

## Myth, Symbol and Ideology\*\*

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to argue that both myths and symbols can be discussed in the same setting as ideology. More than that, ideology, as a set of values shared by a community, is tributary to myths and to symbols. Also, this paper seeks to argue that if we associate a negative connotation to ideology, as some values imposed upon society by a particular power interest, then, to be successful, ideology must act through already present forms of the myth and symbols, re-contextualizing their meaning to serve that particular power interest.

**Keywords:** myth, mythification, symbol, interpretation, ideology.

### I. Myth and mythification

In the largest sense, the myth is to be understood as a discourse, a story, expressed in speaking, the origin of which is unknown. The interpretation of myths has a vast history and the authors who dealt with this issue are plentiful. Those who are the benchmarks for our discussion are close to us, chronologically speaking, and provide clues also for the modality in which the myths may be discussed in parallel with the ideological phenomenon.

First, the myth may be described as a form of language<sup>1</sup>. An image, a film, a painting may be described as a myth, as well. However, not all forms of language, all images may be placed within the sphere of myth. Furthermore, the sense of myth may not be identified if we do not pass beyond the representative nature of the language; it co-exists with the language.

The myth may be explained within a semiology framework. Formally, the semiology is described by Roland Barthes as a structure having as a basis three elements: the signifier, the signified and the sign. To exemplify this, Barthes refers to roses<sup>2</sup>. For him, the roses signify passion. The signifier in this relationship is *roses*, and the signified is *passion*. In a formal analysis, *the "roses"* is in a relation with *the "passion"*. This relationship constitutes the sign. The association between *roses* and *passion* takes place due to experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

By reviewing the relationship among the three elements, we find that the signifier is *empty* as far as the meaning is concerned. The rose, in itself, has no meaning. Due to consciousness, the sign, the relation between the signifier and signified, *gets filled* with meaning.

The myth cannot be understood only at the level of language; it involves a *meta-language*. Thus, we have a sign, from a first relationship (between a signifier and a signified) that passes to another level, that of meta-language and finds itself here in a new relationship, of 2<sup>nd</sup> order, in which it becomes itself a signifier. Therefore, in the mythic plan, we have a relationship between a signifier (that is at its origin the sign of another relationship) and a new signified. In the same way, the relationship between the two ones will render in turn a new sign<sup>3</sup>.

*The mythic plan* is somehow paradoxical. If, within the first relationship, the sign *gets filled* with meaning, within the second relationship, in which it becomes a signifier, it gets emptied of meaning, remaining only as a form. Thus, the interpreters of the myth find themselves in difficulty as they are faced with a structure of the discursive unit that, at its origin, has a meaning, but that at the same time is only form, in a new relationship.

In an attempt to make ourselves understood, let's assume as follows: I am at the grammar class, at high-school, and I am presented with the following sentence: *the tree is a ladder*, of which the only thing I know is that is from a sacred ancient text. As I am at a grammar class, I am asked to analyse the relationship between the subject and the predicate. The signifier consists of the terms *tree*, *is* and *a ladder*. The signified is the acoustic image of the sentence *the tree is a ladder*. Ultimately, within the context of the grammar class, *the tree is a ladder* terms for me a grammatical structure that I have to analyse. However, upon reading afresh the sentence, I realize that *the tree is a ladder* holds also another meaning which remains hidden from me. As I lack the experience of the context from which the sentence was taken, I cannot retrace that meaning. The sentence has a signifier that originates in another reference system, as it is at its origin a sign of another context. I lack the data required for building the universe in which *the tree is a ladder* was originally uttered. I do not know whether the religious man of a certain country, in a certain time of the year, within a ritual, transcends the time and the space towards eternity and paradise by climbing a ladder that for that man represents a Cosmic Tree. As I lack this experience, I am only presented with a form, which, in a new relationship, may only be given the meaning of a grammatical structure. The paradoxical structure of this sentence is obvious when, noticing that it is only a shape, we find that is not only an empty shape that may be completely filled by another content, meaning, but it preserves though the traces of the older meaning,

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<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

undecipherable, however, without the conscience of the context from which it originates:

