



Myth and the Schellingian Notion of Mythological Consciousness as a Basis of Narrative and Narrative Identity

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Abstract

The paper concerns the problem of the mythological origins of narrative and narrative identity. Referring to works of such narrative researchers as D. Carr, B. Williams and K. Atkins and to F.W.J. Schelling's conception of a mythological consciousness, I prove that 1. in a narration – personal as well as collective (in a tale which constitutes given culture) – the type of necessity is similar to that which occurs in nature as well as in mythology (its higher potential) and which is responsible for a perfect story coherence that is unavailable in normal life and characteristic rather of art than of a usual experience; 2. although our personal narratives are shaped on the basis of a collective myth, they assume a first-person, reflective perspective, and this is the reason why an individual may in spite of such to some extent “untrue” origins keep personal freedom and autonomy.

Słowa kluczowe: mit, mitologia, świadomość mitologiczna, narracja, tożsamość narracyjna

Keywords: myth, mythology, mythological consciousness, narrative, narrative identity

Over the last thirty or forty years, the concept of narrative and the related problem of narrative identity became very popular in many branches of various sciences – typically humanities, including literature or philosophy, as well as, for example, medical and social sciences and so on. There are several reasons for the wide interest in this question, previously treated rather as part of fictional, literary discourse, but one in particular seems to be the most important. The narrative may be a valuable methodological proposal in all those sciences in which humans are not only subjects conducting research but also objects of the conducted research – which may be a consequence of the fact that telling stories is one of the most human of all human activities, taking place all over the world in every historical time, every culture and every society.

In this paper I would like to prove the thesis that both narrative and narrative identity, that is to say a story (narration) concerning somebody's life, have the same origins as myth and mythology. I would like to show that they can be treated as at least partially produced by the mythological consciousness described by F.W.J. Schelling in his *Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation*, which appears especially in the poetical, ideal coherence characteristic of narrative structure and absent in normal life, which unites events in a perfect but at the same time fictional way. I would also like to answer the question of why this coherence may contradict such values as truth, human autonomy and individual freedom of choice, and why in spite of this our personal life-story may overcome such a danger of reducing ourselves to a part of a mythical tale.

Every narrative – fictional as well as “real” – has one important feature which is constitutive for it and without which it would not be possible to tell any story. This special quality is related to its aesthetic, artificial character, which is a consequence of the fact that each narration must be coherent, because without this it makes no sense to the reader or listener. As Katrina McNeely Farren puts it, according to Ricoeur's views every narrative joins discordant, “(...) random events that are constantly occurring (...)” in the so-called real life of an individual or community, giving them a concordance which finally “(...) wins out over discordance (...)”,¹ and such a “discordant concordance” is its most important, key attribute. In doing so, it changes accidental, empirical events, giving them a form of something like a work, a piece of art which many philosophers believe does not exist in reality, or even if exists to some extent, it does not look exactly like a ready whole, a complete story-to-be-told. As David Carr puts it, many “philosophers, literary theorists, and historians” are convinced that “Real events simply do not hang together in a narrative way, and if we treat them as if they did we are being *untrue* to life. Thus not merely for lack of evidence or of verisimilitude, but in virtue of its very form, any narrative account will present us with a distorted picture of the events it relates (...)”.² Further, he adds a few remarks to clarify this poetical transformation towards an aesthetical whole, which is quite utopian from the point of view of real life: “(...) a narrative unites many actions to form a plot. The resulting whole is often still designated, however, to be an action of larger scale: coming of age, conducting a love affair, or solving a murder.”³

In short, every narrative – even the “truest” story of our own life or an eye-witness testimony to some real events – is to some extent “poetical” and “fictional,” because this is a complete whole with a beginning, middle and end and must be told according to some precisely determined rules so as an activity which imitates a reality and has its own poetics it belongs to an art in the Aristotelian sense of this term. From this point of view there is no clear difference between a fictional narrative concern-

¹ K. McNeely Farren, *Narrative Identity in Paul Ricoeur and Luce Irigaray: The Circularity Between Self and Other*, Houghton, MI 2010, <http://gradworks.umi.com/3403377.pdf> [access: 1.11.2014], p. 82. About Ricoeur's idea of so-called discordant concordance see also P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. by K. McLaughlin, D. Pellauer, Chicago-London 1984, p. 38 and further.

