

Myths and Rituals

Myths and Rituals in Contemporary World: The Discreet Charm of Totalitarianism

Zapraszamy na otwarte seminarium naukowe IEiAK, podczas którego gości będzie Aleksandar Bošković (UFRN - Natal, Brazil; ULAM Fellow at Uniwersytet Jagielloński - Kraków, Poland; Institute of Archaeology - Belgrade, Serbia).



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What can myths tell us about a society? Can they be seen as a product of historical processes, philosophical developments, or biological and social needs of a group of people? Can historical, philosophical, and biological/functional explanations be combined, and to what effect? These are just some of the questions that I am going to deal with, comparing three very different scholars, but who all shared a very humanistic ideal of understanding their own, as well as other, cultures: Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744), Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945), and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942). The first part of my presentation will explore their theories (even though only Vico and Cassirer explicitly dealt with myth), both in their origins and context in which they were formulated. I will also show the extent to which these scholars were theoretically related to each other, as well as how can their understanding of the role of myths in society help us navigate the complexities of our own world. Using examples from Vico, Cassirer and Malinowski, I intend to show how a genuinely and positively collaborative view of human capacities can arise, develop, and that it can be based on our basic humanity.

In the second part of the presentation, and focusing on some of the themes that Cassirer developed in his later work, I will outline the use of mythical thinking in contemporary world, with the special reference to the works of another philosopher, Hanna Arendt (1906-1975), as well as a psychoanalyst, Christopher Bollas (1943). Myths provide a key to understanding some of the contemporary global trends, as well as the rituals associated with them.

Na skróty

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Aleksandar Bošković? is ULAM Fellow at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (Poland), Visiting Professor of Social Anthropology at the UFRN, Natal (Brazil) and Senior Research Scientist at the Institute of Archaeology in Belgrade (Serbia). He has Diploma in Philosophy, University of Belgrade, M.A. in Anthropology, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA (USA), Ph.D. in Social Anthropology, University of St. Andrews (Scotland, UK), and is Fellow of the RAI (Royal Anthropological Institute). Previously taught at the Jagiellonian University, University of Belgrade; Faculty of Applied Sciences, UDG (Montenegro), Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia); University of Brasília (Brazil); Rhodes University in Grahamstown (South Africa); University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, South Africa); and University of St. Andrews (Scotland, UK). Between 2013 and 2018, Bošković? was Deputy Chair of the Commission on Theoretical Anthropology (COTA) of the IUAES, and member of the Council of Commissions. In the last ten years, he received grants and fellowships from the Institut d'Études Avancées at the Collegium de Lyon (France), University of Aberdeen (Scotland, UK), as well as from the DAAD and Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Germany).

Bošković? published in *American Anthropologist*, *Anthropos*, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, *Ethnos*, and other journals. He is the author or editor of twenty books, including *William Robertson Smith* (Berghahn, 2021), *Mesoamerican Religions and Archaeology* (Archaeopress, 2017), *Argonauts of the Western Pacific and The Andaman Islanders* (RAI and Peter Lang, forthcoming – co-editor, with David Shankland), *African Political Systems Revisited* (Berghahn, 2022 – co-editor, with Günther Schlee), *Other People's Anthropologies* (Berghahn, 2008), and *The Anthropological Field on the Margins of Europe* (LIT Verlag, 2013 – co-editor, with Chris Hann). Among his research interests are rationality, history and theory of anthropology, psychoanalysis, myth and religion, semiotics, ethnicity and nationalism, and gender.

Since 2022, Bošković? is co-editor of the *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* (AJEC). He is co-founder of the History of Anthropology Network of the EASA (with Han Vermeulen – the two chaired the Network until 2018) and was EASA Book Series Editor (2016-2020). He is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association for Comparative Mythology (IACM).

e-mail: aleksandarbos@gmail.com [1]

a.boskovic@ai.ac.rs [2]

web: www.gape.org/sasa [3]

Adres URL ?ród?a: <https://www.etnologia.uw.edu.pl/aktualnosci/myths-and-rituals>

Odnosi?niki

[1] <mailto:aleksandarbos@gmail.com>

[2] <mailto:a.boskovic@ai.ac.rs>

[3] <http://www.gape.org/sasa>