

*Maybe someday we'll understand that the logic of mythic and scientific thinking is the same and man used to think always well.*

Claude Lévi-Strauss

*The world of myths is not a homeland but a labyrinth to be escaped for the sake of your own identity.*

Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno

Nationality once again becomes an exceptional sign of time. In our attempts to pull away from all-pervading globalization, Cosmopolitical orientation and universal unification process as never ending desolation labyrinth, where space perception, feeling of time, orientation of values are lost, we focus on authentic identity. Meaningful identity formation starts with historical perceptions, reality transactions and present day investments into the future. "Imagined communities" can survive only while developing their identity, peculiarity and originality, stimulating self-esteem, demonstrating national imagination and significant posture.

National identity is inseparable from political maturity of society. National myths demonstrating horizons of collective memory and imagination turn into mass usage products. Mythical world view becomes social needs hostage. Contemporary nations must reconstruct their foundations and it is possible by analysis of national myths and memoirs, by search of ethnic symbolic manifestations and originality with no regard to time challenges (Smith 1999). Links between time, nations and nationality, in comparison of programs, myths and realities, are raised in research by Eric Hobsbawm. History of literary language is closely related to national history and this is characteristic of Lithuania (Hobsbawm 1990 54) as well as nationality transformations in various periods of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The questions of the national origin are raised in the investigations of the history and ideology and they are related to modernization of argumentation in the same way as the further existence of contemporary nations is related to the development of national cultural foundations (Anderson 1991). The scenarios of future prognosis as well as evalua-

tion of the past constitute the actual nationality background. By losing the mythical code of the past nations as well as narratives are supposed to find it anew. Otherwise, nation survives only as an ambivalent structure (Bhabha 1990).

We are tied by reality and constantly find ourselves in dead ends of distorted meanings. The great existential triad: past, present, future all are constantly intertwining and transformations are creating an assumed reality out of clear criteria, of reading codes and perception possibilities. The 20<sup>th</sup> century strengthened the domination of myth as structural universality, archetypical experience, and meaningful mechanism. Myth legalized its own net of meanings covering especially wide spectrum from holy, sacral things to marginal, profane, imitatorial meaning patterns.

The history of myth turned into the investigations of social, political, religious, cultural phenomena investigation disclosing actual, important and innovative significations. The French scientist, sociology initiator and anthropology propagator Émile Durkheim was the first to give sense to myth model by showing in his works that the world is perceived through socially created and learned classification schemes bearing binarity as their main feature. Myths as religious ideas have over passed their circle and shaped especially wide activity spectrum. He argues that there are certain essential notions dominating all our intellectual life and since Aristotle times they are called perception categories, such as time, space, sort, quantity, reason, matter, personality and other. They match the most universal qualities of things and are as if tight framework imprisoning our thinking (Durkheim 1937). The understanding of imprisonment is not only as a sanction to limit freedom, time and place but rather abstract and non-personal frames covering the existence of all human kind and providing grounds for infinity to spread stable and defined reference points for any possible events where every time section is evaluated by scrutinizing analytical outlook.

The originality of mythical thinking is based on analogies with scientific one and their common principle of identity. It is true, that in the history of ideas significant and wide systems of images such as mythology are often ignored. The main feature of mythology is discrepancy, bearing the most contradictory traits of being oneness and multitude, spiritual and material at the same time, being able to disintegrate endlessly and to preserve what constitutes them; it is an axiom in mythology maintaining that a component can substitute wholeness (Ibid.).

The research goals set the rules of methodological labyrinth. We can liberate ourselves from it only by naming the scientific task and its essence with the help of axiological scheme proposed by José Ortega y Gasset, when the task of science is to invent definitions, its essence – methodical efforts to escape from object to its notion; thus, a notion or a definition consists of sequence of conceptions and conception by itself is a mental allusion to an object (Ortega y Gasset 1982). Also, it is stressed, that science focuses not on separate things, facts, events, but on signs, images, structures which would be able to substitute them by a system or to present them as a whole.

