

IN MYTHICAL THINKING, ARCHE AS THE FIRST “LINK” OF THE GENETIC CHAIN

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The article talks about ancient Greek mythology. The essence of the “arche” and its embodiment in ancient traditions is considered.

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Philosophers were led to think of the “initial” that constantly repeats the changes taking place in the cosmos, the first “link” of the genetic chain, the negative or positive cornerstone (arche) that stands at the beginning of what is happening. The arche, which is an element of tradition in essence, is constantly repeated in the thought and activity of subsequent generations in the form of numinous (a sign of a higher power – the Divine). In the initial sense, the arche is understood as the occurrence of gods and people. An example of the repetition of the arche can be the divine epiphany (sudden understanding or awareness of the meaning or essence of something [3]), which expresses the manifestation of God before man. The arche, which is reminiscent of the leitmotif in music and the concept of eternal return explored by M.Eliade during the analysis of myth, is an ontological structure. At an unknown time, some numinous (sacred) being performs a certain action for the first time, and from that time on this event is repeated every time, but always acquiring a new content. Roland Barthes expressed an idea that echoes Eliade’s concept: *“Myth proceeds from the function of “stolen” and reconstructed speech. Since the reconstructed speech has already taken on a completely new form, if we try to return the “stolen speech” and put it back in its place, it will no longer correspond to its previous place”* [1, p.124]. The same can be said about arche. Despite the fact that the same beginning has been repeated many times to this day and these processes are still ongoing, no repetition that occurs can be the same as the other. In this sense, arche is not just a basis or beginning, but also a form of life. The repetition in question is primarily related to natural phenomena. Thus, in ancient Greek mythology, the Sea was born from Earth – Gaia, created the night, morning and afternoon, the departure of Persephone from Hades causes the arrival of spring, and her return to Hades causes the return of winter. K.Hubner expressed his attitude to this issue as follows: *“What is said about Arche can also be applied to the human heart. A warlike person will behave warlike everywhere. This stems from the fact that Ares lives in his heart. The settling of Aphrodite in a person’s heart opens up his chances of falling in love, Athena’s practical way of thinking, Zeus’s domineering behavior. The love of playing the lyre indicates that Apollo lives within a person”* [2, p.122]. As it can be seen, the character of a person is determined by the gods, and accordingly, some are the “children” of Ares, some of Aphrodite, some of Zeus, etc. The basis of this is the initial mythical event that repeats itself identically. These characters have divine characteristics, arise from stories told about the gods, and at the same time are determined by these stories.

This can also be applied to the rules of society and history. Some god established rules of conduct for the clan, the phratry (a tribal division that unites several clans through mutual marriage), the polis (city). From that time on, it is repeated constantly and in the same way. In this repetition, the god himself participates, guiding the one who turns to him in prayer.

Arche also expresses itself in an interesting way about professions and arts. V. Gronbech writes: "*Athena invented the art of weaving, Pandora, together with her sisters, made woolen clothes for people. Athena, in turn, taught people the art of taming horses and harnessing them to a chariot*" [2, p.123]. Since it was determined by rules, norms, stereotyped actions, all social life was perceived as a regular phenomenon of nature, and human mental behavior was manifested as a repetition of the actions of the numinous prototype.

Even when people prayed, if we consider their original formulas, we will see that the expressions they used ("May God make it as it was before," "as in ancient times," "one day of days," "long ago," etc.) were typical of this type of thinking. By imitating God's previous action in this way, they hoped that the action would be repeated again, that its previous power would be manifested. In this case, the power of the name and the word plays a special role. During each ritual action, the name of a certain god is addressed. Therefore, the name does not remain a mere ideal. The god addressed by name in a specific ritual form is present in the place where the ritual action takes place. In such cases, the appeal is accompanied by a pseudonym: Zeus (Ombrios-god of rain), Zeus (Hikesios-protector of foreigners), Athena (Ergane-goddess of profession), Demeter (Karpophoros-goddess of fertility), etc. The unity of mythical reality and the spoken word is especially manifested in prayers, the recitation of myths, oaths, and curses. There is a power in the word that penetrates a person as a numinous force and, thanks to this, becomes a modern reality.

To understand the essence of the arche, one must turn to late Greek philosophy. For example, a tree is a tree because it contains the idea of woodiness. At the same time, the multiplicity, diversity and imperfection of trees are due to the fact that the idea of an eternal and divine tree penetrates their mortal substance. This also affects their time. Comparatively, we can say that even the most accurate seal does not find its exact trace. If we pay attention to the succession of the seasons, each new spring differs from the previous one in new plants, animals, springs, in a word, revival, and they were created thanks to spring. This phenomenon is connected with the penetration

of the divine beginning Persephone into all mortal beings. From the point of view of myth, spring returns every year and is greeted as a holiday. Thus, despite the fact that different flowers bloom, they appear on the same sacred day, and, despite the fact that this night differs from the previous one, they were born on the same night. It becomes clear to us that the mythological substance, which takes the form of action, has here both an individual and a general character. It is particular, because it represents a numinous being, for example, Persephone, and general, because it can appear everywhere. The arche is not an instance with a generalizing meaning as a single sequence of events, but at the same time a unity of ideal and material. We are talking about a being with its own special name. A being that has taken on the function of understanding, for example, spring, which does not exist as spring, but precisely as the result of the activity of Persephone.

From the points we have considered above, it is clear that arche is the only type of event that is constantly and inevitably repeated. The laws and rules of nature, on the other hand, are of a general nature. The beginning (arche) is concrete, while the laws and rules of nature are abstract in nature because they are isolated from individuality. Primitive people, who were constantly interested and attentive to what was happening in nature, accepted the naive conclusions they had about the world and the product of their imagination as reality. In fact, it is not known where imagination ends and reality begins. As soon as they found the answer to one riddle, they were faced with the next mysterious point.

Just as primitive people were helpless in the face of nature, we are also helpless in the face of their legacy – myths. Although they have tried to interpret myths at various times and reach their layers of meaning, and have made attempts to reveal their primordial meaning, they have still not been able to realize the unknown reality of myths and their captivating mystery.

References

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