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PRODUCT OF THE UNCONSCIOUS OR SACRED ACCOUNT? THE MYTH IN FREUD AND ELIADE

Rafael Pereira Nunes[1], Orcid: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6903-1994
Mauricio Rodrigues de Souza[2], Orcid: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6290-000X

ABSTRACT. Before to the advent of philosophy itself, myths were already an object of reiterated interest, subjecting themselves to various interpretations and valuations throughout history. Taking this into account, we aim in this article to point out how psychoanalysis, based on the originality of Sigmund Freud's founding discourse, maintains a simultaneously close and particular relationship with mythic narratives. In order to add something new to this debate, we have established a counterpoint between Freudian thinking about mythology and the perspective defended by the philosopher Mircea Eliade on this same theme. In conclusive terms, we highlight some possible implications of Freud's approach to mythology and of the counterpoint between himself and Eliade both for psychoanalytic theory and for the analyst's clinical practice, implications which directly involve the problem of alterity and that are guided not by a mutually exclusivist binarism, but by the value of an idea of supplementarity between the poles of science and mythology.

Keywords: Mythology; psychoanalysis; philosophy.

PRODUTO DO INCONSCIENTE OU RELATO SAGRADO? O MITO EM FREUD E ELIADE

RESUMO. Anteriormente ao advento da própria filosofia, os mitos já se constituíam como objeto de reiterado interesse, sujeitando-se a variadas interpretações e valorações ao longo da história. Levando isso em conta, objetivamos neste artigo apontar como a psicanálise, a partir da originalidade do discurso fundador de Sigmund Freud, mantém uma relação ao mesmo tempo estreita e particular com as narrativas míticas. De maneira, porém, a acrescentar algo de novo a esse debate, estabelecemos aqui um contraponto entre o pensamento freudiano acerca da mitologia e a perspectiva defendida pelo filósofo Mircea Eliade acerca dessa mesma temática. Em termos conclusivos, destacamos algumas possíveis implicações da aproximação de Freud com a mitologia e do contraponto entre si e Eliade tanto para a teoria psicanalítica quanto para a prática clínica do analista, implicações que envolvem diretamente o problema da alteridade e que aparecem pautadas não por um binarismo mutuamente exclusivista, mas pelo valor de uma ideia de suplementaridade entre os polos da ciência e da mitologia.

Palavras-chave: Mitologia; psicanálise; filosofia.

[1] Universidade Federal do Pará, Belém-PA, Brasil. E-mail: nunesrp@outlook.com.br
[2] Universidade Federal do Pará, Belém-PA, Brasil. E-mail: mrsouza@ufpa.br

¿PRODUCTO DEL INCONSCIENTE O RELATO SAGRADO? EL MITO EN FREUD Y ELIADE

RESUMEN. Antes del advenimiento de la filosofía misma, los mitos ya eran objeto de un interés reiterado, sujeto a diversas interpretaciones y valoraciones a lo largo de la historia. Teniendo esto en cuenta, en este artículo pretendemos señalar cómo el psicoanálisis, basado en la originalidad del discurso fundacional de Sigmund Freud, mantiene una relación al mismo tiempo estrecha y particular con las narrativas míticas. Para añadir algo nuevo a este debate, hemos establecido un contrapunto entre el pensamiento freudiano sobre la mitología y la perspectiva que defiende el filósofo Mircea Eliade sobre este mismo tema. En términos concluyentes, destacamos algunas posibles implicaciones de la aproximación de Freud con la mitología y del contrapunto entre él y Eliade tanto para la teoría psicoanalítica como para la práctica clínica del analista, implicaciones que involucran directamente el problema de la alteridad y que son guiadas no por un binarismo mutuamente excluyente, sino por el valor de una idea de complementariedad entre los polos de la ciencia y de la mitología.

Palabras clave: Mitología; psicoanálisis; filosofía.

Introduction

From the moment that, for some reason, their attention is awakened and they become interested in knowing ancient mythological records, people soon become aware of the presence of mythical thinking in their daily lives in a much more common way than they imagined. This is in productions as diverse as books, films, television series, comic books, advertising materials, cartoons, or even in everyday interactions with friends and family.