² D. Carr, *Narrative and the Real World: an Argument for Continuity* [in:] “History and Theory,” 1986, vol. 25, no. 2 (May), p. 117.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

ing characters invented by a novelist – such as the count of Monte Cristo, Jane Eyre or Julien Sorel – and a true narration concerning for example the life of any famous historical hero, like Joan of Arc, Elizabeth I or Christopher Columbus, and we can say that a given story is fictional or true only because we know which of them refers to real, empirical facts.

Philosophers and theorists conducting research concerning narrative – especially those who are to some extent sceptical to the idea that there is an ideal equivalence between narration on the one side and the real events it relates on the other – claim that in a story – even one which aspires to be true – we always find something like a perfect, poetical coherence which does not exist in normal, everyday life. Stories are always told after, when everything has already happened, and those who tell them are very clever because they know how the given story finishes. In the moment of shaping the narrative, they have knowledge which was completely unavailable to them when the given events were occurring. From such a perspective, everything looks more coherent, more understandable, more clear – in such a way that we can be convinced that everything had to lead to exactly such an end which really took place. This may, though, be only our subjective illusion, because there is no proof that those particular events could not have had any other (or even more than one) course and – perhaps more importantly – a completely different ending. In short, there is an anxiety that in creating our story we are not only giving a faithful account but – just because this is an imitation, a kind of complete whole which has a definite form – are also imposing upon the empirical facts something like a poetical, fictional order using ready narrative schemes and patterns which do not exist in reality and which are “(...) derived from the act of telling the story, not from the events themselves.”⁴

As Bernard Williams puts it, “There are some particular worries (...) about the status of the coherence that is given to a life by a narrative structure; we need to ask whether the ‘inevitability’ that may be conveyed by a narrative, and the capacity of narratives to represent some developmental sequences as coherent while others seem arbitrary or inexplicable, may not express some other, external, kinds of constraint, tacitly appealing to a power which is not simply that (...) of the truth.”⁵ Elsewhere, he suggests that such a fit “seems like magic.”⁶

Such a “magical,” poetical coherence is related to the social and cultural origins of narration. In his famous analysis of the Russian folk tale, Propp claims that such a primary, folk narrative is based upon a common, recurrent scheme which always consists of a couple of typical heroes and a few types of activity related to them, united in sequences of a plot which follow each other according to precisely defined rules that are always the same. As a consequence, such stories resemble each other to a very high degree. Propp explains this recurrence by referring to their origin – as he puts it, at the very beginning they were neither a literature nor an art, but rather part of a common myth constitutive to a given community and the text of a tale – a recur-

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

⁵ B. Williams, *Life as Narrative* [in:] “European Journal of Philosophy” 2009, vol. 17 (2), p. 308.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 312.

rent sequence of typical activities – probably imitating a succession of some mythical operations which belonged to an ancient, forgotten ritual.⁷

In short, what we see in such a tale is not a typical, Aristotelian imitation of real beings or events, but rather an imitation of a ritual, possibly with a kind of a ritual or a myth itself – and that is the reason for this ideal, “magical” coherence which unites the successive episodes of a given story and which does not exist in a normal life. In other words, such an ideal, poetical whole is available only because in a narration we still partially have a mythical consciousness which has produced and shaped myth, mythical images and collective rituals, and in such a way also gave the basis for all creative activities like, for example, poetry, art or storytelling.

I would now like to define a term mentioned above. According to Schelling’s late philosophy, so-called mythological consciousness is a higher potentiation of a nature productive process – speaking more precisely, it is a nature productive process which takes place in human consciousness. This is the reason why mythology – the primordial collective tales which are the basis of all cultures or communities – has the greatest reality, and is not “invented” or imagined by people who decide freely which image or which motif should become a part of such a collective myth or ritual and which should be discarded, for example for being too ugly or too cruel. Instead, it is equally essential and necessary as nature itself. As Schelling puts it in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, “(...) mythology has no reality (...) outside of consciousness; but if it only takes its course in the determinations of consciousness, that is, in its representations, then (...) this course of events, this succession of representations themselves cannot again be such a one that is merely imagined; it must have actually taken place, must have actually occurred in consciousness (...). This succession is not fashioned by mythology, but rather (...) mythology is fashioned by it.”⁸