“But the essential point in all this is that the form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one’s disposal. One believes that the meaning is going to die, but is a death with reprieve; the meaning loses its value, but keeps its life, from which the form of the myth will draw its nourishment. The meaning will be for the form like an instantaneous reserve of history, a tamed richness [...] It is this constant game of hide and seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth.”<sup>4</sup>

It follows that, for instance, a text could never be able to *comprise*, in relation to what it *intends* to signify, an ultimate meaning. The text, due to the form to which it is bound, will always comprise residues of meaning as well; its form cannot ignore them, as they are, in a certain way, constitutive parts of it. These *residues of meaning* are added to the new relationship that it attempts to achieve with a signifier. This game between form and meaning in continuous interaction is the stake of the interpretation act. This may signify the accurate discrimination of the significances that a text may suggest *in itself*, but also the identification of the residual meanings that come together with its form – hence the issue faced by the translator. He or she has to achieve a transfer of meaning between two different forms. The problem is that each form comes with distinct residual meanings. Moreover, the interpretation can also regard the compatibility between form and meaning, identifying the possibility conditions for which a certain form is best compatible, is mostly associated with a type of rationale that cannot easily be caught in metaphors. Similarly, there is an affinity of the form *rose* with the fact that it refers to passion; but that association does not emerge by itself, but is generated against the background of an experience, of culture and history, where the interdependences and the successive interactions between the form and the meaning become difficult to track.

Therefore, the myth is the form holding a signification specific to a certain historical context, where experiences different from those common to us were shared. However, the myth preserves a remaining of the initial signification, but, when updated, it is given an infusion of meaning by means of re-contextualization. Nevertheless, the myth does not evolve like any other act of language, but, as Barthes states, it should be *chosen* by history in order to remain alive<sup>5</sup>.

The re-contextualization of an older form, by mythification, may gain a negative connotation. An example used by Barthes in order to explain a form of mythification is that of an image where a black man, wearing a

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109.

uniform, looks up while saluting in the military way, probable the French tri-coloured flag<sup>6</sup>. The actual image is what we name *form*. This, placed in the context of the French imperialism, takes over an artificially-imposed significance: a black man, *as all French young men*, salutes while wearing a military uniform, the French flag, probably, in the name of imperialism. But besides this form in which a new meaning is projected, we may also find another signification, pushed towards the side, which must be replaced. The image makes also reference, however in a different context, to the situation when the black men were oppressed, used as tools, due to the colonialism.

The re-contextualization of a meaning, the mythification, may be correlated to ideology. Within the context where ideology means the dissemination of certain values which legitimate a certain political structure, the mythification may be a form by which that ideology can be disseminated. In order to be efficient to the fullest, the mythification targets actually the *erasure*, the interpretation of history in a unilateral way. The *cleaning* of history by means of censure aims exactly at blotting the meaning still present in a form or another, so that it may take over to the highest degree, following the re-contextualization, a new meaning. It is still an open issue whether the ideology may overlap entirely, by mythification, a form, conferring an *artificial* meaning to it. When we refer to myths, we fail to see all the time the contortion of the meaning. We should not exclude the possibility that certain myths be *chosen* by history, to use the term employed by Barthes, for the very reason that they make reference, by their significances that they still preserve, regardless the way in which they have been re-contextualized, to primary experiences. The history does not choose them, they are rather expressions that keep coming back as archetypal forms, because people cannot disregard them as they are constitutive to the psyche in general.

## II. Myths as benchmarks

On other hand, it may be suggested that the myth is rather related to experience than to significance. The myths, at their origin, are benchmarks. In this context, Joseph Campbell, during an interview with Bill Moyers, stated:

“Campbell: People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. That’s what it’s all finally about, and that’s what these clues help us to find within ourselves.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116.

Moyers: Myths are clues?

Campbell: Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life.”<sup>7</sup>

Also:

“Moyers: But all of these myths are other people’s dreams.

Campbell: Oh, no, they’re not. They are the world’s dreams. They are archetypal dreams and deal with great human problems. I know when I come to one of these thresholds now. The myth tells me about it, how to respond to certain crises of disappointment or delight or failure or success. The myth tells me where I am.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Campbell, the myth holds four functions<sup>9</sup>. Firstly, the myth holds a mystic function, as it narrates about the mysteries of universe, of creation; it may make the listener or reader of the myth experience the wonder. Secondly, the myth holds a cosmologic dimension, as it indicates the structure of the universe, but in a manner where, again, the presence of mystery makes itself felt. Thirdly, it holds a sociologic function. The myth provides the guiding marks for the social life. Finally, the myth holds a pedagogical function, pointing the way in which one may live, regardless the circumstances.