In conceptual terms, myths are, in general, considered narratives that create and substantiate rites, customs, laws, and sociocultural institutions. They often appear associated with the sacred, tradition, and even the origins of the things they refer to. And yet, they continue to influence the construction of very contemporary theories in the field of humanities (such as those proposed by Marshall McLuhan's communication or Teilhard de Chardin's anthropology), as well as in ideologies and theologies, which points to their absolute still valid today as an area of research.

This is how we intend to shed some light on how psychoanalysis maintains a close relationship with mythical narratives in the singularity and originality of Freud's founding speech. Aiming to add something new to this debate – already carried out competently in Brazil by a series of previous works such as Azoubel Neto (1993), Souza and Rocha (2009), Azevedo (2012) and Pastore (2012), among others –, we chose to contrast Freud's reflections and approaches regarding myths with those defended by the philosopher and religious scholar Mircea Eliade. This choice is justified both by the author's relevance to the field of studies of mythical forms of thought and by the lack of research more specifically focused on possible contacts between his ideas and the psychoanalytic framework beyond the already debated influence of Jung (Oldmeadow, 2008).

To this end, as this was a very theoretical work study, we proceed methodologically as follows: we initially carry out a bibliographic and comparative review of some relevant historical and conceptual studies on the issue of myth and then focus more on the specificity of the thoughts of the two aforementioned authors. Naturally, a transdisciplinary movement

like ours, which involves psychoanalysis and other subjects such as philosophy, must be aware of the vast field of knowledge involved and the resulting difficulties, which are accentuated by the limited space available for writing an article.

With this, we obviously do not intend to present an exposition that is intended to be overly detailed or exhaustive, whether regarding the nuances of the issue of myth or the perspectives of the two aforementioned authors about it. In any case, we are encouraged by the possibility that the return to this theme – as well as the clash between different approaches made about it – results in one or more reflections that prove to be interesting both for psychoanalytic theory and the analyst's daily practice. It is, therefore, in this spirit we invite the reader towards our first movement: a brief conceptual and historical exploration of the nuances of the myth.

About the myth: some general comments

The important contribution of Patai (1972) in his book *Myth and Modern Man* occupies a special place in this first stage of our work, from which we extracted precious information. In it, the author conjectures about the existence of mythology since the prehistoric period of humanity, considered basic knowledge and transmitted from generation to generation. This situation would remain stable until at least 25 centuries ago, when the first questions arose about the constitution of the myth, henceforth the object of new appreciation and interest, especially on the part of those who would come to be known as poets.

From the 6th century BC onwards, the first interpretations of the myth began in philosophy, mainly by skeptics, with Thales of Miletus, Theagenes of Rhegium, and Pythagoras conceiving it as an allegory of nature. With Herodotus, in the 5th century BC, the myth began to be taken as a historical report. Alongside this historical perspective, however, others emerge: moralistic, metaphysical, and sophistic. The latter, tending to reconcile the first two, although criticized by Plato, predominated among Neoplatonists and Stoics of the Hellenistic period. At the same time, Euhemerus began to think of myths as the result of a long process of deification of earthly characters, which would later be followed by names such as Tertullian and Saint Augustine.

Euhemerus' perspective reigned throughout the Middle Ages until the Renaissance when interest in Greek and Roman mythology was revived. As a result, several mythography manuals were produced in Italy dealing with Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Syrian, Phoenician, Assyrian, Persian, Arabic, Celtic, and Germanic pagan deities, which paved the way for comparative mythology developed in the 17th century. In the 18th century, some interpretative controversy would once again predominate, this time between Epicureans on the one hand and Neoplatonists and Stoics on the other. Among the Epicureans, the rationalism of the French philosopher Voltaire, for example, disqualifies classical myths, taking them as mere superstitions. On the other hand, following the Neoplatonic and Stoic perspective, the German romantics stood out, responsible for giving high value to mythical narratives. As expected, this renewed confrontation of conceptions also ended up inaugurating new perspectives for studies and research, no longer only under the responsibility of poets and philosophers but also of linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists.

