

MYTHOLOGIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF FEMININITY IN THE RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE OF THE SILVER AGE

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- **ABSTRACT:** This paper deals with different aspects of the mythological concept of femininity in the Russian philosophy and culture in the end of XIX and XX centuries. Special attention is paid to clarification of the culture-forming significance of mythological, ideal femininity in Russian culture. The author considers the peculiarities of femininity nature expression in the Russian culture and philosophy of the Silver age. The analysis revealed that Russian thinkers managed to unite, in the concept of femininity, the philosophical, religious and esthetic notions concerning the female principle as an ideal image that requires adoration and has the ability to inspire creation. The paper describes the basic mechanisms of myth, the process of creation and realization of a mythological image of femininity in the culture of the Silver age. It was established that romantic interpretation of myth played a pivotal role for the representatives of Russian culture of the early XX century. It is noted that mythologization of the concept of femininity allowed Russian thinkers to combine vivid particular content and the sublime elitism of an absolutely abstract form. It is shown that the representatives of Russian philosophy and culture used the syncretic image of “the Eternal Femininity” as a cornerstone of myth formation, simultaneously establishing its new conceptual limits and defining it as an ideal of the epoch. The specific feature of the Russian cultural tradition is developing the phenomenon of femininity in the process of creation through correlation of masculine and feminine principles based on the ideal androgynous nature. It is concluded that the development of the concept of femininity depends on the process of formation of new cultural values.
- **KEYWORDS:** Myth. The concept of femininity. Eternal feminine. Myth creation. The Silver Age of Russian culture.

Introduction

Revelation of fundamental national cultural concepts is considered as one of the main problems in understanding the national world-view. The concept of femininity

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is supposed to be the key one in understanding of Russian culture. The formation and mythologization of this concept comes along with cultural evolution. Femininity is a universal cultural concept; it includes some most important characteristics that are intrinsic to both culture and society. It is obvious for the contemporary scientists that the phenomenon of femininity has a historical character, because it periodically comes through the process of transformation. This point of it is especially interesting to modern science. The culture at the bound of the XIX–XX centuries can be understood as flourishing of different texts where mythogenic concepts play significant roles. Myth-creation became one of the criteria in characterizing of the transition stages of culture, in particular – The Silver Age¹, when cultural constructions began with myth-creation. Specifically, this age gave birth to a new, idealized femininity. However, myth brings back some archaic representations of femininity that are inner to the Russian nation's mentality and come out of traditional pagan believes. Their actualization depends on a crisis of Christianity. In the culture of the Silver Age, there is a tendency to take the mythological concept of femininity on the basis of its idealization. The state of spiritual crisis, being inherent to the transition stage at the turn of the century, has a direct impact on the cultural system as a whole. In philosophy, arts and religion, there is a common orientation to construct the reality with relation to a mythological perspective of perception.

One of the main reasons for the turn of Russian philosophy and culture to myth-creation was disappointment with positivism and its pretension to explain all the world's proceedings in terms of empiricism and rationalism. For that reason, the dominance of rational explanation inevitably transforms into irrational understanding; an irrational, sensual and religious vision of the world and man was activated in that time. The borderlines between philosophy, arts and religion were erased by the idea of overcoming a critical situation; it helped to generate a holistic and syncretic kind of philosophical, artistic and religious consciousness.

The intention to express the integrity of culture, to overcome its ruptures and disintegration was reflected in an attempt to create a specific spiritual synthesis of different cultural branches and assumed a mythological form. One of the founders of the femininity mythologem, A. Bely (1994, p.154), characterized the beginning of this process very clearly: “The word gave birth to an eidetic symbol – metaphor; metaphor seemed to be really existing; the word gave birth to a myth; the myth caused religion; religion bore philosophy; and philosophy bore the term”. Thus, overcoming of critical world-view became one of the main functions of myth in the critical period.

¹ “Silver Age” is a term to describe the Russian culture in the late XIX – early XX centuries; it was determined as spiritual and artistic Renaissance. Russian culture of that time experienced a kind of rising that entailed great achievements in philosophy, arts and sciences. This term usually denotes all the trends of spiritual culture in the beginning of XX century. Philosophers, artists and scientists of that time worked on the problems of cultural preservation on the basis of humanistic values.

Research Methods

It is very important to understand and evaluate this problematic from the point of view of philosophical and cultural traditions. To analyze the concept of femininity in Russian philosophy and culture, complex methods of historical and philosophical reconstruction and contextual analysis are used. This study involves genetic and diachronic methods that allow examining the femininity mythologem as a cultural phenomena within a particular historical period. This allowed us to reveal the meaning of the concept of femininity in its evolution.