Eliade, making reference to the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, finds that the myth signifies everything opposing to *reality*<sup>10</sup>. In this context, the relationship of the myth with the ideology is obvious. Moreover, the myth may intermingle with the ideology, as, more often than not, the ideology was understood as opposed to reality. The issue is what we mean by reality and in what way the ideology, together with the myth, are in opposition to it.

As the myths do, the ideology tells a story, suggests a meaning. The myths address to anyone, but not all understand them. The myths need to be interpreted. The meaning for the way in which we must act, for the way in which we must experience, following hearing or reading a myth, must be deciphered, pursued. At first, the myth leaves us perplex, astonished. This function of it urges towards reflection, towards meditation. It suggests that, actually, reality is not only what can be seen, that sometimes the meaning is hidden. In this respect, the myth does oppose to reality, but only to penetrate it deeper, to signify and experiment it. However, the ideology addresses, as myth does, to anyone, but presents itself as simple. It must be understood as such and in this simplicity lays its efficacy. It provides the coordinates, the benchmarks, the data for the way in which we are supposed to act now, in this context, in this circumstance, but it is severed from the

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, First Anchor Books Edition, July, 1991, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>10</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Mituri, vise și mistere*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, București, 1998, p. 17.

feeling of wonder. This is the one that it should borrow in order to reach people's hearts. The ideology begins by being a parasite of the myth, only to proceed subsequently, having digested all of the latter's substance, to pushing the latter aside as with an empty shell. In the end, it asserts itself to be full of substance, accusing the remaining of the myth, its form, as being a worthless thing. The ideology fails to take over *in an honest way* the substance of myth, but steals it and in the end it is the one making accusations. It conquers by using the mask of myth but proves itself to be a green-eyed partner, imposing itself continuously in the life of the other. The myth seduces but keeps its distance and does not impose itself violently. It offers meaning but not suffocates with it.

To Eliade, it is obvious that Marx conquers by building his philosophic doctrine upon "one of the great eschatological myths of the Asian-Mediterranean world, namely: the redeeming role of The Right One (*the chosen, the anointed, the immaculate, the messenger* – in our days, the proletariat), whose sufferings are called to change the ontological status of the world"<sup>11</sup>. The other example offered by Eliade regarding myth and ideology refers to National-Socialism. It is built, in the same way, on the basis of the Christianity, not upon its structure, but in opposition to it. The National-Socialism fails to provide compassion and to promise salvation, but is pessimistic, proposing the birth of another world following a final fight during which both parties will pay an immense toll:

„Translated in politics terms, this substitution means to say approximately the following: give up your old Judeo-Christian histories and revive deep within your soul the faith of your ancients, the Germans; then, prepare yourselves for the great ultimate fight between our gods and the demonic forces; in that apocalyptic battle, our gods and heroes – and we together with them – will lose our lives, it will be a *ragnarök*, but a new world will be born later.”<sup>12</sup>

The myth is each time the myth of the stranger, of the unknown one, it is a meaning proposed to me, an experience offered to me. If I catch the meaning, I re-live the experience, the alien turns into a fellow human. It may become more *real* than the contemporary people. It is more real, more easily to comprehend because it experienced a state that I have lived myself, because it has understood in a certain way the limit situation in which it found itself, and now it proposes to me, by its example, to do the same thing, or to learn from this. In the same way, by reading literature, getting close to the character, we are *there*, together with him or her, leading us until a point where, separated from ourselves, we find ourselves in another time and another space. As for the literature, shows, films, Eliade remarks that

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 20-21.

they are substitutes for the primal myths<sup>13</sup>. They may transform, in turn, in a myth, to the extent to which they are *chosen* by the history, as far as they offer pertinent coordinates for limit situations.

