

УДК 165.63

Zoomorphic Metaphor as an Example of a Social Myth's Dynamic of Destruction. Gnosiological Aspect

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Received 05.08.2008, received in revised form 10.09.2008, accepted 17.09.2008

This article is describing the gnosiological understanding of a social myth instead of the classical myth ontology. This understanding of a social myth as conditionally true statements which is proved by the system analysis of context and by axiology is caused by utility.

An object which illustrates the state of this article is the moment displaying a social myth concerning a bird the Stormy Petrel (Procellariidae.) It is the protagonist of «Song of a Storm Petrel» written by great Russian author A.M.Gorky and a base revolutionary, mythopoetic image of the USSR. The Stormy Petrel «as a streak of black lightning» is imperatively acquired truth for the Soviet man. Destruction of a social myth of the Stormy Petrel is objectively caused by distinctions of appearance and habits of representatives of bloodline of these birds which live in territory of the USSR and carry the name "Fulmar" (Fulmarus glacialis) which means silly person and, the so-called, small petrel (Procellariidae puffinus) which carries the name of the snake "Python" and inhabits in the Mediterranean where A.M.Gorky has lived.

This demystification of semiotics of a totalitarian mode of the USSR, given as an example of the basic material, is the largest discovery in this area in the 21 century.

Keywords: social myth; art; mythopoetic image.

Introduction

The purposes of our reflection bring forth gnosiological understanding of a social myth in particular unlike ontology of a classical myth.

This is an operational understanding of a social myth as statements conditionally true which is validated by the system analysis of a context and axiological (Ulyanovsky, 2005).

As a reasoning for this definition we shall consider technology of work with knowledge in information aspect.

Let's explain this position with an example of one unrevealed social myth from Soviet

period. This myth can begin (can begin - exact modality!) its revealing only after sufficient number of readers of the present theme not only read it, but also consider curious. Otherwise this ancient myth about the poetic symbol of October revolution - in general and revolutionaries - in particular, it will remain unrevealed. It is a myth about the Stormy Petrel of Revolution.

Unrevealed myth of the storm petrel is found out accidentally in the form of new knowledge about the prototype "Stormy Petrels of revolution" and put under doubt seeing this (Ulyanovsky, 2005: 86-90).

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A.M.Gorky's storm petrel became a symbol of all revolutionary movement in Russia. After the revolution Gorky has received a rank of the writer №1. In the USSR A.M.Gorky was esteemed not only for literary talent (what is certainly just), but also as one of nunciates of revolutions. What has "the storm petrel of revolution" annunciated?

To clear the answer to this question objective data about habits of the bird of Petrel bloodline (Procellariidae), the richest on number of kinds in order Procellariiformes, is investigated and for it additional knowledge is drawn from the authoritative encyclopedia in 6 volumes. (*Animal's life*, 1970: 69)

"It was considered, that a storm petrel is a symbol of the fighter for freedom, a symbol of the true proletarian. It cannot find to itself a place in existing order, it is oppressed by fat penguins - gorged capitalists and silly seagulls - bourgeois. A storm is a symbol of a situation developed in Russia on a boundary of centuries. The storm tries to stop inevitable, - to stop «light» revolution, not to let the true sun in the world - true order.

The petrel is the fighter, and it defeats the storm, defeats discontent of silly penguins and seagull's fear...

... but it matters that the only species of storm petrels nesting in territory of Russia, it is quite logical to assume that Gorky has been writing about it, is called Fulmar (which means silly person). That should alert already: the Symbol of revolution is the Fulmar (Silly Person) (though resulting the revolution pragmatically this name do not seems very offensive).» (Ulyanovsky, 2005: 86-90).

Only this new knowledge is enough, already. Certainly, after fair describing sad ideas will arise.

Image of the Fulmar, the only one nesting on USSR territory, becomes an emotionally expressive metaphor of the Soviet man.

In the biological description of 1970 the Fulmar's nestlings' sad fate is described - even in 2004 of mass-media of Russia constantly discuss the theme of export (more often to America) of Russian and Ukrainian kids as body donors...