In this research the author applied methods and approaches that helped to explore the femininity mythologem in the Russian philosophy of the Silver Age with regard to actual historical environment. And philosophical and cultural analysis made it possible to examine the very mechanism of the formation of femininity concept as a specific mythologized reality of symbolical nature.

Since myth embraces human existence entirely and universally, the analysis of special approaches developed by different scientific schools and trends in myth research implies some special and complex elaboration. It seems that even a simple enumeration of significant characteristics concerning the meaning of this subject would become too extensive and misleading.

The applied gender approach allowed us to consider the concept of femininity in the Silver Age with an accent on its ontological aspects. Femininity as a socio-cultural construct has specific features that are traditional both for gender analysis and for institutional forms of representation of women behavior, and their psychological qualities in a certain time interval. The concept of Femininity is a cultural symbolic phenomenon that is represented on some metaphysic level. In terms of gender analysis, the social aspect of femininity is reproduced in socio-cultural norms accepted by society.

Construction of the femininity myth-image

Myth as a special reality: from Romanticism to Symbolism

In Russian culture, the sources of mythologized image of femininity historically go back to the tradition represented by the symbols of Mother-Earth (*Mat' – Syra Zemlya*), the Blessed Virgin (*Bogoroditsa*) and Sophia. The concept of femininity combines the symbols of Eternal Femininity, Bogoroditsa, Mother-Earth in the ancient archetype of Mother that symbolizes a supporting, caring and guarding essence (HUBBS, 1988). The representatives of the Silver Age rested mainly on the symbol of Bogoroditsa. They emphasized her ideality, spirituality and the mystical mode of existence, in which everything earthly and even maternal is represented in symbols and has no “real content”. This is only a reference to something feminine, but it rather has not actual sexual belonging itself (although it bears idealized features of maternity).

According to M. Eliade (2005, p.7), the existence of myth is constant: “The mythological thinking can leave behind its previous forms; it can adapt itself to the new cultural norms. But it can’t become finally exhausted”. In the Silver Age culture, myth is adapted to life changes, reserving the ideas accumulated in ages and modifying them under new conditions.

To describe the myth – it means to tell about something which occurred an origine. “Described” once, i.e., been opened, myth becomes apodictic truth, in its absolute truth is. “There is so, because it is said so”, Eskimos assert, in order to argue the truthfulness of its sacred history and its religious traditions. Myth proclaims appearance some of new space “situation”, or some primary event. Thus, this always story about some “creation”: on how any thing took place, i.e., it began to exist. This is why myth akin to ontology: it narrates only about the real, about that which actually occurred, which entirely appeared. (ELIADE, 1994, p.64).

The mythological concept of femininity is constructed in the course of searching new values and overcoming a myth-creation crisis. Philosophical and artistic myth-texts create the mythologem of Femininity, which demands adoration; it is a cult personified in the symbols of Eternal Femininity, Belle Dame, Radiant Lover, Eternal Mistress and so on.

We can explain the Silver Age’s return to mythological thinking with an unsatisfied need in holistic world outlook, and a reaction to the crisis of classic rationalism. Moreover, the change of universal ideas and the growing interest to myth are specific features of any transition stage, in which the principle of “eternal returning” become active. In this regard, we see the restoration of interest to ancient philosophy (in particular – to Plato and Neo-Platonism), to German romanticists and idealists, and to F. Nietzsche. It is well known that myth used to be of a great significance in the ancient and European romantic traditions.

The romantic interpretation of myth is also of great importance for this study, because the thinkers of the Silver Age returned to the ideas of romanticists, and duplicated or modified them. This approach is represented in the works of F. Schlegel (1980), J. W. Goethe (1960), F. Schiller (GOETHE; SCHILLER, 1988) and F. Schelling (1966).

Romantics for the first time turns to the myth creation, gave the prime examples of it both in their creation and in the life. F. Schlegel (1980) in “The Speeches on the Mythology” proposes, that the mythology is not so much a result of sensual understanding and symbolization of nature, but of spiritual ones. Myth is the focus of infinite transformations and transformations of means (SCHLEGEL, 1980). F. Schelling (1966) in “The Philosophy of Art” speaks, that the myth is not a fantasy, but the form of the Absolute’ manifestation. He takes myth as means, character, and a special artefact. He considers myth as the substantive unity of the formal, material, moving and final reasons, i.e., he approaches the definition of myth as the form of existence. Symbol to romanticists becomes the structural element of mythology. Symbol, according to Schelling, is the means, not translated into the languages of other sign systems, the

symbols of myths exist as “descriptive expression of senses, ideas”, it distinguished by integrity and semantic inexhaustibility (SCHELLING, 1966). The means of myths are the symbols of the beginnings of existences, which have transcendent nature. This approach to the symbolism anticipated the theories of the symbol XX of century in many aspects.