This moment corresponded to when Wilhelm Wundt began to play a prominent role in the academic world. Founder of modern experimental psychology in the mid-19th century, an achievement for which he is best known, Wundt was also responsible for relevant work

on sociocultural phenomena such as language and religion, having proposed two fields of research within the psi universe: an experimental, physiologically based, and another more social. Regarding the latter, at the beginning of the 20th century, he published a series of ten volumes called *Volkerpsychologie* (Psychology of Peoples), where the study of myth would assume a central role, especially in its relationship with rites.

However, whether he is a psychologist, an anthropologist, or a historian, the student of myths is given the nickname mythologist, especially when he dedicates his research to the modes of production and the local and historical circumstances that permeate mythical thought. It is common, however, that some of these scholars end up crossing these limits. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sigmund Freud were examples of this, the first when developing his method of structural analysis to interpret the meaning of any myth to which it was applied. And the second, when he frequently used mythical narratives to employ them in his clinical practice and/or the formulation of his own initial psychoanalytic theory.

In any case, the truth is that the scientific approach has also advanced considerably in the field of mythology studies, helping to further highlight the differences that effectively distinguish these two modes of thought: scientific and mythical. In this sense, although moral problems constitute an important source of concern for various scientific subjects, from the point of view of Patai (1972), the main characteristic of science is to be objective, seeking to know, unveil, and report without necessarily holding the moral purpose as a priority in its discoveries. The myth, in turn:

> ...always keeps man at the center of its interest. The explanations it gives to the great questions that have agitated man since he was a man invariably contain an element of encouragement: a phenomenon, the myth tells us, as we find it today, has this and this as its basis, reason, origin, meaning or purpose (...) Where science explains, myth reassures; where science reports, myth comforts (p. 68).

This statement (and the split supported by it) seems too categorical to us, as we know how much science also reassures and comforts, at the same time that myth can bring with it a whole nebulous, ambiguous, and disturbing dimension. We will come back to that. In any case, following his perspective, Patai (1972) draws our attention to the necessary importance of differentiating historical from mythical reports, at least to the extent that the latter would have the peculiar characteristic of dispensing with objective and factual data, largely based on a subjective basis.

Well, moving forward in conceptual terms, we would now like to highlight the suggestion made by Abbagnano (2000), who proposes three different conceptions about myth throughout the history of Western thought. The first of them would be the one most present in Classical Antiquity when *mythos* was opposed to *logos*, the latter being considered a truer discourse. As a counterpoint to the truth, myth was attributed at most a character of verisimilitude to which a moral or religious validity was generally linked. In effect, myth, quite characterized by a share of imagination, fiction, and fantasy, would be closer to art, whose purpose would reside in itself, being able to mobilize belief through its beauty, through faith, or simply through each person's own choice. *Logos*, on the other hand, would need to resort to argument and logical conviction and could be believed as true or false[3].

The second conception presented by Abbagnano (2000) stops subordinating the myth to rational knowledge and starts to consider it: "...an autonomous form of thought and

[3] According to Souza and Rocha (2009), these two ways of expression would be reduced to one when the philosophical discourse appropriated the mythical narrative as an object of study, rationalizing it.

life" (p. 673). In addition to being widely welcomed by romanticism as an artistic movement, in the more specific field of philosophy this second conception has a prominent representative in Ernst Cassirer, especially in the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, where mythical thought is taken as resulting from an understanding always incomplete of symbol, and in *An Essay on Man*, which, in addition to logical rules, highlights the fundamental role of emotion and feeling in human activities[4].

In the third conception disseminated by Abbagnano (2000), the myth is inserted as a study tool used by modern sociological theory inaugurated by James George Frazer and Bronislaw Malinowski. In these terms, no longer considered a mere prerogative of archaic civilizations, since duly integrated into the study of so-called "advanced" societies, myth assumes the task of giving continuity to human culture being therefore studied according to its functional character.

Also linked to this tradition of thought, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss stood out; with his *Mythologiques* tetralogy - composed of the books *Le Cru et le Cuit*, *Du Miel aux Cendres*, *L'Origine des Manières de Table*, and *L'Homme Nu* (Cf. Lévi-Strauss, 1964/2009a; 1967/2009b; 1968/2009c and 1971/2009d, respectively) –, provided myths with the status of relevant forms of access to the unconscious dimension that would build life in society. He did so through a structural method that, presented a few years earlier in *La Structure des Mythes* (Cf. Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1985), defended the point of view that they (myths) did not even have a beginning nor an end, nor a proper meaning, appearing as fragments of broader narratives to be deciphered and which could be found, even if in a distorted form, in reports coming from significantly different communities.