Myth as being a part of cultural identity is not that closely related to historic reality as to the world of ideas. Structural similarities, quests and discoveries should be regarded as scientific achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Myth has been rendered humanitarian and social sciences regalia liberating it from traditional formal limitations.

The outline of myths as systems of signs was raised on the basis of structural linguistics. Claude Lévi-Strauss argues that myth is a story, message, and news conveying the deep structure of a myth which is expressed by binary oppositions which are important to a society where it is prevalent. In his attempts to ground the investigation of myth as a complicated form he proposed an analogy with orchestra score: isn't it necessary to decipher elements of the whole which is needed to be grasped at once rather than deciphering them one by one? (Lévi-Strauss 1955). Search for harmony, synchrony and diachrony usage in reading of myths, structure fluxion and definition of myth as a whole of all its variations discloses the originality of myth and maintains its popularity.

The spectrum of myth distribution is especially wide: antique legacy, pre-Christian beliefs, epic traditions, Christian parables, narratives of the Middle Ages, New Age images. Ernst Cassirer has stressed a new human feature – to create symbols. In his works on mythical thinking forms, philosophy of mythology, relationship between language and mythology he demonstrated and outlined the main landmarks of the mythical<sup>1</sup>. According to Eric Fromm, contemporary human beings have forgotten the language of symbols, although it is namely the only

<sup>1</sup> Cassirer, Ernst, *Die Begriffsform im Mythischen Denken*. (Studien d. Bibliothek Warburg, Vol. I) Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1922, V, 62 pp.: "Zur 'Philosophie der Mythologie'". (*Festschrift für P. Natorp zum 70. Geburtstag*, p. 23–54. Berlin: de Gruyter.) 1924; *Sprache und Mythos. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Götternamen*. (Studien d. Bibliothek Warburg, Vo. VI). Leipzig und Berlin: Teubner, 1925. 87 pp.; "Mythischer, ästhetischer und theoretischer Raum."

universal mankind made language, common to all cultures and unchanging through its history (Fromm 1951). It is crucial for society to learn this language anew in its attempts to get to know itself better and to understand myths, fairy tales, dreams and rituals.

Roland Barthes combined sociology, semiology, structural anthropology and literary investigations to provide myths with new actual significances. On the one hand, myth is an ideological device; it forms and reveals postulates of faith. On the other hand, as a discursive element myth is a sign, communication system, certain report being an ideogram and revealing the most diverse shifts: every object of the world can transmute into a closed existence, become dumb, regain wordy expression, to open itself to society needs (Barthes 1957 216). Underlining that everything what is covered by discourse can turn into myth opens widely gates for research. There are no substantial boundaries, only formal ones. Thus, anything can be myth since our world is extremely suggestive. Reading and deciphering a myth opens opportunities for apprehensions, by assimilating a myth its readers reveal to themselves their spiritual depth. It is obvious that myth in its way turns meaning into form, it controls form by capturing language. How does primordial thinking become a property of a myth? Language also didn't preserve its autonomy. Roland Barthes says, myth turns into an object of history due to two things: form with rather conditional motivation and historic understanding of mythical object. Had myth been deprived of political sense as Roland Barthes was sure of fifty years ago? Or has mythology these days overwhelmed all possible realms?

To break free from seemingly all pervading omnipotence – one of the most important ideological tasks. New disclosures create a suggestion of new ideological experiences as if being the guarantor of scientific success. Dilemma of ideology and its ghosts leans on matrix of the vision of “the end of the world” propagated in the works by Slavoj Žižek. Existing *as* generating matrix, ideology regulates relations between what is visible and invisible, imaginable and unimaginable; and in between changes of these relations it is equated to the dialectics of “old” and “new” (Žižek 1994).

History and ideology, national myths, illusions and reality in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century become dominants of new narratives. Current identity technologies are based on current actualities and past experiences oriented towards future provisory.