Greek mythology, which for Schelling is “one and the same” as Homer, provides us with a very good example of this necessary, symbolic character of a mythological process. As he puts it in *The Philosophy of Art*, “The origin of mythology and the origin of Homer (...) coincide”⁹ because Homer was “(...) already involved in the first poetic products of mythology and was, as it were, potentially present” and “already spiritually – archetypally – predetermined.”¹⁰ In other words, although the name of a person who is supposed to be an author of a Greek mythological tale is very well

⁷ Such a conclusion corresponds well with the conviction, very popular among such narrative thinkers as Mary-Louise Pratt, Thomas Leitch, Monika Fludernik, David Herman, Marie-Laure Ryan or Michael Kearns, that such terms as narrative and fictive “might better be seen as describing acts rather than objects, discursive processes whose determinations are constituted by a community’s ways of using them, not by a text intrinsic formal features (...)” and that “They are not discovered intrinsic elements but extrinsic learned behaviours, tacit rules and explanatory stances that allow the interpreter to decide what elements or patterns are required to confer story status on a given phenomenon (...)”; M. Kreiswirth, *Narrative Turn in the Humanities* [in:] *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, D. Herman, M. Jahn and M.-L. Ryan (eds.), London–New York 2010, p. 381.

⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. M. Richey, M. Zisselsberger, New York 2007, p. 89.

⁹ F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. D.W. Scott, Minneapolis 1989, p. 52.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

known, as a matter of fact mythology does not have one individual, precisely determined originator. Like every collective narration, it was created rather by a whole community, by many people speaking in one unanimous voice. As Schelling himself puts it, "(...) Mythology can be neither the work of an individual person nor of a collectivity nor of the race (to the extent that the latter is merely a composite of individuals), but rather exclusively of the collectivity to the extent that it itself constitutes an individual and is the equal of an individual person."¹¹ This collective author was "seized by one thought," despite not having a reflective, individual consciousness. At the moment when mythology was generated, people were not thinking rationally and were acting under the influence of something like ecstasy, were possessed by something akin to a Dionysian passion, a higher spiritual inspiration.

In other words, a mythology concerns something universal, at least within the limits of a given culture or community. Problems presented by this collective author(s), speaking through the medium of a mythological narration, are never related to one particular, individual person, but are always to some extent common. In such a collective tale, we are dealing with typical, sometimes archetypal relations, feelings, the most popular and most frequent attitudes towards a few universal situations all people sometimes have to face up to – love, death, suffering, grief, life and so on. Using the language of poetical images, figures of gods, heroes and people endowed with extraordinary, divine advantages or skills, a mythology tells a story which is maybe not a truth in an empirical sense of this term, but nevertheless remains important to community members as a kind of pronouncement which has a higher poetical reality and bears key values and ideas constitutive to a given culture.

What is the relationship between a mythology and a narrative? Are these two different types of expression, or perhaps one and the same type? Is mythology a kind of narrative, or rather only a source of every single story, which reveals some similarities to it despite at the same time remaining a completely separate whole existing according to a totally independent rule?

According to Schelling's views, a mythology founds the basis on which various particular mythological stories, tales and plots grow. As he claims in his *Philosophy of Art*, it provides an artist or a poet with material for his work and so-called private mythology.¹² Some other authors – such as Emily Lyle or Alan Dundes – are convinced that a myth itself is also a specific form of "sacred narrative" which "does carry us back into (...) a deeper prehistory than has been reached through the study of Indo-European languages"¹³ (Lyle) or which explains "how the world and man came to be in their present form"¹⁴ (Dundes). In other words, this is also a kind of a narra-

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

¹² As he puts it, "(...) every great poet is called to structure from this evolving (mythological) world, a world of which his *own age* can reveal to him only a part. I repeat: from this world he is to structure into a whole that particular part revealed to him, and to create from the content and substance of that world *his* mythology (...)" ; F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art...*, p. 74.

¹³ E. Lyle, "Narrative Form and the Structure of Myth" [in:] "Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore," 2006, vol. 33, p. 59 (see: <http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol33/Lyle.pdf>).

