is a relic of the past. It is obvious that mythology was gradually replaced by philosophy, art and science, but being embodied in all new manifestations, finding different forms, it retained its importance throughout the development of human civilization, remaining relevant today [3].

Not all myths are supported by social traditions and beliefs that have evolved over the years, many of them are innovative. Due to the accelerated development pace of technologies and means of data transmission (print media, radio, television, Internet), in the modern world there is confusion in terms of information reliability. Television shows us psychics, with their exorbitant possibilities; many videos about UFO flights or Yeti shorted by eyewitnesses; the discussions about the global conspiracy or the end of the world. Moreover, the Internet generates its own myths, such as that one day hackers will create a "virus", which will destroy the entire Network overnight, or that people are immersed in a virtual world in order to contend with the harsh reality. All these raise the questions in our minds.

We can say that information in some sense controls the world. The picture of the world is not formed by itself. It is a conglomerate of many views, attitudes, perceptions and values. The main task of the media is to provide coverage and interpretation of important phenomena occurring in a particular country or in the world as a whole. Through the media, the communication between the "Communicator and the recipient" is formed, so the system of Media-Society appears. Media, as a provider of information, must meet the information needs of society, because the lack of accurate data leads to the emergence of rumors, myths, and crisis situations cause fear and panic [1].

Media coverage of "complex", or even "mysterious" themes (about UFO, Masons, etc.) generates misunderstanding. Moreover, this misunderstanding, in turn, pushes a person to search for a "simple" explanation of complex things. The fact is that the myth is a tool for simplifying life. It makes certain systems, ideas, or concepts of things around us more available for everyone to understand. [2]

The myth in the "hands" of the media can be identified as a tool for manipulating people's consciousness, for suggesting the certain information that is necessary for someone. In my opinion, a simple but excellent example of the use of mythologization in the media, is the following: "ordinary powder washes bad, and powder presented by the firm N does it in the best way!" Thus, there is the myth about the unusual properties of a washing powder presented by the company N. Ordinary thing acquires magical properties. Myth works [6].

The media, for example, actively use human love for myths when people watch news. Information in news stories with the help of advertising is divided into "portions". This method of crushing is aimed at reducing the concentration on the proposed information, thereby making it less significant. Information overload with facts, the shift from an information story line to an advertising helps to manipulate more effectly on the audience. Manipulation of public consciousness can differ in goals, methods and nature of influence, and is manifested almost in all spheres of human life [9].

Manipulation in the modern context is a special kind of power aimed at programming the behavior and moods of the social masses. Those who possess the means of manipulation have the opportunity to force people to change their life priorities, principles and preferences. In this regard, the phenomenon of manipulation has a close relationship with the phenomenon of management. In order to show this relationship, there are several levels of control, depending on the scope and objects of impact. These include: management as a science (a set of theories and concepts); management as a process of command and administrative actions against others; management as a function of information, carried out in order to change the behavior of the

audience to obtain the desired results. These levels are distinguished in the work written by Shulenina, N.V. and Polonskaya, D.D. [5].

Also, an equally important aspect of myth-making on the part of the media is a linguistic component. An effective method of manipulation is the construction of a linguistic picture of the world by the media, which can be produced by the increased use of certain words and phrases, as well as by borrowing terms from other languages. Thus, such a high level of integration of definitions, constructs and speech patterns, deprived of denotative basis, results in "new myths" that deprive the public consciousness of individuality and the ability to understand the reality [8].

Since myth is an absolute "weapon" of the media, it is of great interest from the political side. Historically, the myth is a mandatory component of political activities. The main task of any political force is to retain power. To achieve such goals, many different methods are used, including myth-making. Since the media and PR-technologies have a huge impact on public opinion, this phenomenon is used actively in politics. Political myths implemented by the media are used to explain, justify or even praise the existing conditions of social life created by the political activities of the authorities. If earlier myths were compensated by a lack of knowledge about various phenomena, today they are used for other purposes, for example, to replace the lack of logical explanations of certain actions, processes or decision-making by politicians who are not liked by the majority of the population [7].

Today, the mass media determines the level of public interest in almost any kinds of activity. The mass media exists in science. As an example of interaction between the media and scientists, we can cite the opinions of representatives of various fields of science, who gave their comments about this phenomenon to the educational online magazine "PostNauka". According to Markov, A.V., a doctor of biological Sciences, science should perform an educational function in society, contribute to the formation of this society of an adequate representation of the world and prevent the influence of various myths. The «form» of presenting information explains the goals of the media. In some cases, the scientist cannot affect the form in which the information appear (for example, the kind of information that will be included in the final version of the created popular science film). Another form is presented by live broadcasts. Wybe, D.Z. said that some media takes into account only the extent of scientist's influence while communicating with him/her. As it is more interesting if a person recognized by the scientific society tells about simple things. However, it is worth noting that there is media that really needs scientists. According to Wybe, D.Z., the scientist's communication with the media brings more inconvenience to the scientist. The main problem of the emergence of myths from the media is the distortion of the essence of the information it transmits. When creating the material journalists focus on the "appearance" of the provided information, without thinking about the meaning. Due to S.V., Drobyshevsky if a scientist has a task to make information accessible to the media, it is either necessary to avoid this, because there is a possibility of distortion of the essence of what is said, or to do it personally without the media [4]. Thus, it can be concluded that communication between scientists and the media does not always bring positive results. Often, in the process of simplifying information there is a mythologization of scientific data.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say that from the point of view of the philosophical approach to the study of the media as a cultural process, the opinion that media culture is an important component of modern culture is formed. Myth acts as a kind of foundation in the spiritual and cultural life of a man, while the media supports certain sentiments in society through myths. It is

unadvised to say that myth performs only a destructive function that negatively affects the consciousness of the masses. Actually, both people and authorities need the myth.

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