In fact, exactly in this structural apprehension of the myth lies the motivation for us, closely following Azevedo (2004), to reiterate here the importance of Claude Lévi-Strauss for psychoanalysis. After all, by analyzing mythology based on Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic model, his anthropology overcame old distinctions, such as those between particular and general, individual and collective, synchrony and diachrony, thus allowing this essential aspect of mythical language to be treated with due consideration: repetition. The same repetition was once taken as the cornerstone of the constitution of the Freudian unconscious in its incorporation of contradiction and paradox. So, now, let us look a little more closely at what he has to tell us.

The Myth in Freud's thought: a product of the unconscious

By seeking to move away from the more rigid model of science previously proposed by Descartes – the one guided by the voice of reason, the *cogito* as the sole foundation of human nature –, Freud approached mythical language as a favorable means of expression for his innovations and theoretical and clinical discoveries guided by the hypothesis of the unconscious. This is what we can infer, for example, from the following passage from

[4] As an important representative of the neo-Kantian movement, it is also worth highlighting Cassirer's (1925/1946) considerations in *Language and Myth* about the "'Copernican revolution'" carried out by Immanuel Kant. For the author, from Greek sophistry to modern skeptical criticism, myths, and art were considered invalid or just fiction and phantasmagoria. With Kant, however, there is the requirement to recognize in different intellectual productions a spontaneous mode of creation with its own rules, which lies its revolutionary dimension: to stop considering science, language, art, and myth as allegories of an existing reality to consider them as bearers of a meaningful world of their own. Thus, Kant reveals himself to be very important for the study of myths due to his claim for the autonomy of mythical thought concerning philosophical thought.

Conference XXXII of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, entitled *Anxiety and Instinctual Life*, which records the following: “The theory of drives is, so to speak, our mythology. Drives are mythical beings, formidable in their indeterminacy” (Freud, 1933/1964, p. 98).

A year before the *New Introductory Lectures*, however, during the writing of *The Acquisition of Fire*, Freud (1932/1964) sought to extract meaning from another Greek myth – this time, that of Prometheus. In the text in question, even considering probable distances between fact and mythology, Freud (1932/1964) considers the renunciation of human sexual pleasure of putting out the fire with a jet of urine - an important precondition for the mastery of that same fire by of our species.

But, without a doubt, as can be seen in impressive detail in the solid work of Rudnytsky (1992), the most notable example of the importance attributed by Freud to myths – in particular, the Greek ones – comes from the misadventures of Oedipus. After all, by expressing the enormous relevance progressively acquired by fantasy in the field of the etiology of neuroses, a relevance established after the abandonment of the theory of infantile seduction, the insertion of the *Oedipus Rex* metaphor into psychoanalytic theory highlights one of its fundamental achievements: the resolution of the hitherto traditional (and impoverishing) clinical divergence between “truth” and “imagination.”

Thus, it did not take long for, after Freud’s (1897/1976) first mention of the value of Sophocles’ tragedy – a reference made in correspondence number 71 to his then confidant Wilhelm Fliess, marked by the admission of having recognized feelings in himself which he began to consider as being universal in early childhood: jealousy of the father and passion for the mother –, the myth of Oedipus was then approached by Freud (1900/1953) for the first time as a psychic complex. This occurred in a footnote in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where mythical thought is elevated to the status of a collective phenomenon resulting from an unconscious process similar to dreams in individual life. In these terms, Freud (1900/1953) states that if dreams are the most effective way the psychic apparatus finds to avoid censorship, this same avoidance would be processed socially through myth. Furthermore, in the middle of the fourth part of chapter 5 of the book, a new reference to the Oedipal tragedy is present when referring to some typical dreams related to the death of loved ones, where Freud (1900/1953) is categorical in supporting what:

> ...parents play the main role in the psychic life of all children who later develop psychoneurosis, and the passion for one and hatred for the other parent are elements of the immutable collection of the psychic impulse material formed at that time and so significant for the symptomatology of later neurosis (...) To support this discovery, Antiquity has left us a legend whose pervasive and universal efficacy only becomes comprehensible if we admit a similar universality of the precondition of child psychology discussed above. I refer to the legend of Oedipus the King and the homonymous drama by Sophocles (p. 301-302).