In the romantic view, myth obtains sufficiently wide interpretation and relation to the field of everything expressive and figurative. Not only artworks, but human life itself are treated as a personified myth, mythical existence; and myth itself is treated as actuality or reality. Such romantics as Schlegel and Schelling were the first to tell about myth-creation and they gave a prominent example of it in their creative work and life. They supposed that the images of myth are the symbols of existence beginnings, which are transcendent. The poets and thinkers of the Silver Age proved to be very receptive to the romanticists’ philosophy in their trying to refuge from tragic reality in a fantastic world of their own myth-creation.

Facing the world chaos, a romantic person creates and reproduces himself and his myths as a new reality. Myth combines the visible and invisible, the material and spiritual, the real and ideal. It assumes re-creation of reality in the spirit of a mystic symbolism, where poetry and myth are represented as hypostases of united and entire being; and these hypostases pass into each other in their interaction.

The femininity mythologem obtains some specific sense in the poetry of Russian symbolists: V. Bryusov (1988), A. Bely (1994), A. Blok (1991), V. Ivanov (2000). The cultural and philosophical syncretism of their creativity appeared as an intention to synthesize the transcendent and the real, and to interpret any – even the most ordinary – phenomena as something irrational. Thus, the synthesis of “the earthly” and “the heavenly” created a mythologem, in which the features of a real (and also re-created by the art) woman and the Blessed Virgin were converged (BELY, 1994).

The specific ambivalence of mysterious feelings was elaborated by R. Otto (1936) in his work “Das Heilige” (“The Idea of the Holy”). He proclaims:

The qualitative content of the numinous experience, to which the “mysterious” stands as form, is in one of its aspects the element of daunting “awefulness” and “majesty”, which has already been dealt with in detail; but it is clear that it has at the same time another aspect, in which it shows itself as something uniquely attractive and fascinating. (OTTO, 1936, p.31).

Russian culture makes its own vision of mythological field due to fact that the Russians are an integral nation both in ethnic and cultural aspects. So, we can also tell that myth itself has an integrative function in Russian culture. Here, myth transforms into some superimposition of senses and practices that are borrowed from different mythological, religious and philosophical traditions. The end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX centuries passed under the sign of Nietzscheanism; and the Nietzschean mythological system became the basis of many versions of myth in the Silver Age. According to its ideas, the Russian philosophers of that time chose a mythologized

and Dionysian way to develop the Russian culture. Symbolism played a great role in the reception of the Nietzschean culture model. Especially important were its main principles represented in the works of Vyacheslav Ivanov; due to this, the ideas of F. Nietzsche were adopted by many thinkers of the Silver Age and received some new “Russian content” (IVANOV, 2000).

Thus, this adherence to the symbolic attitude was characteristic for the majority of the Russian philosophers in the Silver Age, which determined their approach to the interpretation of myth images. Apparently, symbolic attitude made it possible to form new mythological images; it allowed understanding and reflecting the reality in a special way. With this attitude, a natural symbol is accepted as final reality in itself. Absolute interpretation of myth as a reality took shape in the phenomenological studies of A. Losev. The analysis of the Silver Age thinkers’ heritage in the context of his theory makes it possible to reconstruct the meanings of myth in that period more precisely.

According to A. Losev (1991, 1994, 2001), myth is an individual world-perception, an *Energeia* expression of a personality and an ability to receive an existence in its formation and manifestation. Myth integrates different aspects of a human being, it synthesizes the external and the internal, providing *Energeia* integrity – a human personality. Myth is “[...] a certain horizon of the world perception, which changes and creates significance (values, senses) of things and milieu” (LOSEV, 1991, p.74). Losev (1994, 2001) proposes to consider myth as a subjective picture of the world. It allows defining myth as a product of personal creation that produces a reality that can be taken as authentic.

Highlighting the irrational character of myth-creation, the Austrian researcher A. Hansen-Loewe supposed that the significant feature of religious myth-poetical symbolism is an absurd metaphor that is empty in terms of common sense. He tells that its interpretation is impossible, because the subject is transcendent and inaccessible. This is the basis of the metaphysical world-system of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism. The mystical discourse contains a hint at some highest value, wisdom, “a real meaning” that cannot be expressed by rational language.

The femininity mythologem, in its symbolical interpretation, completely corresponds to this description, being a concept without any real content that is associated with pointlessness, illusiveness, mysteriousness and incomprehensibility (HANSEN-LOEWE, 2003). In his opinion, the aestheticism of Eternal Femininity in the Russian symbolist’s creativity is in its impossibility, variability, inaccessibility and the illusiveness of aim.