Materials and methods

The methodological reasons and theoretical experimental reasons are defined by philosophical anthropological approach and interpretational experimental approach. Also methodological intention of philosophical anthropology as system knowledge of the person, synthesizing methodological approaches and conclusions of philosophy, psychology, cultural science, sociology and history, and also natural sciences, is understood as a basis of the present work.

The theoretical experimental bases for analysis of ethical and aesthetic questions of social mythology are defined by the concept of myth-centered mass communication which is understood as an achievement of public expediency during satisfaction needs by communication audiences. It is also defined by the concept of the socially cultural activity, which is understood as socially expedient activity on creation, absorption, preservation, distribution and the further development of cultural values.

The bases of research or compiled of positions: philosophical anthropology, its two main principles: an anthropological reduction which is a substantiation for a way of the person's existence in the newest situation of disintegration of united structure of life, reduction of human existence to the cultural sphere and a principle of practical active objectivization in adequate cultural forms that assumes active interaction of natural-science and humanitarian knowledge for the perpose of research.

Let's quote the file of the Stormy Petrel (Fulmar-Silly Person) according to "The life of animals"

The fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*):

«Order - procelariiformes, *bloodline* - petrels, species – fulmar.

The body length - 46-47 sm.

Length of the wing - 33 sm.

Wingspan - 112 sm.

Weight - 600-900 gram

Color - smoky-gray, also more whitish, almost white (a so-called whitish phase).

Residence - wandering.

Nutrition - eats ... seafood, not infrequently - carrion, waste of a whale craft (pending sugarplum it can follow whaler up to 180 km from coast.), and even whale droppings. During the feeding fulmars are shrill and pugnacious.

The voice - low, rough, audible at a great distance, reminds cackling of hens or geese.

Single silly fellows publish silent groaning sounds. The jack does not hide, and arranges it directly on the ground, a rock, and even on an ice.

In Northern America adult fulmars are hunted in thousands, furthermore, people collect their eggs which are very tasty. In many places the nestlings of silly fellows are also stored salted and quite often exported.” (*Animal's life*, 1970: 69)

Let's compare encyclopedic materials to semiotics of «Song of a Storm Petrel»

«Song of a Storm Petrel». A.M.Gorky (1968)

Over the gray flatness of the sea the wind gathers storm-clouds. Between the clouds and the sea proudly soars the stormy petrel, as a streak of black lightning.

Now the waves on wingtip touching, now as an arrow shooting to the clouds, he screams, and – the clouds hear joy in the bird's proud cry.

In that cry – the lust of the storm! The power of anger, the flame of passion and certainty in victory hear the clouds in that cry.

The seagulls whimper before the storm, – whimper, toss about over the sea and are ready to hide their horror to its depths.

And the diver-birds also whimper, – the diver-birds cannot attain the joy of life's struggle: the thunder of lightning-bolts frightens them.

The stupid penguin cowardly hides its blubber in the rocks ... only the proud stormy petrel soars bold and free over the grey sea froth!

Ever darker and lower clouds drop to the sea, the waves singing and tearing to pieces to meet the thunder.

Thunder rumbles. In a froth of anger moan the waves, fighting the wind. See the wind grab waves in a powerful embrace, and in a fling, smash them at the rocks, beating emerald masses to drops and mist.

The stormy petrel soars with a scream, a streak of black lightning, as an arrow pierces the clouds, on wing-tip slicing the wave froth.

See him hover, like a demon – proud, black demon of the storm – he laughs, and cries ... he laughs atop the clouds, he cries with joy!

In the froth of anger – clever demon, – he has long heard weariness, he knows that the clouds won't defeat the sun – no, the sun will triumph!

The wind roars ... Thunder rumbles ...

As a blue flame burn clouds over the sea's abyss. The sea catches arrows of lightning and snuffs them in her depths. As snakes of fire reflect those twisting bolts, vanishing.

– The storm! Soon will break the storm!

The bold stormy petrel proudly flies between the lightning and the frothing anger of the sea; now screams the prophet of victory:

– Let the storm burst forth in all fury!

Results

We reveal heterogeneity of social mythology field which contains:

- § Unrevealed,
- § Revealed,
- § Evident social myths.