A few years later, the myths would return to the scene in Freud’s pen when they were related to another production of the unconscious: in this case, the sexual theories elaborated by children. And this is how, in *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children*, Freud (1908/1948) weaves an intriguing rapprochement between myth and neurosis. According to him, even in early childhood, human beings would create a series of theories aimed at explaining the anatomical difference between the sexes, coitus, and the conception of babies, with similarities in the process of development of these theories and myths in that, for both children and the most varied people, there would be a motivation to answer about the origin of something and the answer to this question would be taken as evident in both cases.

Therefore, in this scenario of valuing symbolic thinking and reasoning by analogy, the myth is related by Freud (1908/1948) to neurosis, considered by him to be no less than an individual myth.

We then arrive at *Totem and Taboo*, where the myth is treated with great emphasis by Freud (1912-1913/1955) under the condition of acting in the remembrance of totemic and animistic rites linked to the horror of incest, taboos, and the ambivalence of feelings (for example, about the dead). Furthermore, we have the writing that presents in its fourth chapter what would later lead Lacan (1959-1960/1986) to consider it as being "...perhaps the only myth of which the modern era has been capable of" (p. 212): the elaboration of the narrative of the primitive horde, a fundamental heuristic element for the Freudian understanding of the origin of culture. As is well known among psychoanalytic scholars, this is the hypothesis of the existence, at the beginning of our history as a species, of a primitive horde of hominids whose relationships of love and hate between their members could be thought of in Oedipal terms, horde one whose transgenerational and unconscious conflicting heritage would reach each of us, contemporary neurotics, in a movement that, in practice, would mean a far from negligible rapprochement between elements of individual and collective psychic functioning.

From then on, Freud continued to express in other texts the results of his theoretical reflections and clinical observations through myths, which assumed the role of structuring axes of a thought that left so many marks and provocations in the history of ideas in the West. For example, in *The Question of Lay Analysis*, where mythology appears as a living and faithful record of the history of peoples. From this perspective, Freud (1926/1947) proposed some analogies between life stories and the imagination of human communities that were called primitive at the time and some expressions of childhood sexuality.

For our purposes here, it is worth highlighting Freud's (1926/1947) intention with the publication of this work to emphasize Psychoanalysis as knowledge which would not be restricted to the jurisdiction of physicians, resuming an idea previously defended in *The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest* (FREUD, 1913/1975). Knowing, therefore, whose study and practice would also prove interesting for professionals from several other areas, not necessarily psychology, with which it would dialogue, such as pedagogy, sociology, aesthetics, biology, philosophy, the science of language, and the history of civilizations. This brief digression seems important to us because it is precisely at this moment that Freud (1913/1975) highlights the study of mythology as fundamental to the training of the psychoanalyst:

> In the first place, it seems quite possible to apply the psycho-analytic views derived from dreams to products of ethnic imagination such as myths and fairy tales. The need to interpret such productions has long been felt; some 'secret meaning' has been suspected to lie behind them and it has been presumed that that meaning is concealed by changes and transformations. The study made by psycho-analysis of dreams and neuroses has given it the necessary experience to enable it to guess the technical procedures that have governed these distortions. But in a number of instances it can also reveal the hidden motives which have led to this modification in the original meaning of myths. It cannot accept as the first impulse to the construction of myths a theoretical craving for finding an explanation of natural phenomena or for accounting for cult observances and usages which have become unintelligible. It looks for that impulse in the same psychical 'complexes', in the same emotional trends, which it has discovered at the base of dreams and symptoms (p. 356).