It can be noticed, with regard to the dialogue between the culture of the European space in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the so-called exotic cultures, that the latter ones seem to be mainly interested in only two themes: that of Christianity and that of Communism, while popular themes, as that of positivism, shared by a large part of Europe, are not of very great interest<sup>14</sup>. A theme as the positivism can be easily distinguished from the ideological phenomenon, while Christianity and the Communism are often studied as ideologies. The situation seems to be explained by the fact that both Christianity and the Communism are doctrines of salvation and, therefore, they resort to symbols and myths to be found, in similar forms, at the extra-European cultures as well.

Eliade notices that the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is the moment where, in Europe, the symbols and myths are deconstructed, rationalized, pushed towards the periphery of knowledge, by the fact that they are rather associated to the spiritual life, contravening to rationality that begins to take shape<sup>15</sup>. They are harmful, disturbing the understanding of the historic current state of things, attempting to perpetuate a regime of power that finds no longer its place. No sooner than the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the base of the study of the unconscious is formed, the fact is found that both forms of myth and the symbols may not be really put in parentheses. The development of the psychoanalysis is concomitant with an assertion of *irrationality* (from the perspective of a positivistic logic), as the mechanisms of the psyche are not dissociable from symbols and myths:

“The images, the symbols, the myths are not arbitrary creations of the psyche: they respond to a need and fulfil a function: to unveil the most secret ways of the being. Therefore, their studying allows us to know better the human, “the pure and simple human”, who was not affected by the historical circumstances. Each historical being bears in itself a large part of the humanity of before the history.”<sup>16</sup>

When referring to images, symbols and myths, Eliade does not target necessarily at their classic manifestations. The cross may symbolize the suffering of Christ, the fact that, in experimenting the condition of human, he had to die in order to get close to those whom he speaks about the

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>14</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Imagini și simboluri. Eșeu despre simbolismul magic-religios*, Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

recovery of a lost paradise. The promise of paradise may be, however, reconstituted also via other symbols or a random image. The interpreter is the one who sees behind the mask that, in a certain context, is worn by an image, by identifying the *force* behind it, using the concept of Nietzsche<sup>17</sup>; identifying the fundamental need for which the image or symbol stands. In this context, for good reason does Eliade state that a fragment of a song, played on accordion, heard by chance, may bear, for the one who catches it, the nostalgia of a paradise that cannot be recovered<sup>18</sup>. Pushing the symbols, the myths to a periphery area of knowledge can only help build a unilateral discourse about psyche, understand the individuals as final products of the historical context in which they find themselves. The marginalization of the study targeting the modality by which, for instance, one simple image may trigger an affective status, determining modalities to interpret the world depending on the impact that it has over the psyche, seems to put in parentheses an entire range of experiences which, if we are to be honest to ourselves, we should not ignore. On other side, to ignore such experiences may reverberate in a harmful way over us, finding us estranged from our own wishes, states, relating in a non-authentic way to ourselves and the others:

“Such *nostalgias* were not taken into account. We did not want to see in them but psychical fragments empty of significance: it was admitted, at the very most, that they might be of interest for some investigations regarding forms of psychical evasion. On the contrary, the nostalgias are sometimes charged with significances engaging the very condition of human; having this feature, they present interest for the philosopher as well as for the theologian. Only, they were not taken seriously, they were regarded as *frivolous*: what subject can be more discreditable than the image of the Lost Paradise elicited suddenly by the song played on accordion.”<sup>19</sup>

We may, however, ask ourselves, whether, no matter how hard we would try to marginalize the importance of the myths, of symbols, it should be admitted that they cannot be entirely suppressed, continuing to appear under different guises, manifestations, why those new faces that they receive are classified under a category of non-authenticity? True, it is important to know accurately the origin of a symbol or myth, from a historical perspective, but to what extent may one assert that the reliving of an emotion, for instance due to the nostalgia triggered by a musical fragment, is less intense, or may be labelled even as non-authentic, in comparison with the *living* of the symbol in its classic form, for instance by participating to a

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<sup>17</sup> Dilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, Ed. All, București, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Eliade, Mircea, *Imagini și simboluri...*, ed. cit., p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.



church service? Does the fact that the image of the mother is caught in a classic form in the Myth of Oedipus render the emotion triggered by listening to the song *The End*, of The Doors perform non-authentic? To put it differently, are not the higher levels those that matter? We may live with the feeling that the historic complex in which we find ourselves is a de-spiritualized one, but may we assert with confidence that, in history, people were not equally, or even more, alienated from their own experiences or from a form or another of spiritual life? We see ourselves every time reaching the end of history in a tragic way, having a past that, each time, we must recover, but we are seldom willing to see our future in other way than a glorious reconstruction of that past that, actually, is no longer possible and that maybe we shouldn't even attempt to rebuild.