As one of the modern culture investigators Johan Huizinga has put it, history in our attempts to understand and interpret meanings is loo-

king at us from the past and it is always one of the payment forms to the past and one cannot have any pretensions because of that. By the way, it is an intellectual form where civilization pays its bills itself from its past (Huizinga 1963). The lessons from the past are full of the most unexpected things and everyone is able to find what is looking for: positivity as Johan Huizinga, imagination as Jacques Le Goff or preservation of the dimension of the past as Hannah Arendt.

Historical realities are provided with conditionality signs producing meaning effects and developing universal mediation themes, because while ideal truth is considered as the rule of discourse and the principle of unfolding is set as its immanent rationality and repeating ethics of knowledge promising truth only for thirsting ones and being capable of reflecting on it, themes are found as a response or maybe an impel to that game of limitations and eliminations (Foucault 1971).

Interpretations of the past create an original contemporary history corresponding scientific criteria and simultaneously it should formulate new space for ideas because history does not encounter an inevitable alternative: either to write a chronicle of discoveries or to describe ideas and opinions (Ibid.). Choice spectrum is wide indeed. 20<sup>th</sup> century methodological polylogue is not a fiction. Mentality investigations have formed the field of historical interpretations and present-day objectives.

In our future negations and by living here and now we still are in search of touch opportunities with propositions made by visions. Subjective quests seek actual objectivity. Ideological attitudes form reality percepts along with national *encouragement* as free choice possibility and at the same time possibility to represent nation and civic position.

Following Slavoj Žižek, it would be a temptation to ask, after meeting a paradoxical typology, where pure ideology is only the surface, but when related directly to something turns into something else representing something, what is deeper than the depth itself', what is more real than reality (Žižek 1994). So, what is reality? Something not really real? Something in between of real and unreal?

Nationality suggestions inevitably come back to the active ideological usage circulation. Ideological models in the European Union are minimized to national percepts: how to preserve identity, to preserve socio-cultural environment, to escape mythology traps and labyrinths turned into clichés.

Strivings for ideality in pragmatic contemporary world should be vitalized and supported as paradigms of spiritual perfection. By disso-

ciating from higher strivings and dreams we find ourselves in identity isolation and tied by self limitations.

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History findings, discoveries and disclosures are inexhaustible, by finding ourselves in labyrinths of quests we encounter the problem of time and space, which avoids banal and primitive explications and leaves us a possibility to rest upon and believe in the existence of ideal things. Identity things, search for homeland, accentuation of memory are not just an expression of rhetoric exaltation. A specific diagram of ideas is demonstrated in the programmed foreword by Lithuanian culture researcher Rita Repšienė "Mythology today: nationality issues and historical perspectives". By choosing investigation fields, attitude, posture we should find a unique mythological, illusionary world, surprising by its simplicity and actuality which would be open for analogies and at the same time unyielding to them.

Native Europe, free from poetic and essayistic visions, became political and social reality. Following Warsaw University professor and famous Polish intellectual Andrzej Mencewell, our regional European vision "is so close to reality as never before". Historic impressions, allusions, generalizations open to us a subjective, full of experiences, miscellaneous cultural authenticity. An exuberant elevation tune creates a special suggestive mood when discussing the Middle Europe. The hermeneutic analysis of ideas and situations as well as exegesis of facts turns into actuality.

*Native Realm* by Czesław Miłosz becomes certain skiff, possibility to migrate to a historical and cultural reality which once existed. There are similar European visions today! The glory of the future and simple personal twists and turns, accidentality chains and unusual time abysses coming up between the idealism of the past and pragmatic contemporary world. Intellectual legacy is unlocked by means of plenty of historic legitimations: even such basic attitudes like "negative motivation is going to be always stronger than positive" are undergoing change. Contemporary history science, humanitarian discussions on historic modern nations formation, ideological constructs and different ethnic content, suggestion, arguments and historic subjectivity form the Middle Europe status in the universal history.