¹⁴ A. Dundes, *Introduction* [in:] *Sacred Narrative. Readings in the Theory of Myth*, A. Dundes (ed.), Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1984, p. 1.

tion, but of a very special type – as Theodor H. Gaster puts it, it is not “(...) just any story of the supranatural that happens to be believed. It is a story that gives verbal expression to the Mythic Idea; in practical terms a story that is specifically associated with a cultic situation (...)”¹⁵ And, as he adds further, “By means of this more limited definition the obstinate problem of what distinguishes a myth from a tale is at once resolved. The difference lies (...) in their function and motivation. A myth is, or once was, *used*; a tale is, and always was, merely *told*. The former presupposes an actual or original counterpart in cultic performance; the latter does not.”¹⁶

In all the conceptions mentioned above, mythological narration is treated as older and as a consequence more fundamental (more genuine to some extent), because as a myth it is closer to a primordial ritual which gives a direct approach to an original truth, to the ideal, poetical matter of all discourses (a universal ocean of poetry, as Schelling puts it in the last chapter of his *System of a Transcendental Idealism*). In spite of this, though, it also remains a story, even if this is not an ordinary, but a sacred, holy tale. This is a reason why although mythology is not exactly the same as a usual narrative their sources are to some extent common – just because both of them constitute some kind of a story, a tale which may be told. Moreover, the latter is only a less symbolic, more rational and logical, more simple and univocal¹⁷ version of the former.

They take their truth and their proper matter from a primordial myth, from a mythical past when people were possessed by a mythological consciousness. These circumstances related to their origins are one of the most important causes of – as mentioned above – such a magical, ideal coherence of a story, elements of which are such discourse universals as ready narrative patterns, expectations which always come true and so on. Every story which is going to be complete and coherent needs such knots in the plot which gather together various events and facts, thus presenting them as a part of a greater whole. Simple models of understanding which let us know in advance that something has to happen exactly in a way assumed by a given pattern or cultural model and which force us to consider the given circumstances, random facts or actions such as a love affair, professional negotiations or an attempt to find somebody’s own place in life, are necessary in a narration, because just such universals, prior to every possible experience patterns or narrative categories, create a discordant concordance which according to Ricoeur’s views is the source of meaning in a story. In other words, in every narrative as well as in every myth and cultural record there are such – sometimes very far from empirical facts and prior to them – convictions which as a matter of fact are what shapes the story and push it further, although maybe they are, as Williams puts it, “(...) the power which is not simply that (...) of the truth (...)”¹⁸ – and as a consequence that of the reflective thought or a typical scientific discourse.

¹⁵ T.H. Gaster, *Myth and Story* [in:] *Sacred Narrative...*, p. 123.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

¹⁷ Of course, this does not mean that a usual narration always has only one meaning and cannot carry a symbolical record at all – for example, it is well known that all valuable literary fictitious narratives can also be also read on different levels and give various possibilities of interpretation – just because they are not and cannot be univocal.

¹⁸ B. Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 308.

In my opinion, Schelling's philosophy of mythology and revelation may provide us with the best explanation of this "unreflective" character of a narration. The power which unites successive events is not "that of the truth." This is because what we have here is not only or mainly a usual discourse which consists of statements and sentences referring to facts in a way described by, for example, positivist philosophers, but rather something created like a piece of art, or rather generated like a myth, by a mythological consciousness which does not depict a reality but creates its own world in human consciousness using the same creative forces (potentions) which are also true, real sources of a nature itself. In short, this is simply a power of nature which acts in human consciousness, and this is a reason why the answers and schemes of understanding proposed by a narration and imposed by it on real events are sometimes such irrefutable and necessary, "magical" and giving associations with a constraint received by an individual as violating his or her personal autonomy and freedom of choice.

It is necessary now to say a few words about narrative identity. First of all I would like to define this term, which does not have a long history or tradition in philosophical discourse and appeared towards the end of the last century, in the early 1980s (although some philosophers – for example Wilhelm Schapp or Hannah Arendt – also applied it earlier, but only on a smaller scale and less pointedly).

There are especially three thinkers whose works are important for understanding what exactly narrative identity is – Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur. For example, according to MacIntyre's views, it is "(...) a concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end. (...) we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out."¹⁹ Ricoeur puts it even more explicitly in the Conclusion to the third part of *Time and Narrative*, where he writes the following words: "What justifies our taking the subject of an action, so designated by his, her, or its proper name, as the same throughout a life that stretches from birth to death? The answer has to be narrative. To answer the question 'Who?' as Hannah Arendt has so forcefully put it, is to tell the story of a life. The story told tells about the action of the 'who'. And the identity of this 'who' therefore itself must be a narrative identity."²⁰

In other words, a narrative identity is somebody's life-story which constitutes somebody's self and personal identity, and is one and the same thing as the manner in which he or she understands who he or she is. Such an individual, private story may be a trusty copy of a typical pattern of personality most popular in a given community, as for example MacIntyre puts it. He is convinced that an individual can only faithfully follow the traditions and schemes of behaviour he or she inherits and in such a way shares with his/her ancestors, and that as a matter of fact it is impossible to invent here something really new and original, refuting the sometimes hard and inwardly contradictory heritage of our common past which shaped our identity.