Eliade attempts to demonstrate that there is an archaic behaviour of the human psyche that is not acquired within a historic background<sup>20</sup>. He argues that, regardless the historic context, be it the ancient Egypt, be it the Vedic India, there is a common symbolism. For instance, the symbolism of ascent is the same: to create the link, by means of a ritual, between the earth and the gods' world. The symbolism of the ascension is materialized by the motif of the ladder that is a replica of the Universal Column, of the Cosmic Tree, of the Mountain, designating the centre of a religious space by the fact that it is the place where the world was created. The distance to the place where the creation began must be each time recovered. Thus, the stability of the world is endangered. This recovery is exemplified by Eliade by the myth of Parsifal and of the Fisher King. Parsifal is the only one who succeeds in curing the king's disease, the disintegration of the kingdom, of the nature, by raising the issue of the centre, wondering where the Grail is. By the mere problematization of the creation act, the nature recovers its health, the life within the kingdom gets a new meaning. In that context, Eliade asserts:

“This small detail of a grandiose European myth disclosed at least one ignored aspect of the symbolism of the Centre: not only that there is an intimate sympathy between the life of Universe and the salvation of human, but it takes no more than simply raise the issue of salvation, it is enough to raise the central problem, i.e. the problem, in order that the cosmic life regenerate itself indefinitely. Because more often than not the death – as this mythic fragment seems to show – is nothing short than the consequence of our disinterest towards immortality.”<sup>21</sup>

The myth may not be comprised in the historic time, but finds itself of the limit of this time, taking place within a sacred time that cannot be specified with accuracy. To narrate it is more than to sequence a number of events,

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 57-63.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.

but it produces a re-updating of the sacred time in which is, primarily, located. Therefore, it is not to be conducted anytime, anywhere, but only upon the limit situations, when, in the everyday, one cannot find the meaning of an occurrence, of an action that must be comprehended. Rather, to re-update the sacred time by bringing the myth to the front takes place in a ritualistic context, during specific periods deemed as sacred by the shaman, priest etc.<sup>22</sup>

Eliade suggests that, although the religious experiences may be researched as having been determined by a space and a time that allow for their being located in history, they view the transcendence of the historic space and time: the reclaim of the paradise, the finding of a symbolic centre of the world by which the passage into another plan of existence is possible, the approach of the gods, the magic linking to or de-linking from the divinity etc. In the arguments of Clifford Geertz<sup>23</sup> to the favour of the scenario where the ideological phenomenon is achieved also via images, symbols, metaphors that constitute elements generating cohesion within the communities, as a common background determining a certain relation to the world, it is important to find whether the symbols, in general, and the religious ones, in particular, have an origin that can be accurately placed in history, or whether they are of a universal nature, namely they may appear regardless the historic context (the two assertion are not necessarily mutually exclusive).

In the context of our study, the stake is the following: if one religious symbol has one single origin and, in time, it is transferred and adopted, under multiple forms, by other communities, then it seems easy to assert that a religious symbol is part of an ideology. For instance, the Christianity emerged historically. By the fact that its origin can be pointed, the Christianity may be understood as an ideology. In this context the Christianity, the precise expression of a certain context having its own vision, its own way to relate to the world, by the values that it proposes, it may be an inadequate modality of relating to the historic context in which we find ourselves. However, it is the transcendence of time and space by the offered eternity and paradise that the Christianity has as a purpose. This transcendence is its stake. The issue is whether the attempt to exceed the time and space is a practice having a historic origin tributary to a certain context, or whether it is a universal practice having its origin deeply rooted in our very nature.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>23</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1973, pp. 193-234.

### III. Symbols as manifestations of the psyche

The term *symbol* has its origin in Greek (*symbolon*), where it means a password, a pass, or *thrown together*, a mix of two things. In Latin (*symbolum*), the term designates a belief, a hall-mark. In the poem *The Faerie Queene*, by Edmund Spenser, at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the significance of *something that stands for something else* is offered for the first time.