James Hollis (2004) interprets myth images in a similar way. He ascribed three primary meanings to myth: psycho-dynamic means; individual scenario; the ancestral system of values. His understanding of mythologem as a mythical idea or motive (they together create a myth) reflects the essence of the femininity mythologem represented in Russian philosophy and culture. In the course of time, the concept of femininity evolved into an independent structure in the art and philosophy; it was filled with vital energy and had a reverse action on its creators.

Mythologization of the concept of femininity in Russian culture

The construction of a myth-image is accompanied by the intellectual distance of its creator, which allows him to emancipate himself from the natural world and to create his own artificial world by using denaturalization and pan-aesthetization; this process increases his personality to the Demiurge status. In symbolic interpretation of the world in the Silver Age culture, the concept of femininity became an element that gave an opportunity for spiritual realization, the need to follow the ideal with overcoming of any contradictions and incompatibility to rough reality.

Empty forms deprived of their primary meanings are filled with new mythological semantics, turning into the myth's "denotation" or "ideal object". "Denotation" became the incentive for myth to come into life. R. Barthes (2000, p.35) nominates "denotation" as "a mythological concept": "A concept reflects not reality itself, but specific ideas about it, and the method of presence inherent to it is related with memory". The ideas comprised in a mythological concept are a kind of vague knowledge, which has been formed on the basis of weak associations. It allows us to understand the mechanism of myth-image formation. A concept helps to introduce new eventfulness in myth –by transforming from a sense into a form, an image loses its current meaning in order to be filled by the meanings, which are contained in the concept (BARTHES, 2000). R. Barthes uncovered a technology of myth "naturalization", having described the procedure of contextual filling at the expense of consequent substitution of real content for new idealized semantic. The emergence of the mythological concept of femininity, which got its ultimate embodiment in Russian culture as the "Eternal Femininity" symbol, was made in the same way.

The femininity mythologem was amongst the most attractive ones in the Silver Age. Femininity was constructed within the framework of the masculine mythological thinking and then it was raised to an ideal. Being a mythologem, it causes associations of the same kind, lingers in the mind, pretending to be a really existing image (PRESTO, 2002). The model of idealized and mythologized femininity substitutes the primary nominations of femininity in the real world facts ("denotation"), and is "naturalized" and, therefore, perceived as a real one. Myth doesn't hide its connotative meanings, but works to make them real, nearly authentic and material. "Something real" is turning into "something real" and becoming the life itself. Hence, there is substitution of the ideal and real worlds. The connotations of the Eternal Femininity replace customary ideas about femininity.

The unity of ideal and material... has for the myth as fundamental value as its negation for scientific ontology [...]. In order to correctly understand, with what the discussion deals, it cannot be proceeded from the difference between the subject as something ideal, and the object as something material so as more lately to place in the close and finally indissoluble connection, and on the contrary, it is first necessary to derive them from this unity. This unity is strictly primary, it assigns the bases of mythical objectivity and composes the source of any phenomenon. (HUEBNER, 1996, p.64).

The mechanism of naturalization and the interaction of “the ideal” and “the real” are realized through myth-creation of new epoch creators. Thus, we have to understand myth-creation as a specific kind of activity in a system emblematic space, the process of which is concentrated on deliberate creation of myth in arts and in reality, on construction of myth reality as a form of life perception. Myth-creation gives shape to the life itself. The creators of a new actuality transfer their ideas into reality, turning their life into creation. Life-creation, as a product of mythological consciousness, is expressed in passionate desire to embody the results of someone’s own conclusions, to create a new existence and a new human being.

In the mythological consciousness of the Silver Age, everyone imagined himself as a creator, who was ready to make his ideal world and then make it real. In that way, creativity became the dominant of the epoch, it left the realm of the unconscious and turned into myth-creation. The latter may be described as a process of integration of opposite substances (which are “the real” and “the ideal”) into a common whole.

Creative activity faced convergence of the main components of Russian culture: the art and religion were philosophy in potential; philosophy, in its turn, was embodied in artistic forms and became religious; religion acquire poetic forms. Consequently, it makes sense to analyze the mythological concept of femininity as some syncretic phenomenon and look at it through the prism of femininity myth, which was personified in philosophy, fiction and religion.

Myth, as a specific symbolic system, is the basis for the formation of individual mythological systems – and this is what the myth-creation expressed in the artistic texts of the world (as well as in the works of the Russian Silver Age) seems to be. The writers and theologians of this epoch actively participated in the creation of mythological systems, which represented the “parallel dimensions” in reality. Myth revealed itself in different individual texts where symbolization, bearing the metaphoric meaning of reality, served as a specific code of its objects. Myth actively invaded the life, forcing the reality to act according to the rules of the textual discursive formations. Both feminine images and real persons came through mythologization.