¹⁹ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame, Indiana 1984, pp. 205, 212.

²⁰ P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. K. Blamey, D. Pellauer, Chicago–London 1988, p. 246.

This is not the only possible answer, because according to such thinkers as Taylor, although a community with all patterns of personality available somewhere is very important in our becoming ourselves, an individual always has a free choice and can autonomously make so-called qualitative distinctions and choose who he or she wants to be, which values are the most important for his/her life and his/her own, private narration.

Irrespective of which of these possibilities is closer to our own intuitions concerning the way in which we become who we are, there is no doubt that an idea which lets us consider culture and individual identity as two sides of one and the same coin is widespread in the humanities and social sciences. Many philosophers as well as anthropologists will surely agree with the thesis expressed above, that our personal story (narration) may be shaped only on the basis of a collective tale which is one and the same thing as our culture. Secondly – and perhaps more importantly – that as a consequence our narrative identity is nothing more than a special, particular, rich or less so, interesting and individual or less so, but only a version of such a common mythology that is very hard to understand really deeply and properly without its particular primordial, social context. As Ruth Benedict puts it, “The large corporate behaviour (...) is nevertheless a behaviour of individuals. (...) In reality, society and the individual are not antagonists. His culture provides the raw material of which the individual makes his life. If it is meagre, the individual suffers; if it is rich, the individual has a chance to rise to his opportunity. Every private interest of every man and woman is served by the enrichment of the traditional stores of his civilization. The richest musical sensitivity can operate only within the equipment of standards of its tradition. It will add, perhaps importantly, to that tradition, but its achievements remains in proportion to the instruments and musical theory which the culture has provided.”²¹

The last question I would like to consider concerns the problem of whether, and if so, how, such partially “untrue,” mythical origins of our personal life-story may influence such key ethical values important to the individual as freedom of choice, moral autonomy or dignity. If our personal identity as well as our culture and everything belonging to it – every work, every story, and even every type of discourse, including – although it may sound like a paradox – that of science and truth, are only a kind of “well shaped tale to potential narrators of it,”²² are we still able to speak about any real world or reality as opposed to fiction or treat such moral universals as freedom, dignity or justice as something more than part of somebody’s private narration? Or, in other words, do we still have the duty to tell the truth, the opportunity to do it, and are we still free in a world in which practically everything, including our own personality, our idea of who we are, is “constructed” like a piece of art and is only an element of an individual or collective story, a by-product and a distant derivative of a collective, social myth?

²¹ R. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, Boston 1959, pp. 251–252.

²² B. Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 313.

First of all, we must underline that there is no agreement among researchers in such questions as the structure of so-called real experience. Some are convinced that this is only a “structureless sequence of isolated events,”²³ while others show that although maybe a structure of our real actions “is not necessarily narrative structure,” there is “a kinship between the means-end structure of action and the beginning-middle-end structure of narrative.”²⁴ Alternatively, they refer to Husserl’s analysis of the consciousness of internal time to prove that in our real experience there is also a continuity because putatively completely isolated events “(...) are charged with the significance they derive from our retentions and protentions”²⁵ and so on. In a word, there is no compelling, ultimate proof that real life is chaotic and narration is always organised and ordered.

Ultimately, as Carr puts it, the only “real difference between “art” and “life” is not organisation vs. chaos, but rather the absence in life of that point of view which transforms events into a story by *telling* them.”²⁶ In short, in the real, empirical world there is simply no narrator, no person or subject who gathers together everything that is happening and recounts it as a complete whole, a story with a beginning, middle and end. There is no one to explain the final moral and the sense which lets us answer the question of why all this suffering, grief, war, work etc. were done and experienced. Even if such an Ideal Narrator exists somewhere, we cannot contact him or her and ask for an explanation of the purposes and endeavours. We may only wait and believe (or not) that when everything ends some day in the future we will understand his reasons and that somewhere over there (for example in Plato’s world of ideas and so on) there exists some transcendental, absolute basis or justification of a whole story which is not completely irrational and absurd and is not reduced to this tale which is being told.