Shortly before the end of his life, Freud (1939/1953) would return to mythology one last time. This time, aiming to understand aspects of the religious phenomenon in *Moses and Monotheism*, where he highlights the underlying presence of myths in Western

civilization as arising from the Judeo-Christian worldview. Regarding our interests here, Freud's book (1939/1953) proves interesting in at least two aspects. Firstly, by insisting on the difficulty in delimiting what would effectively belong to the realm of historical facts or the mythical domain – in this case, involving the image of a great man, leader, and liberator of the Hebrew people that came to prevail around Moses. Secondly, by using the psychoanalytic theoretical arsenal – more specifically, the idea of an original parricide as the ground zero of culture as presented in *Totem and Taboo* – to formulate risky hypotheses about the development of the Jewish religion from the murder of Moses in the desert, this murder was supposedly orchestrated and carried out by the Jews themselves. Here, albeit in a synthetic way, is the trajectory of myth in Freud's work. So, without further ado, let us look at a little about its presence and importance in Mircea Eliade's writings.

The Myth in Mircea Eliade: narrative and sacred truth about life

From the 19th century onwards, the founding of *Religionswissenschaft* began in Europe as an autonomous field of study composed of various disciplines, among which the History of Religions gained prominence. In this *métier*, the Romanian philosopher Mircea Eliade and his research on the subject of myth fit in, even though, as Allen (2002) tells us, Eliade himself seeks to distinguish himself from other theorists generally taken as representatives of *Religionswissenschaft* – in particular those linked to approaches today considered highly subjective, normative, and ethnocentric, such as James George Frazer and Edward Burnett Tylor.

For Mircea Eliade (1963), it is not so important to define with absolute precision the status of fiction or the lie of myth at different historical moments. It is interesting to understand its relationship with the societies where it is still "alive." Read: where it remains giving value and meaning to human behaviors. Eliade (1957/1967; 1963) considers myth as an account of a sacred and, therefore, true story, a story that took place in the origins, in the primordial and fabulous time of beginnings, an account of the deeds of supernatural beings, of an act of creation, of how something came to exist. For him, it is in this sense of an intrinsic relationship with the origins that myth is thought of as a continuity or extension of cosmogony.

By telling past events *ab origine*, adds Eliade (1963), the myth provides the religious person with the possibility of imagining the authenticity of a given existence. And, when reporting stories from a primordial time, it assumes the essential as prior to that same existence, leaving it up to man to behave in accordance with certain narratives and even assume their consequences. According to Eliade (1963), this is how it works among indigenous peoples, who make a marked distinction between true and false stories, taking as their main defining criterion the relationship they maintain with sacredness.

With modernity, however, continues Eliade (1963), the essential ceases to depend on an ontology, and the sacred moves into the background. This is to the same extent that man considers himself much more dependent on history, placing himself as an agent and subject of his own existence. In these terms, even though modern and archaic man presented themselves as the result of past events, the first sees himself as the result of well-defined and dated historical events, while the second considered himself heir to sacred stories passed in a mythical time whose characters would be heroes and supernatural beings.

Still from the perspective of Eliade (1963), the historical importance of mythology is such that themes like those related to universal values, such as truth and reality, later taken

as objects of metaphysical speculation, were defined in archaic societies as coming from sacred experiences, whose propagation and perpetuation were done exactly through myth. In them, time in a continuous and chronological sense was evaluated as profane and unacceptable, with privilege being given to the notion of a cyclical time that held in ritual an indispensable means of repeating and, in some way, accessing the domain of the gods and ancestors. This perspective may give the impression of immobility and stagnation; for Eliade (1963), there would be a mistaken impression since those ancestral peoples inevitably went through changes and constructed new histories, even though the transformative gestures were usually motivated by archetypal models.

In a word, in the pages written by Eliade (1957/1967; 1963; 1957/1987), we read how the structures of understanding the world would be, for religious man, divided between sacred and profane and determined by myth. On the other hand, for the modern and secular man, reality would be desecrated, and his understanding would move toward the domains of history. Even so – that is, despite all the tendency towards the historicization of existence characteristic of modernity – the condition of man would appear as essentially religious and transcendental, with the mythical and sacred dimensions configuring themselves as a *structural part of the human unconscious*. In this sense, even though Eliade (1963) does not shy away from recognizing the importance and relevance of the Freudian description of the unconscious when characterizing this same unconscious from his historiographical studies, he insists on taking it as something structured by the myth and, with it, the sacred.