There is no impenetrable border between groups of unrevealed, revealed and evident social myths. The border is mobile in synchronous and diachronic aspects, contextual. It depends on ideology of a man and represents **tendency to identify verity as reality experienced as visibility in the form of seeming at first, and actual substance of a social myth as boundary metaphysical logic concept in a semantic field “reality - revealed social myth – lie”**.

Unrevealed social myths which are felt and experienced by a man as directly present, objective living reality, true, natural laws of a life meant by itself, they define relation and logic of the world view.

But the most perspicacious wiseman has already established their conditionally true character. If an adherent of wisdom isn't able to shake somebody dwelling in a myth's confidence in his validity then the social myth does not exist, it is unrevealed for myth dweller. If people living in a myth start to trust the wiseman then the social myth is revealed. When P.S.Gurevich emphasized the illusory character of a social myth's appearance (Gurevich, 1983) then both unrevealed, and revealed social myths get in area of its reflections. (As a matter of fact, they differ with the revealing degree, that is to say the attitude of creator's knowledge about the social myth and ignorance of myth dweller about a myth.)

When P.S.Gurevich emphasizes voluntariness of social myths' application which are dominant in society with mass influence force, he sorts certain social mythology from rhizomorphic

field by the purposes of domination and values of controllability.

Rhizomorphism of a field of social mythology means, that social myths produce dominant groups for influence on the mass and different social groups of mass for influence on other social groups and on the dominant groups. P.S.Gurevich, as a matter of fact, concentrates on special development of social mythology. However, as well as M. Mogeiko (Mogeiko, 1999), he reflects on revealed and evident social myths, not recognizing unrevealed social myths as a problem domain of social mythology («modern mythology» by Mogeiko, 1999).

As pointed, «A myth can be considered as certain compensation and addition for missing, but very important information for a man. And it is necessary to distinguish two kinds of myth (borders between them can be washed out):

- an evident myth which openly states hypertrophy, modification, irreality of events (epos, fairy tales, legends, classical myths of antique Greece, Rome, East countries, etc.)
- a myth camouflaged as a science, i.e. myth as a pseudo science (para science) (racist, geopolitical, theosophical, anthroposophical, alchemical and other concepts).

Sometimes a myth represents symbolical expression of quite real situations. The so-called social cultural myth excels with the most striking symbolic ... it is a myth connected with one or another ethnos which produce numbers of more specific myths of individual and collective mind» (Vasil'ev et al., 1998). Zobov and Kelaciev are the closest to us in time enunciates of typology of social myths by their revealing degree.

Let's think of this typology.

The unrevealed myths are perceived by myth dwellers as an only possible world view and they are not willed to be reconsidered, doubted myth dwellers' mind (from this position it would



Stormy petrel and the stormy ocean on the USSR 1 ruble coin. We can not understand the petrel colour.
(source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_of_a_Storm_petrel)



For English language culture space the Stormy Petrel colour is dark. But there is no dark Stormy Petrel in the USSR. (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_of_a_Storm_petrel; «Wilson's Storm-petrel, painted by John James Audubon»)

be possible to deduce the reverse position - all the judgments called into question, are gradually revealing).

Absence of comprehension of social myths creators' will in unrevealed myths also makes it senseless to search for unrevealed myths among brands: considering brands the will of their creators is on hand and it is strengthened by a symbol in form of a trade mark.

How estimably sounds Parmenides: «The man is a measure of all things: existing - that they exist and not existing - that they do not exist». The unrevealed myths do not even belong to possible, virtual worlds and do not exist for their dwellers because they are not doubted.

The revealed social myths represent fragments of beliefs, common prejudices, theses and preconditions of favorite advertising, standard opinions, social cultural myths caught in focus of rational logic preparation, which cause ambivalent feeling of a reality/unreality.

This group of myths has drawn attention of M. Mogeiko reflecting on social myths as «an impregnation of a myth in a tradition not mythological (based on unrevealed myths – *author's comment*) by the nature». M. Mogeiko described the modern reality generally «as rationalistic, with impregnations of this group of myths» (Mogeiko, 1999).

Evident myths are pure meaning of social mythology. Its meant are unrevealed and revealed myths.