The theory of cultural sociology developed in the works of professor Vytautas Kavolis displays the circumstances of liberal historiogra-

phic canon creation in Lithuania after 1990. This theme is reflected in the research by historian of culture Vytautas Berenis. Educational function of history, methodological novelties, the history and culture of the Great Lithuanian Duchy enables the spread of liberal values in society. The liberal ideology has changed the natural community notion by modern individualism. The scientific attitude confirmed itself as liberal and became an institutionalized ideological power.

Consciously avoiding community meanings, liberalism disengaged from ideological grips and stressed disrespect to traditions: "Ahistorical describing of individual in history, his efforts to get rid of tradition, suppressing his freedom and morality" are denominated by Kavolis as "repressive system". National historical discourses gain new connotations, the former dominants are vanishing and new national identity possibilities are revealed. Globalization, integration and consumer society impose pragmatic functions on history.

How past should be analyzed? Following scientific historical attitudes, once an objective cognitive entity is evaluated as the past, creation, life, reality are ruined, i.e. reality, authenticity. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche thinks, that a new strategy of historical cognition must be created, which would foster oblivion and, thus, would open "new spaces for history didactics" and create national and civic genealogies.

This kind of history deconstruction is perfectly shown in myth on Tadas Blinda, which was carefully scrutinized by Tomas Balkelis, a historian from University College Dublin in Ireland. The story of a robber who turned into hero first of all reflects community beliefs, populist needs, and strivings for social identity. Secondly, widely developed heroism of Tadas Blinda becomes a form of cultural representation. Thirdly, the story is mythologized by elite efforts and it is endowed with fixed ideological significations. Generally, Tadas Blinda is not a solitary hero. English Robin Hood, Australian Ned Kelly, American Jesse James and similar semi criminal characters are popular all over the world. "Social banditry" as a protest form is characteristic of peasantry society. Creation of legends about heroic criminals induces formation of myths.

Fulfilling the role of social and political mobilization the myth about Tadas Blinda became a dominant of collective memory and national identity. It is pretty hard to pull away from well-established stereotypes. A seemingly calm idyll is chosen, the past is mystified and the net for hero creation is adjusted to it. In such a way, the "heroic merits"

of Tadas Blinda are epitomized in literature, fine art, theater, cinema and music. "Leveler" is reborn in the most unexpected forms: CD-ROM game "Strong Meat, Tadas Blinda. Accentuation", political images (in such a way the discredited politician Rolandas Paksas used to be presented) or even becomes a trade mark (Blinda's bear and alike).

Media as a powerful information tool can form and create contemporary myths on its own. One of the most famous stories in Estonian press about brothers Ülo and Aivar Voitka, who while being ordinary criminals because of media gained enormous interest in society and stimulated dialog on the importance of social and political values. A researcher from Tartu Literary Museum, Eda Kalmre, demonstrated a stencil for creation of heroic saga of Voitka brothers. By the way, there was no other such an important, widely engaged entertainment and commercial event.

What actually is taking place and is presented by media in this case does not have any clear division and it is a characteristic of these days reality with widely applicable canon of mythic idealism. A hero or criminal – one of the most essential questions of self-perception, when history becomes folklore, law – limit representing two different poles: power and people; someone turning to be an outlaw can claim to be a hero supported by people and its legendary tradition.

Identity crossed the limits defined by time and became post-national. But we remain tied to national, cultural and historical myths and our national sensations remain an important identity factor. Change of political denationalization attitude is deeply analyzed in the article by Post-modern discourse creator in Lithuania Vytautas Rubavičius "European political identity: *demos*, civic values and national feature". National, folklore and community identities are formed and maintained by social, collective and cultural memory. Political denationalization approach, which has to be carried out, undoubtedly is conditioned by popularity of the new phenomena: post-national identity, European constitutional patriotism as well as unconditional hospitality and their discourses. Different historic experiences, national feelings with their contribution to the liberation from the Soviet occupation as well as the accumulated experience of the Soviet denationalization, all of them are sensations demanding our attention when creating new European *demos*.