However, it is worth asking, would the psychoanalyst, in their daily professional practice, inevitably deal with sacred and mythical stories? Interestingly, Eliade's own answer (1957/1967) to this question is categorical: no. Because according to him, if dreams contain religious and mythical elements represented by symbols with a claim to universality, and if, in turn, mythologies are provided with imaginary efabulations and dream processes, the continuity between what is part of the individual dream and what is linked to the collective religious terrain does not imply mutual equivalence. So, it would be possible to establish analogies but not to the point of reducing one sphere to the other.

In the same vein, by insisting on attempting a dialogue with some pillars of Freudian theory, Eliade (1957/1967) makes it clear that, although they present continuities and similarities, there would be a radical difference between dreams and myths. And what would it be? Well, for the Romanian thinker, myths could not be considered personal events, as they would always participate in the unveiling of a collective mystery. Or, put differently, they would not only address the intelligence and imagination of a single individual but the entire man. Dreams would belong to the dreamer, becoming subject to interpretations and decodings whose scope would inevitably be limited to the interior of that particular universe. Therefore, they would lack what would characterize myths in a more intrinsic way: exemplarity and universality.

As can be seen, these considerations become relevant because they greatly clarify the importance attributed by Eliade (1957/1967; 1957/1987) to the possibility of joint work between the history of religions and other knowledge – such as psychoanalysis – in what concerns mythology. However, the author always considers that we would have to respect certain disciplinary limits and not make the mistake of reducing one field to another, thus meeting the requirement of studying common phenomena but preserving in this attempt reference plans that would be specific to each area. Therefore, when defending the irreducibility of the mythical phenomenon in the face of what he considers

to be attempts to impose conceptual frameworks that would be alien to it, Mircea Eliade exposes his disagreement and dissatisfaction with the actions of important representatives of scientific thought. Among them is Sigmund Freud. With that in mind, let us come to some conclusions.

Final considerations

As we suggested previously, at first, mythical narratives were considered basic and indispensable knowledge. However, over time, as such narratives became the target of the most diverse interpretations, their value considerably diminished. The general picture appears as follows: during the Middle Ages, the conception of myths as basically responsible for deifying historical characters predominated. Meanwhile, in the Renaissance, interest prevailed in rescuing ancient Greek and Roman mythologies; with the arrival of the modern Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant returned to myth the status of an autonomous narrative – that is, carrying its own rules of operation that were not necessarily susceptible to assessment by the courts of philosophy and science. Finally, in a contemporary world that also includes psychoanalysis, myth acquires a new function, as it comes to be understood as a useful narrative for the study of behaviors and religious beliefs of different societies, whether “primitive” or “advanced.”

In this context, works such as those by Mircea Eliade gained prominence, who dedicated himself diligently to studying myths to unravel and clarify essential aspects of religion. For him, every understanding of reality by religious men is guided by the idea of sacredness, belief in the supernatural, and a way of acting delimited by archetypal models. And the myth is nothing more, nothing less than the narrative responsible for informing this same man about all this reality, about what is sacred, true, and correct modes of conduct. In short, the meaning of life itself.

As far as Freud is concerned, the importance of studying mythology is accentuated to the point that he considered it indispensable for all those who wanted to become psychoanalysts. In fact, Freud seems to have taken this exhortation so seriously that the psychoanalytic theory he developed found in Greek mythology a series of very suitable analogies for his descriptions and interpretations of the operation of the psychic apparatus. Despite having sought content for his theses in ancient mythological sources, Freud also suggested innovative and ingenious interpretations for myths from the perspective that they would have the same unconscious origin and the same model of action as infantile sexual theories, dreams, and symptoms.

Thus, once we have recapitulated our journey so far and, along with it, reaffirmed the close relationship between Freudian speech and mythical narratives, as well as the general contours that demarcated such an approach (1st of the goals of this article), let us move forward in these last paragraphs in the sense that to address the second objective of the present work, we grasped some possible lessons from the counterpoint that we set out to establish between Freud and Eliade in the field of mythology, which may result in some relevance both to psychoanalytic theory and to the analyst’s daily work. In this sense, it is worth facing the following question from the start: How can we establish a productive dialogue between both authors in the field of myth research, given the apparent irreducibility of their conceptions regarding this topic?