It seemed that Nietzsche (1990, p.75) was right, when he wrote:

The opposition of subjective and objective is generally inappropriate in the aesthetics, since the willing subject, which is individual who pursues his selfish purposes, can considered only as the enemy of an art, but not as its source. Since subject is an artist, he is already free from his individual will and would become a kind of medium, mean through which united true-existing subject celebrates his release in the illusion.

That is the mechanism of myth-creation in general. That is also the mechanism for creating the femininity mythologem in particular (semantically, “myth” + “to create” can be simply decoded as “producing myth in creative activity”). The resulting symbolic images become the basic form of mythic reality expression (GOLAN, 1991). Myth-creation, in its turn, manifests itself in myth-texts where its cardinal mythologems are

revealed in figurative, metaphoric images. Thus the fictional or philosophical text (after some decoding) supposes a vision and perception of the world through the mythological components of poetical world-comprehending.

However, there is a problem, which was faced by almost all makers and adepts of the Eternal Femininity. Since myth is essentially a kind of utopia, everything created by it finally proves to be utopian, unpractical. A myth can be very attractive, but when it is embodied, it inevitably comes into contrast with real life; and that is its tragedy. It is not surprising that people, who experienced the influence of myth themselves, speak against it afterwards. That also occurs with the mythologized femininity.

And again we can find some explanation to it in Nietzsche's ideas:

The fact is that the ecstasy of Dionysian state, with its destruction of usual limits and boundaries of existence, includes, until it lasts, the certain lethargic element, in which entire personally experienced in the past is immersed. Thus, between the ordinary life and Dionysian reality lies the abyss of oblivion. But as soon as that daily reality again comes out in the consciousness, it is perceived itself with the aversion; the ascetic, unwilling mood is the fruit of similar states. (NIETZSCHE, 1990, p.82).

The concept of femininity in the religious philosophy of the Silver Age. The image of Sophia as Eternal Femininity

In the works of Russian philosophers, the Eternal Femininity concept has religious and philosophical meaning. Its most sequential disclosure is accomplished through the image of Sophia, which unites the ideals of the divine and the human. The concept of femininity in Russian philosophy is often represented as a syncretic phenomenon, which originally contains several meanings and simultaneously exists in the mystical and metaphysical sense. The most convincing philosophical, religious and cultural interpretations of the concept of femininity were made in the philosophy of Christian unity. It was originally introduced in the works of V. Solovyov, S. Bulgakov and some others thinker of the Silver Age.

The concept of femininity in the Russian philosophy indicates the internal unity of the world and God. Femininity manifests itself as The World's Soul, the Blessed Virgin and as a concept of Sophia the Wisdom of God. According to Christian unity philosophers, Sophia was the main integral beginning and the most important condition of the unity of God and a human. In the comprehension of femininity in the Neoplatonic sense, it was of special importance, being the idea of embodiment, creation, the beginning of harmony and unity due to the relation of the divine and the created. Sophiological theory is based on the myth about Sophia's especial destination to serve as a mediator in the creation of world and her special role in the uniting of man with God.

The composite image of Sophia was a part of the general cultural synthesis. The femininity concept genesis is rooted in myth-creation, the prominent examples of

which are Neo-Platonism and early Christian thought. The Sophian femininity concept was filled by its own content and was developed in Gnostic tradition, Hermetism and later – in German mysticism and romanticism. In Russian religious philosophy, its interpretation is based on strong historical and cultural synthesis, which reconciles quite different treatments concerning the role of masculine and feminine in the world process. This concept took root and was extended in Russian culture precisely because of its aspiration to the entirety, unity, because it was possible to feel the Divine presence in man, as well as man's salvation due to overcoming the rupture between the spiritual and the material.

The descriptions of femininity in the elite culture were often based on the opinions of Russian thinkers of those times. The theory of the Eternal Femininity, which was developed in Russian sophiology, determined femininity to be something ideal. The metaphysics of femininity was originated in V. Solovyov's teaching about Sophia-Wisdom, Theo-Anthropos, Christian unity; it was developed to give answers to many topical philosophical issues of that epoch.

Vladimir Solovyov intended to restore the femininity mythologem in his teaching, and he turned to Goethe's heritage (the poem "God, Soul and World", which was based on F. Schelling's ideas). The concepts "World Soul" and "Eternal Femininity" was of European origin. They were orientated to romanticism in the portrayal of love, sublimation of sexual senses, its examination in the gender aspect. The theme of reunion of "the high" and "the low", "the sublime" and "the sensual erotic" was close to Solovyov. The perception of poets-symbolists inspired by Solovyov's ideas was subsequently was full of anticipation of tragedy. The myth created by them juxtaposed the eternal, symbolic, sacral and earthly, transient, and material. At the same time, the ambiguity of myth provided an opportunity to interpret it in terms of religion; hence, we see the turning to the image of Sophia (SOLOVYOV, 1990, 1994).