Basically, we understand by symbol an *object* representing, suggesting an idea, a belief, an action, an image or another object. The symbols may, in turn, have multiple forms, may be perceived as sounds, images etc. For instance, the letters symbolize sounds, the roses symbolize passion.

If we understand the inner life, within Jung's meaning, as a succession of images, of symbols *behind which* the psyche attaches emotions, significances, then the symbols may provide clues of the ideological phenomenon. The fact that the symbols, as images, are taken *to the surface* from the unconscious, via the dreams, may signify, among others, a stress of the psyche due to the difference from the way we live our daily life, depending on various values, concepts, and the way our nature demands that we should do it. The discourse about the unconscious may be made, rather, in negative terms, however this does not mean that it remains entirely cryptic, but communicates its meanings via symbols. To the extent to which the latter ones are deciphered, upon the moment when they are consciously understood, then this stress of psyche disappears, or at least we live being aware of the meaning suggested by the unconscious.

Jung distinguishes between the notions of *sign* and *symbol*<sup>24</sup>. The sign is an adequate expression of a thing, of a notion. For instance, the fountain pen is a sign for writing, or the wheel is a sign for movement. But, in the same way, a keyboard may be a sign for writing and a wing may be a sign for movement. Within the sphere of the sign, we may gather an entire range of things that refer, all of them, to the same ideas. On the contrary, the symbol makes reference to something else, and that something else is always not suggested in its entirety, leaving out an unknown residuum. There is a deeper compatibility between the symbol and what it designates; a sign may be replaced by another, but a symbol refers only to one thing, even if our understanding of that thing is not complete.

The symbols that the psyche represents to us have an unknown side. We are, on one hand, in the hold of the representation of the symbol, but it makes reference to an unconscious, still not understood, stress. When a symbol presents to us as such it is not necessarily a live one, i.e. it addresses only to one side of the intellect, but only when: „for an observer, it expresses in an ultimate way a fact divined, but still unknown. Under such

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<sup>24</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Tipuri psihologice*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1997, p. 501.

circumstances, it bestirs a participation of the unconscious. It has an invigorating and stimulating effect. But as Faust puts it: *But differently ah! This sign thrills me!*<sup>25</sup>

The symbols can be achieved by means of images. In this context, the image does not represent a physical object; e.g., a painting. Similarly, it is not a mental representation of an object, but refers to an object using an indirect manner. The representation is a process taking place in an aware way. The *mental* image is perceived by the consciousness, but appears following the imaginative process of the unconsciousness, being located within a *space* common to both those psyche areas. The image should not be mixed up with hallucination, it does not substitute itself to the reality, nor is it symptom for any disease. However, the image can be valued more than the reality, than the exterior world, as it can be more credible, fuller of meaning.

Jung distinguished between two types of images: the personal one and the primordial one<sup>26</sup>. The personal image is the specific expression of a psyche, depending on its own experiences, without necessarily being in anyway related to a conflict between the social values and the own urges. The primordial image is the one of consequence within the context of the discussion of ideology. This type of image has an archaic nature:

“I speak of an archaic character when the image displays a remarkable concordance with renowned mythological motifs, in this case it expresses, on one hand, materials that are preponderantly *collective-unconscious*, and on other hand it indicates the fact that the momentary status of the conscience is subjected less to a personal influence and rather to a collective one.”<sup>27</sup>

The collective influence is due to an experience repeated at community level. The experiences, as they are repeated, become *engraved* in the collective mental. For instance, by the constant succession of sunrise and sunset, experiences lived by all the members of a community are produced. However, Jung does not consider that the psyche is a passive structure. The repeated experience of the sunrise and sunset is not inscribed as on a white sheet of paper. The psyche gives them value depending on its own tensions and laws which constitute its very nature. Without that tension, the myth could not be possible. Although it may be determined by the cycles of nature, the meaning is offered due to a tension existent within the psyche:

“We are, therefore, constrained to assume that the given structure of the brain owes its composition not only to the influence of the ambient conditions, but