How is the post-war cultural legacy to be treated? While finding identity opportunities how to taste the reality and while preserving the authentic historic context how to escape from the prevailing approaches, attitudes of distribution and selection, especially when only the



literature issued on musical questions during the first post-war decades in the Soviet Lithuania is reviewed. It is rather hard to evaluate the historical legacy, which would manage to avoid schematization and would meet objective criteria, although Inga Jankauskienė tries to do it in her publication.

Performativity strategies perfectly reveal historical realities and the great eternal myth between being and non-being embodied by Hamlet. Functionality of scene view, actor's playing as immediate physical performance, particularity and materiality of scenic images are substantial traits of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" directed by Eimuntas Nekrošius in 1997. Theater critic Rasa Vasinauskaitė penetratively presents the importance of identity, comparison possibilities and artistic position testifying that it is impossible to break free from the surrounding historic reality although every epoch condenses its time, the same as every theater director, into the picture of Hamlet. Thus, the face of present-day Hamlet gains additional meanings.

Nationality signs and theater as quests for national definition are revealed in the review by professor Janelle Reinelt from the University of Warwick. Historical Estonian theater plays the role of the repository of national narratives, especially historical ones. Today theater turned into a battle field of contemporary performances and classics, of tradition and innovations. Theater is in the process of becoming a new national resignification institution.

Theater is an inseparable part of city culture. Current urban policy is also conditioned by the development of news economy and tied with new modernity and European discourses. Actual and constructive insights numerous can be found in the article "New Vilnius vision in the Post-Soviet urban policy" by Skaidra Trilupaitytė where she discusses the planning rhetoric of Vilnius as one of the East European capitals. Cultural policy, the same as in the rest of the Middle and East Europe, is formed referring to political and economical problems and seeking to stimulate investments, consumption, and international tourism. Services, especially creation of entertainment and cultural industry, become an integrative part of the new economy, which is also called a symbolic economy. Is the discourse of "culture" going to be used, like in post-industrial Western societies, as an instrument for economic success strivings and to meet consumption needs of elite class as well as to propagate the new policy of identity?

Ideology today is not able to get rid from stereotypical labyrinths: the neighboring countries are not an exception; preconceptions serve as

common approach in evaluations. Investigations by Laima Anglickienė, an ethnologist from Vytautas Magnus University, add to and widen the scope of popular narrative culture. Folklore as traditional forms of world sensation reflects political, social and cultural changes. The image of stranger in popular genres of folklore – anecdotes, chain letters, funny sayings, aphorisms etc., remains untransformed when transferred into cyber space, although, gains some new features: peculiarities of international plots, migrating universal themes, actual accents and signs.

Baltic unity – the myth of Lithuanian and Latvian brotherhood is disengaging from usual ethno linguistic 19<sup>th</sup> century stereotypes and becoming an object of controversial discussions in another, virtual and anonymous space. Suggestive and wide review by docent of Latvian Culture Academy Rūta Muktupāvela notices, that “in recent times a new mythology, based on natural sciences’ achievements, about a unique Baltic gene is growing in popularity between Latvian intellectuals” and there are hopes, that it would be another opportunity to form common Baltic space, to foster unity and create future plans.

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The new seventeenth “Culturology” volume is arranged on the basis of the presentations made during the international scientific conference “Historic Realities and Myths in National Cultures” held on October 17, 2008 in Vilnius. Also, there are new research works presented in this field by Lithuanian scientists and the most interesting publications by foreign scientists, proposing identical or different horizons. The national identity suggestion is inseparable from common historic reality schemes and mythical stencils. The present approach helps to make the necessary accents meaningfully and to find new evaluation opportunities.

Heights of politics and everyday social life, magnificent facts and shameful past, brilliance and poverty of heroes, religious manifestations, popular myths on national glory and uniqueness, idealistic illusions and mystifications of truth, strivings and identity puzzles – all of them comprise the general set of this volume.

Contemporary communication phenomena make their impact on culture, form new significations and experiences. The volume brings up exiting issues on how self identity should be preserved, how knowing should be grounded and developed, how new attractive visions should be created and new significant realities found within actual mythical outlooks.

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Editor

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