There is a syncretic confluence of the ancient concept of beauty and a number of Christian motives in Vladimir Solovyov's teaching. The feminine image of Saint Sophia is one of the steadiest patterns generated by ancient culture and then developed in J. Bohme's teaching, German romanticism, as well as in Orthodox theology and symbolists' poems (VAYL, 2000).

The essence of the concept of femininity, in its religious-philosophical aspect, reflects those supreme powers, which give a human being the possibility to live and create forever. The basis of such meaning of the mythologem was the cult of Christian Sophia honored in Byzantium and embodied in Russian iconography. Later, Sophia would carry out her main mission in the philosophy of unity, where she would become the essential person for the unity of the earthly and heavenly realms, which was contemplated by God.

In Russian religious philosophy, there is a direct relation between love as a metaphysical phenomenon and Sophia, since the Eternal Femininity is wisdom or – Sophia. V. Solovyov assumed that only "Eternal Wisdom" is capable of reconciling and reuniting the male as divine and the female as natural. He transferred the European romantic ideal of femininity into the Russian cultural tradition, thus creating an ideal concept of holistic man through his reunion with the Eternal Femininity and the World Soul. VI. Solovyev (1999) in his work "Russia and the

Universal Church” distinguishes Sophia as divine beginning and The Wisdom of God, from one side, and The Soul of the World as the supreme beginning of material peace, from another. The Soul of the World now is understood as the antipode of Wisdom, the source of evil and chaos, while Sophia is “[...] radiant and celestial essence, isolated from the dark of terrestrial material” (SOLOVYOV, 1999, p.147). While the Soul of the World is considered by Solovyev as “the mother of extra-divine chaos”, he does not identify it with chaos: philosopher sees the sense of world process in the fight of divine Word-Logos-Christ with the infernal beginning for the authority above the Soul of the World. This fight composes the authentic content of the world drama, in which the decisive role belongs to Theo-Anthropic unity.

W. Helleman (2010), one of the Solovyov’s thought researchers, accents that

The symbolist approach to be a mis-reading of Solovyov, for his approach shows clear participation in romanticism, particularly on the theme of love and androgyny, and in aesthetics. For Solovyov, romanticism also meant a rejection of personification. For romantics the lady, as object of love, is historical, or literal. Symbolists, on the other hand, appreciated symbols and (allegorical) personification. Even so, in practice, Solovyov accepted personification of Sophia, as an implementation of the theurgical task of incarnation of the divine in mortal, corporal reality. (HELLEMAN, 2010, p.212).

S. Bulgakov (1991, p.309) also indicates the co-existence of male and female essences in Divine Sophia: “The Sophian spirit of human is bisexual [...] it combines the male, solar substance of thought, or Logos, with the female substance of receptivity and creative perfection surrounded with beauty”. According to N. Berdyaev (1994, p.61), the concept of Sophia is related to the idea of religious creativity – “the creation of a new creature”. Nikolay Berdyaev emphasized that man can create only when he feels free. In the act of free creation, he aspires to the transcendent. However, the searching of a way out beyond the “world of immanence”, as many philosophers thought, belongs only to a male. Therefore, any creative act inevitably relates to male essence. Only a male can be a creator, like God (not Goddess) who created the Earth. Creation ceases to be a simple impulse, it already wants to be a new existence, which proceeds from “the chaos of freedom” as a result of disintegration of the previous ordered system. Thus, the creativity of the Silver Age culture was actualized not only in making something new; it began to form the life itself.

It is paradoxical that the construction of the femininity mythologem in the religious tradition was not related to the radical contrast of male and female essences. Examining the problem of sex (gender) in terms of religion, philosophers often linked it with the idea of immortality. In the spiritual tradition, the question of resurrection and overcoming of death was usually solved on the basis of achieving personal wholeness and restoring the unity of the male and female. Thus, Russian thinkers supposed that both males and females retained “the image and resemblance to God”; and man had remained to be an androgynous creature in his essence.

Results & discussion

In general, the Eternal Femininity proved to be that ideal, around which the new life style and the spirit of the age were formed. Femininity as one of the main personalized substances and world's energies comes into life of a man, nature, cosmos and god.

One of the main specific features of the Silver Age culture is the rise of interest in the problem of femininity. Taking the femininity as social and cultural construction (the complex of behavioral and psychological features, that are traditionally mean “something feminine”), that is filled by the cultural dominants of that period, we found that it becomes the most receptive to the conditions, events of epoch and it undergoes to changes itself. Especially because femininity for the Russian culture plays the special role: the “soul of Russia” is feminine itself. The characteristic features assigned to Russia are traditionally related to the femininity concept. Establishing semantic boundaries and points of crossing to “female” and “femininity” concepts, we demarcated them as sexual and gender, and also – as something natural and something cultural and symbolic.