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 504.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 477.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

also to the specific and autonomous constitution of the live matter, i.e. to a law given at the same time as the life. The given constitution of the body is therefore a product of, on hand, the outer circumstances, on other hand, the determinations inherent to the alive.”<sup>28</sup>

The *archaic* image is the condition of possibility for the idea to appear. The latter does not belong to the experience, but is the possibility condition of the emergence of any experience; it may take place only due to the tension already existent within the psyche, due to its nature, its predetermined structure that subsequently provides shape for all thoughts. The primordial image, processed at the intellectual level, turns itself into idea. This one redounds upon the life, meaning that it determines value-assignments depending to which the feelings, the perceptions are then orientated. Thus, “in the inner visual field, the primordial image appears as a symbol, by dint of its material nature, it may perceive the material feeling still undifferentiated, and pursuant to its significance, it may perceive the idea whose mother it is, thus blending together the idea and the feeling”<sup>29</sup>.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Ideology, in order to be effective, must substitute itself to the archetypal forms present at the level of the collective unconscious. If we speak about ideology as a system of values, rules, beliefs that are dispersed in a certain group in order to serve an interest of the power, then, under the compulsion of this power, the ideology has to act by mystifying, by substituting to old values some new ones, it must deviate meanings, replace the images and symbols constituting the space of the collective unconscious. If the latter is modified, then any idea will produce assignments of value that will have a meaning already holding a place in a frame of reference and will serve the interest of the power who has disseminated that ideology.

However, this process cannot be produced, during a short period of time. The individuals must be educated and re-educated. Those who would not part with the old mental forms must be driven to the periphery of the society, they must be denied the opportunity to provide another point of view, based on a different frame of reference. The ideology as a vision proposed and implemented by some interest of the power can only be a system of *artificial* values. It interposes to a natural order in which the symbols, as understood by Jung, appear and offer significances and meanings to a psychical experience determined by a certain historic context, and then eventually disappear when their significance is no longer backed

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 478.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 480.

by an unconscious tension which provided them with energy and pushed them to the conscious. The ideological symbol suggests itself to be eternal. This feature is the one that determines, eventually, its death.

Any practice, any symbol or ritual is historical, but its stake is universal. To put it differently, a symbol does not necessarily depend on the historic context in which it is produced; the context determines only the form in which it manifests itself. The symbol may emerge in any moment of the history. It is possible that its origin be within our psyche and its manifestation be only an updating of an archetypal form. In an attempt to demonstrate the fact that certain symbols are universal, the researcher should identify similar symbols in different cultures that were isolated from one another. However, the hypothesis of the common origin of those practices may not be entirely precluded, as who may assert with accuracy that it couldn't happen that those cultures, apparently isolated, communicated at a certain point among them, and the traces of such interaction cannot be retraced? It is possible that an attempt having greater chances of success, in an attempt to determine the universal nature of certain symbols may be offered by psychology. If certain manifestations of the psyche (persisting images, symbols, dreams) are identified as means by which the psyche manifests itself to a large extent, then one may suggest the fact that they have a universal nature. This hypothesis seems to be also taken over by Eliade:

“Provisionally, we should accept therefore the hypothesis according to which at least a certain area of the subconscious is dominated by the same archetypes that dominate and organize the conscious experience and the trans-conscious one. Therefore, we will be entitled to regard the multiple versions of a symbolic complex [...] as an endless array of forms that, in the diversified plan of the dream, myth, rite, theology, mysticism, metaphysic etc. attempts to *accomplish* the archetype.”<sup>30</sup>

The significance of a symbol is taken over and reinterpreted depending on the historic context, even if, originally, it responds to the same fundamental human need. For instance, the Christianity assumes and transforms the previous symbols: the meaning of the Cosmic Tree is substituted with that of the Son of God. The representations, the dreams, the images produced by the psychic are cut to match the shape imposed by the historical context by a religion or other, and their interpretation takes place depending on the data of that vision. Although, essentially, the symbols stands for the need to transcend the historical time and space, its interpretation is determined by the historical context, being conducted against the data of the new context. This does not mean that the symbols are *equalized*. Obviously, there are

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<sup>30</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Imagini și simboluri...*, ed. cit., p. 150.