As for our personal narrative, we are in an incomparably better situation because here there is no doubt that we ourselves are occupying “the story-tellers’ position with respect to our own lives.”²⁷ As reflective entities or, as Taylor formulated it, “self-interpreting animals,” we are at the same time agents (characters who act) and narrators who are all the time “literally telling, to others and to ourselves, what we are doing.”²⁸ As Carr puts it, “such narrative activity” which accompanies our actions “is a constitutive part of action, and not just an embellishment, commentary, or other incidental accompaniment. (...) I am the subject of a life-story which is constantly being told and retold in the process of being lived. I am also the principal teller of this tale, and belong as well to the audience to which it is told.”²⁹

This is a reason why our personal life-story, although – like every narrative – it has origins in a collective mythology and – at least to some extent – depends on

²³ D. Carr, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 125–126.

various narrative patterns and ready social images or expectations which “constitute” and “(...) create meaning rather than reflecting or imitating something that exists independently of it,”³⁰ in spite of that may still have the chance to remain reflective and to be treated as a practical, ethical or moral activity “in the broad sense used by Alasdair MacIntyre and derived ultimately from Aristotle.”³¹ As Kim Atkins puts it, “(...) the narrative conception of identity provides a more inclusive and exhaustive account of identity than the causal models employed by mainstream theorists of personal identity because only the narrative model preserves the first-person perspective, which is essential to an ethical perspective.”³² In other words, only by speaking from the first-person perspective, so important in a narrative model of personality (important because an autobiographical narration which is one and the same as somebody’s narrative identity cannot be told by anybody else than an individual him- or herself), may we fully realise our potential of being ethical, rational entities, and may become really moral subjects, those who are able to make free, autonomous choices. Only by taking such a point of view of a particular but at the same time conscious person may we avoid a danger related to the “magical” tendency described above, characteristic of every narrative which lets us consider various events or actions as ready wholes given from above, as something which must necessarily happen.

This is possible because a conscious, reflective and consequently inwardly free individual can accept a given pattern of thinking or refuse it deciding in an always to some extent free way how and according to which narrative scheme to understand or to interpret given circumstances or facts. This possibility does not exist either in a mythology itself (in a world in which only a mythological consciousness functions, not a reflective one), nor in a fictional world of invented, literary narrations, in which characters and heroes are, as Williams puts it, always “given wholes,” they are not living, “they have no future” and “all of them is already there”: “When the reader starts, and in that sense when they start, they are already finished.”³³ This is the reason why they are not free and remain fully an element of a myth while a real, alive person, someone who has a reflective consciousness, may in spite of that keep an autonomy and a freedom of choice, never becoming entirely a hostage of somebody’s or even his/her own mythology.³⁴

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² K. Atkins, *Narrative Identity, Practical Identity and Ethical Subjectivity* [in:] “Continental Philosophy Review” 2004, vol. 37, No. 3, p. 341. About the ethical aspects of a narrative identity see also P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by K. Blamey, Chicago and London 1994, p. 163 and further.

³³ B. Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 311, 310.

³⁴ Such an ethical first-person perspective corresponds well with Schelling’s idea of a dialectics of mythology and revelation according to which a revelation is the second part of a creative process and takes place in the face of mythology (its first, creative part, a recurrence of a nature process in human consciousness). An ethical point of view always assumes a reflective consciousness, a freedom of choice and an individual autonomy, and this is a reason why it may appear only when mythology is losing its power of impact on human minds, when people are no longer under the influence of such a “Dionysian” passion which was necessary to generate all mythological images (for a dialectics of mythology and revelation in Schelling’s thought, see for example F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Teilband 1, W. E. Ehrhardt (Hrsg.), Hamburg 1992, lecture 1; for the problem of the to some

Summing up, although our narrative identity – like every narrative – has its origins in a collective, mythological tale which is a basis of our culture and all patterns of thinking available in a given culture system, by acting and sometimes also judging we may in spite of that remain free, and are not determined to choose just such an option of being or thinking which is a direct consequence of a mythological consciousness and is fully a part of a collective myth. It is true that our personal life stories, and as a consequence also we as individuals, are shaped by it, but this does not mean that we entirely belong to such a mythological reality and cannot retain the ability to live a life which is reflective, responsible and non-fictional.

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extent “natural” (non-human) character of mythical images and the consciousness which has generated them, see *ibidem*, lecture 33).