1. Ideas about the Russian culture in the Western world: European civilization appeared as “male” standard, while “feminine” Russia – as something special”. The ideal of femininity has enormous value for understanding of some special features of Russian mentality. Separation into the active male principle, directed toward the creativity and the passive female principle as the receptive soul. In Russian culture of this period we can find the both motives, that are the keys to understanding of Russian mentality. These are the antinomy of male and female and, in contrast to it, the idea of their complementarity.
2. Eternal Femininity, created by V. I. Soloviov, was basic mythologema in the Silver Age culture, that designated itself in the thoughts and the art of that time, that was being personified into the reality. Overcoming a given antinomy high-low was trying in his lyrics Vladimir Solovyov (KLING, 2009). We note, that the sources of ideal (i. e. mythologized) femininity were not rooted only in Soloviov's mind, they are rooted in the ancient Russian tradition and are expressed in the symbols of Mother- Earth and Mother of God.
3. The main sources for Eternal Femininity myth were: Soul of The World as feminine aspect of God (F. W. J. Schelling), Eternal Femininity as transcendent power which may rise a man to the highest creativity (J. W. Goethe) and Sofia The Wisdom of God as traditional symbol of Orthodox Christianity.
4. Creation of ideal Femininity myth in the Silver Age culture: realization of this mythologema comes into conflict with reality itself. Myth, encountering life, according to the laws of the myth action is destroyed. Ideal can't fall outside the boundaries of the mythical system of a man thinking, where the femininity in the established tradition of myth-making came out as asexual, super-spiritual image. As a result, the model of Ideal Femininity becomes the empty form, metaphysical “nothing”.

5. The ideal, personified into the reality, is converted into its opposition: Men began to see woman in the aspect of Eternal Femininity, assigning to her such a qualities as: light ful, chaste, non-natural, reasonable, harmonious, imperious It is to note that some “traditional male qualities” were assigned to woman. But Eternal Femininity, which replaces by itself the components of natural (or real) femininity, in the mythological consciousness of epoch becomes the ideal, which begins to form the life of real women.
6. The content of the femininity concept in the context of Russian culture is revealed as the unity of the metaphysical, anthropological, aesthetical and socio-cultural aspects, which take their sources in the mythological and religious consciousness and obtaining conceptual and theoretical comprehension in the philosophy. The philosophical meaning of the femininity, in its turn, found vivid reflection in the Silver Age poetry, where the femininity imago of epoch became the personification of the search for truth in religion and the symbol of the spiritual renovation of Russia. Among the diverse artistic currents of symbolism it has become the main direction in which most fully expresses the intellectual and emotional spirit of the age. The ideas of Russian symbolism and its connection with the art presented in the work Michael Wachtel (1994). Its ambivalence became the special feature of the embodiment of the philosophical understanding of the femininity in the arts: from one side, woman is represented in the halo of spirituality, holiness, wisdom; from other side, she comes out as the personification of fate, passion, falling (with the aspiring to revival).

About myth and myth studies

From a numerous concept in the myth studies and myth creation we selected those, which to the larger degree correspond to the methodological base of that work. These are, first of all, the concepts, in which the myth is considered not as the fantastic form of thinking and knowledge, inherent in the archaic stage of culture, but as the phenomenon, which constantly presents in culture and human existence as a whole. They include (taking into account a number of differences) the concepts, developed by M. Eliade (2005) and A. F. Losev (1991), i.e. phenomenologically oriented models of myth understanding. In both cases the myth treats as the integral meaning of reality, which combines the sensual and rational aspects of its reflection. Thus, myth as a whole and its separate components are poly semantic in their essence. In this quality even the most archaic mythical image, subject, history can again obtain their urgency in the new cultural context. In this case “external” aspects of myth (form of expression, status and role in the cultural system, new interpretations) are connotated by “urgent” culture and “modern” society realia. However, the initial matrix of senses and symbolic demonstration is always referent to authentic ground. For this very reason “the myth today” (BARTHES, 1994) is not less fantastic than the mythology of the past.

Together with this a study rests on the concept “of the technology” of the myth creation in different spheres of the language functioning by R. Barthes (some terms characteristic for it were used in the previous fragment).

Conclusions

The concept of femininity of the Silver Age philosophy and culture was aimed at redefining the principles of life; it was a response to the changing gender picture of the world. Outlining the specific of Russian culture, it is necessary to note that its most important characteristics were focus on the sphere of the ideal, the tendency to go beyond the sensual world and to turn to searching for a spiritual foundation of human life. This uniqueness and constancy reflected in the works of Russian thinkers was apparently motivated by general dissatisfaction with the epoch. It is natural that in the most critical moments of historical development, a deep aspiration to search spirituality acquires exceptional importance.