differences between the Cosmic Tree and Jesus. At the same time, they are coherent symbols, i. e. they respond, in various forms, to the same attempt to get beyond the historic time. The Christianity does not produce, by its historic occurrence, the need to exceed this world (the need pre-existed), but reinterpret the modality by which the entry into eternity should be performed. In support of this I would refer to the following paragraph:

“The symbolism adds a new value to an object or action, without damaging by this their own and direct values. Applied to an object or to an action, the symbolism makes them become *open*. The symbolic thinking breaks the immediate reality without lessening or depreciating it, in its perspective. The universe is not closed, no object remains isolated within its own existentiality: everything links to everything via a close system of correspondences and assimilations. The human of the archaic societies acquired self-conscience within an *open world* rich in significances: whether such *openings* are as many means of evasion or whether, on the contrary, they are the only means to accede the actual reality of the world, that is yet to be seen.”<sup>31</sup>

The function of the symbol may be caught also when analysed within a political context. A means by which one can track the relationship between the ideology and symbols is to notice the way in which a political regime produces, when reaching to be the dominant force within a nation, a complex of new symbols legitimating its power. A more interesting hypothesis is, however, that a political regime does not produce new symbols out of nothing or only depending on its own image, but anchors itself in already-existing symbols, hijacking their initial significance so that it may be projected not only as being legitimate, but as the only solution adequate to the historic context in which it is. In relation to this, making reference to Communism, Herald Wydra says:

“Symbols resonate in the ordinary and habitual lives of people because they capture people’s minds and hearts in ecstatic, out of ordinary situations. Symbols “function” only to the extent that their meanings – such as language symbols, semiotic codes, and forms of iconic or ritual presentation – have a concrete, experiential basis. They provide orientation and markers of certainty when authority dissolves, leaders die, symbols of oppression (such as prisons) are overturned, walls collapse, or towers crumble.”<sup>32</sup>

In a way similar to the one in which the Christianity embeds, by the Son of God, an older symbol, that of the Cosmic Tree, by which the salvation may be achieved, the pass to another world, so will the salvation take place, in

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>32</sup> Herald Wydra, „The Power of Symbols- Communism and Beyond”, in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Springer US, vol. 25, Issue 1, 09/2012, p. 50.

the Communism, but by the effort of the proletariat. The historical context is the one that allows for the transfer of meaning from an older symbol to a new one. In other words, as long as a symbol responds to the human need of having benchmarks, in a certain context, there is no reason for it to be transformed. The transformation takes place when a force that is external to a community (namely, it has different values from those of the community where it attempts to modify the meaning of the old symbols), it finds that community to be confused – when the benchmarks it holds fail to respond to the context of the present. The symbols, irrespective of their regarding the religious phenomenon, or referring to the self-image of the community, or to the political practice, must orientate instinctually the community in order to be *efficient*. When the universe of meanings of a community falls apart, we find the moment when the symbols are susceptible of being reinterpreted, the moment when revolutions occur and when the history begins to unfold following a different vision. In the context of the revolutions in Russia in the period around 1917 we can see such a situation, when the old values did not manage to provide benchmarks relevant for the contemporary historical context. Against the decrease in authority of the Tsar, the Orthodox Church proposed a program for Russia salvation suggesting the symbol of a third Rome. On the contrary, the desacralization of the Tsar failed to result into a closeness of the population to the Orthodox Church, but finds its benchmarks in another type of salvation – the Messianism of the proletarian revolution:

“This revolutionary messianism largely accounts for why an atheistic ideology would be successful in a deeply religious, orthodox country. While the Bolsheviks ruthlessly persecuted the Orthodox Church, they used religious symbols in iconic representations, visual imagery, and semiotic practice to represent the proletariat as the collective hero of history.”<sup>33</sup>

As time passed, a communist regime as that in Russia, dissociating from the moment when it gained its power and beginning to lose its symbolic relevance, would attempt to charge with importance the original moment until the latter raises to the size of a myth. The loss of the legitimacy and relevance of the political system is compensated by intensifying the importance given to symbols. The celebration of the birth of the communist leaders, of the revolution and the institutionalization of such practices only target at re-updating the primal act that has by now passed to a mythic, sacred time. The period before the revolution turns into pre-history. The true history begins only after the proletariat has acquired self-awareness.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55.