Well, when it comes to this, we understand that Freud deliberately ignores or, at least, disagrees with Kant’s exhortation (1788/1983) about the independence or insubordination

of myth to the court of science or philosophy. An example of this stance appears in Conference XXXV of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, which goes by the suggestive name of *The Question of a Weltanschauung*. In this work, Freud (1932/1964) makes serious criticisms not only of religion but also philosophy since, according to him, both prove to be producers of supposedly complete understandings of reality, which would greatly limit the scope of human cognitive capabilities. For the author, psychoanalysis could not adopt a similar ideology due to its own characteristics, and it was up to it to adhere to the worldview of science. This statement reiterates Freud's well-known activism in favor of the freedom of scientific thought to appropriate any phenomena – which includes, of course, mythology.

Eliade is definitely not so incisive (or "enlightened," so to speak) in this opposition, maintaining, for example, that the researcher's link to the mythical universe would not necessarily mean harm to the scientific modus operandi. Here, we are interested in pointing out how much myth acquires a prominent place since it is considered by Eliade to be such a fundamental part of the religious universe *to the point that it cannot be understood outside of it*. This is how, as we have seen, even though the author maintains how "... useful and fruitful the confrontations between the respective universes of the historian of religions and the psychologists of intimacy" would be, he emphasizes to the same extent that it could not in any way "...confuse their planes of reference, nor their scales of values, nor, above all, their methods" (Eliade, 1957/1867, p. 14).

Faced with this impasse, how about we bet on a third way of argument? In fact, returning to the question that makes up the title of this article – that is, whether, when dealing with myths, we are dealing with a product of the unconscious or with a sacred story – it seems more sensible (and even psychoanalytic, if we keep with us the lessons offered by the imbrication between the drives of life and death or by the dream logic characteristic of the primary process, crossed by psychic mechanisms such as those of condensation or displacement) to defend the value of *supplementarity*. What do we intend to say with this statement? Fundamentally, nothing prevents us from conceiving myth as a sacred story and, at the same time, as a product of the unconscious.

This perspective is corroborated by the example arising from the pendulum action inherent in Freud's thought, which, as we previously emphasized, while firmly defending the submission of any human activity to the scrutiny of radical scientificism, masterfully uses precious mythical narratives from Ancient Greece to reveal the nuances of the psychic apparatus. Now, here, the use of mythology, far from belittling the importance of its own worldview, rather greatly reaffirms its wealth and ability to accurately represent fundamental aspects of both the psyche and human society.

Once this decisive step has been taken – that is, from the moment we finally reject the legacy left by centuries of a Cartesian dualism of exclusivist and, therefore, exclusionary nature – a whole field of reflections full of new possibilities, which is significantly expanded when, beyond (mere) rivalry with the other, we really take seriously the Freudian lesson that each pole of an apparent opposition is also *another for itself*. When confronted with this purposefully distorted picture, it is very likely that, surprised or frightened, we will then ask ourselves: So, what is left? Well, neither absolute separation nor complete affinity. Neither the pure and simple acceptance of a fixed binarism nor its "overcoming" by any hasty or arbitrary monism, both coming very close to some identity metaphysics that is quite reductionist in terms of heterogeneity.

What we are left with then is a necessary *movement of meaning*, an alteritarian principle whose maintenance is of utmost importance for psychoanalysis not only as an area of study already traditionally included in the academic universe but also as an integral part of the analyst's clinical activity. Yes, that guided by a listening that, when established through the necessary refusal of harmonies that are too easy or previously defined truths, reveals itself in its search for the interpretative wealth that resides in both dissonances and uncertainties. And that, for this very reason, like the sphinx in the myth of Oedipus, poses a unique challenge to everyone who comes into contact with it: to know himself where he did not know. Once accepted, it is to be expected that, among the various possibilities resulting from such an encounter, one in specific may emerge: the one expressed by the daily exercise of a more tolerant approach to differences, an approach arising from the awareness of also recognizing oneself as a stranger, a stranger in their own home.

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