The Silver Age became a special period in the Russian cultural history due to its aspiration towards mythological perception of the reality. The mythological vision most closely corresponded to the aesthetic sense of the epoch and to the metaphysical attitudes dominating in philosophy. Myth was capable to combine and reconcile two opposite sides of reality, to make mystery accessible and tangible for anyone who was involved into the artistic and intellectual creation of the cultural space.

The epoch was unique in terms of attitude to woman. It was manifested in the desire to change her status in the society; women gradually began to master some of the male roles, which did not happen before, within the framework of the patriarchal culture. The transition to new forms of social being changed men's attitude towards women; the society saw the start of the emancipation movement and appearance of its supporters. It was the time of an idealistic greatness of woman, which was unique in itself.

As shown above, the most important tool in forming the concept of femininity at the turn of the XIX century was myth-creation of contemporary thinkers and artists. In their opinion, the act of creative abilities realization could be performed only by males who created the new femininity. Femininity, in turn, was constructed during creation.

The mythologization of femininity was related with the specifics of world perception and with a necessity to construct an ideal image, which could reflect the most intensive feeling of the epoch, its cultural content or context. The mythologem was constructed as a certain cultural space with a new system of values and ideals, with a specific way of world perception. This cultural space created a new model of existence on the verge of transition from reality to the realm of symbols and myths.

Thus, the idea to make a new system of values in Russian culture found its embodiment in myth-creation. Myth, which traditionally combined incompatible things – earthly and heavenly, spiritual and material, proved to be the most flexible cultural form capable of reconciling diverse senses. This cultural form stimulated artistic activity and creation of new models of the world. Myth was constructed as a challenge

to the cultural crisis; it allowed the new femininity model to come into the reality and then gave birth to the need for its philosophical and artistic comprehension. Only myth-creation made it possible to go beyond the strictly rational limits and inspired a more liberate creativity. The tendency to irrational and existential interpretation of a human being is typical for the culture-makers of the Russian Silver Age; they believed that it gave a better opportunity for understanding of the human inner world.

Summing up, we can say that the mythological concept of femininity had a symbolic nature, which was a part of personal intuitional and imaginary perception of holistic world-vision. Myth was an attempt of integral comprehension of reality. Its constituent concepts filled that symbolic system with sense, which gave a feeling of reality to personal consciousness, and imbued it with “true life”. The concept of femininity can strengthen the semantic implication of the most important elements of world outlook, setting parameters for subjective perception, prompting anticipation of the whole epoch and understanding of the world in the frames of certain cultural myth-creation.

GUTOVA, S. G. Mitologização do conceito feminino na filosofia russa e cultura da idade da prata. **Revista de Letras**, São Paulo, v.56, n.1, p.167-183, jan./jun. 2016.

- **RESUMO:** O artigo lida com diferentes aspectos mitológicos do conceito de feminilidade na filosofia e cultura russa no final dos séculos XIX e XX. Uma especial atenção é dada à definição de cultura, formando significado mitológico, o ideal de feminilidade na cultura russa. As peculiaridades da feminilidade da natureza expressão na cultura russa e a filosofia da era de Prata são considerados no artigo. A análise revelou que os pensadores russos conseguiram unir as noções filosóficas, religiosas e estéticas sobre o princípio feminino como uma imagem ideal que exige adoração e tem capacidade para ter impacto sobre a criação da feminilidade do conceito. O artigo descreve os mecanismos básicos de mito, o processo de criação e a realização mitológica da imagem da feminilidade na cultura da era de Prata. Foi estabelecido que a interpretação romântica do mito desempenhou um papel fundamental para os representantes da cultura russa do início do século XX. Deve-se notar que o conceito de mitologização da feminilidade permitiu que os pesquisadores russos unissem o conteúdo específico e o elevado elitismo do absoluto, de forma abstrata. Demonstra-se que os representantes russos da filosofia e da cultura utilizaram a imagem sincrética de “a Eterna Feminilidade” como a pedra angular do mito de formação, estabelecendo de sua nova conceitual limites, ao mesmo tempo, definindo-a como um ideal da época. O traço específico da tradição cultural russa é o fenômeno do desenvolvimento da feminilidade no processo de criação através da correlação dos princípios masculinos e femininos, com base no ideal andrógino da natureza. Conclui-se que o conceito do desenvolvimento da feminilidade depende do processo de formação de novos valores culturais.
- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Mito. Conceito de feminilidade. Eternidade. Feminilidade. Sophia. “Idade da prata” da cultura russa.

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