Evident myths are perceived precisely in a context of the art truth, figuratively, and even later they are considered as fiction, silly, ridiculous, naïve archaic children's fairy tales, certainly false, maliciously created and disgusting by the majority of people. Such social myths gradually disintegrate, become a part of expressive rhetorical layer of language and also subject of philological studies such as tropes and rhetorical figures, language detonators, a building material

for forming a language world view based on unrevealed myths (which will be revealed, become evident and disintegrate as a myth social in due time).

There is no impenetrable border between these three groups of social myths (unrevealed, revealed, evident). It is mobile in synchronous and diachronic aspects, contextual. This border depends on man's world view and *represents tendency to identify verity as reality experienced as visibility in the form of seeming, and actual substance of a social myth as boundary metaphysical logic concept in a semantic field "reality - revealed social myth – lie"*.

Discussion of results

Here we consider a social myth as *specifically objectificated structural information in society system* which counterbalances the social chaos connected, first, with avalanche accumulation of scientific knowledge, and, secondly, with realization of individual man's freedom in conditions of essentially increased risks for vital activity and opportunities of individual influence on the general risks (Ulyanovsky, 2005).

The increase of knowledge can promote both to becoming, and revealing of social myths – it all depends on the will of social myths' creators. Thus, the will promoting becoming of a myth, operates with direction of myth creativity, imperceptibly focusing will of social myths' creators in the demanded direction of representation oneself in creativity products.

Myth dwellers allow confusion, attaching verity attributes to reality, that is to say, mixing ontological (reality) and gnosiological (verity) basis. The reality looks like realizability. It occurs because of trust of a myth dweller to personally seen ("it's better to see once, than to hear hundred times"), and also because of influence of traditional verification in the field of social humanitarian knowledge. The unrevealed social myths appear

for myth dwellers as features of a reality as such. The revealed social myths are recognized as social myths as such. Also, the revealed myths are described as local, partial being: scientists study them as mental construction of myth dwellers - social myths, but for myth dwellers they all still remain a verifiable part of social cultural (and is material physical) reality.

When a revealed social myth loses its feature of partial being, that is when all human beings, whose freedom depends on the revealing degree of this social myth, on knowledge about this social myth, when all these human beings recognize knowledge about this social myth, the myth becomes evident. The myth dweller's knowledge about a social myth is understood as knowledge congruent with the social myth's creator. As a matter of fact, it is knowledge about cause and effect dependences in such form and in such volume as they are known by the social myth's creator, and that simultaneously means understanding and distinction, splitting of the meaning and meant of this social myth. Cleared of the meant of this social myth its meaning forms an evident myth.

In borders of this example discussing influence of myth dweller's increase of knowledge on the process of revealing of a social myth, it seems interesting to describe the first communication effects of a social myth's revealing. When as a result of the communications there is a spasmodic, qualitative transition of a social myth from unrevealed form to revealed. Below-mentioned observation is especially valuable, because the men, which have gone through the moment of social myth's revealing, are intellectually perfect - two senior lecturer, the candidate of philosophical sciences and the professor, Doctor of Philosophy (in Russian degree). That emphasizes relative independence of being of unrevealed myths from an intellectual level of myth dwellers (though the heritage of dogmatism

in the Soviet philosophy can play a significant role in this episode). (Bykova, 1990) As professional philosophers, they, at an intellectual level, abstractedly understand relativity and seeming of a world view. At the same time, breaking a world view revealing knowledge concerning one of base components of a world view - learnt by heart at the Soviet school "Song of a Storm Petrel" (and emotionally accepted then), the knowledge causes in examinees an expressed vegetative reaction - reddening of skin, distortion of a voice timbre, general excitement. Senior lecturers start to prove fiercely, that it is impossible to apply biological information to common symbols because it is scientifically incorrect. The professor also starts to protect storm petrel as a symbol of his own emotional entirety and shelters with rhetorical reflections that ... 'from petrels' point of view people are rather strange beings too and from above it is visible that they are occupied with indecent things'.

The new knowledge already is present in world view of participants of this discussion concerning material "Fulmars - Silly persons attack". Therefore emotional defenses activate now analytical mechanisms of thinking. There comes an argument that A.M.Gorky, nevertheless, knew the invoice, probably, he just described not Soviet, but *other* storm petrels that he personally observed in the Black and Mediterranean seas. Approaches to social structure of the literature, its correlation with literary myths about writers, their life and a social position make such light correct (Anheier and Gerhards, 1991).

This argument finished discussion, it was accepted by all participants of discussion and served as a mechanism providing integration of new knowledge with old social myth dwellers.

Nevertheless, the further increase of demystifying knowledge concerning this problem reveals the social myth about storm petrel

even more though partially it confirms zoological hypotheses of participants of discussion.

Indeed, as we have already established from before-minded encyclopedias, in Black and Mediterranean sea, on island Capri, where A.M.Gorky is known to have spent some part of his life, there lives another kind of storm petrels not nesting the USSR. It is the so-called *small petrel* (Procellariidae puffinus), or as it is also named ... *python*.

And so, according to 5th volume of the encyclopedia "The life of animals" (*Animal's life*, 1970: 70)

"... the top of this bird's body is asp brown, the bottom is white."

This is where the black color in the metaphor of a lightning in initial lines of "Song of the Storm Petrel" comes from!

"Over the gray flatness of the sea the wind gathers storm-clouds. Between the clouds and the sea proudly soars the stormy petrel, as a streak of black lightning."

Concerning this participants of discussion are right - Gorky really did observe the small petrel. This bird eats not whales' droppings but anchovies. "In the winter in Black sea their main food is anchovies." (*Animal's life*, 1970) (in the same place)

The second name of Gorky's stormy petrel attracts attention – it's a python. Obviously, it is given to it because these stormy petrels "nest ... in cliff cracks or in burrows dug in soft ground. Sometimes these burrows have length up to 1,5 m." (in the same place). So, the small stormy petrel of revolution is similar in art to the adder by its places of the nesting which is a symbol of petty bourgeoisie and a character for another myth poetic work of the grand author.

Abovementioned explicated demystifying knowledge reveals other meanings - other social myths. These are myths about beings the same bloodline as fulmars-silly persons, but foreign

to Russia, their painting is similar to penguins, they live in warm region like adders, but cause exciting images of revolution in silly fulmars nesting in the USSR.

The social myth is represented in context of knowing and not knowing, and now it looks natural to examine function of a social myth in a society in gnosiological aspect.

The conclusion

We have considered knowledge as demystifying, revealing factor. The increase of knowledge can promote both becoming, and revealing of social myths - it all depends on the will of ruling elite of social myths. So, The Will promoting becoming of a myth controls direction of myth's creativity, imperceptibly focusing will of social myths' creators in the required direction of representing itself in creative works.

Myth dwellers allow confusion, attaching verity attributes to reality, that is to say, mixing ontological (reality) and gnosiological (verity) basis. The reality looks like realizability. It occurs because of trust of a myth dweller to personally seen ("it's better to see once, than to hear hundred times"), and also because of influence of traditional verification in the field of social humanitarian knowledge.

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What did the Stormy Petrel cry about? About the destructive potential of a storm resulting from a catastrophic difference between actual knowledge of those who planned it, of those who disappeared in it (Furet, 1999), about monsters, born with not the mind's sleep, but with the break of fantastic images of ideal desires (now it's an evident myth) in reality itself.

Questions for further research

Following questions demand further researches:

1) - Why did "Song of the Storm Petrel" pass all ideological cordons and did not cause any suspicions for all 70 years of the USSR's existence?

2) - Are the authors of the biological encyclopedia dissidents and smart falsifiers now? That can be probable because the «impartiality of researchers» is placed in doubt for a long time (Jaggar, 1989).

3) - Generalizing two previous questions - is repeated circulation of social mythology carried out in the society? How do cycles of such hypothetical circulation organize? Is there any mechanism of transition of evident myths to new unrevealed myths (and if it exists – how does it work)? Will our assumption that evident myths represent the ruined material of ideological connotations of previous periods (Gibbons, 2005) and that this ruined material acts as a building material for new unrevealed social mythology, prove to be true?

4) Then, **how** are cycles of social mythology connected with cycles of memory relevance in the society, how much this memory is connected with memory of concrete and subsequent generation?

5) How do the newest information technologies (Payne and Frow, 2004) influence (Himmelsbach, 2003) similar cycles of memory and social mythology – do they extend or, on the contrary, the increase of information noise promotes shortening of a cycle – the effect of "short memory".

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