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ANTROPOLOGIJA SMRTI  
*ANTHROPOLOGY OF DEATH*

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**Ključne besede:** smrt, mitična leteča bitja, človekovo telo, kulturni predmet, kognitivni horizont

## Uvod

Ena bolj zanimivih lastnosti človeškega mišljenja je, da ne more obstajati brez nekega zunanjšega predmeta, na katerega se v svojem delovanju nanaša. To pa ne pomeni, da mora biti predmet nanašanja vedno le materialne narave. Prav tako je lahko tudi mentalna slika v človekovi zavesti, čeprav moramo v tem primeru ločevati med mentalno predstavo in mislijo, ki mentalno sliko tisti trenutek omogoča. Nastanek mentalne slike sega v preteklost in ima vpliv na posameznikovo nadaljnje mišljenje. Ne glede na to pa so naša življenja na splošno natrpana z vsakovrstno predmetno 'šaro', kajti posamezniku je običajno veliko lažje vzpostaviti odnos z materialnim svetom kot pa izgraditi kompleksno strukturo reflesije znotraj razuma. Morda lahko pravkar povedano popremimo z obžalovanjem, toda biti moramo realni, kajti za povprečnega posameznika je vsakdanje življenje pač predvsem in najprej materialno. Izmed vseh razlogov, zaradi katerih je posameznik pretežno orientiran k fizičnemu svetu, je prav gotovo najpomembnejši naslednji: v primeru, ko bi se stik med posamezniki, izvršen prek nosilcev materialnega sveta, prekinil, bi nastopilo popolno uničenje družbenega sveta. In ker je vse, kar biva, v svojem bistvu družbene narave (glej na primer Mead 1962 in Schutz 1967), lahko rečemo, da je tudi znanost družbeni konstrukt. Na podlagi tega spet lahko trdimo, da družboslovna znanost ne sme zanemariti materialnih dimenzij družbenih procesov. Kajti v tem primeru znanost ne more odgovoriti na vprašanje, kako so interpersonalni odnosi med posamezniki v svetu vsakdanjega življenja sploh mogoči.

Temeljna zahteva sociološkega in antropološkega preučevanja človeškega fenomena leži v kvalitetno pridobljenem znanju o materialnem svetu. Povedano drugače: razlaga specifičnega družbenega ali kulturnega fenomena je odvisna od tega, koliko spretnosti premoremo pri določanju družbenega in kulturnega predmeta. Za sociologa, katerega glavni cilj je določiti kognitivne pogoje človekovega razuma, je ta zahteva nema-

ra neobičajna. Toda ne glede na to verjamemo, da je več kot le potrebna. Naša najpomembnejša naloga v pričujočem eseju je, da poiščemo, kar se le da veliko primerov različnih živali, ki simbolizirajo smrt, in nato dobljene primere ustrezno klasificiramo v različne kategorije. V nadaljevanju bomo pokazali, kako posamezniki skozi sebi lastno kulturno izkušnjo uporabljajo svoja telesa in kako pri tem pazljivo izbirajo med različnimi tipi objektov, ki lahko nastopajo kot kulturni objekti v primeru simboliziranja smrti.

## Klasifikacija živali

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Ta prispevek je plod nekega navdušenja, ki ga je porodila Fantastična zoologija J. B. Borgesa, knjiga, v kateri so brez ambicij po sistematizaciji in klasifikaciji zbrana bitja, ki spremenijo zoološki v mitični vrt. Kot pravi njen avtor, bo ta knjiga vedno ostala pomanjkljiva, enako pa velja tudi za pričujoč pregled krilatih bitij, ki jih je človek tako ali drugače povezoval s smrtjo. Živalska simbolika je med seboj izredno prepletena, zato so na tem mestu zbrana bitja oziroma božanstva ne glede na zgodovinske in geografske okvire. Izvzeti so angeli in zmaji, ki seveda zahtevajo poglavje zase. Predstavili bomo le nekaj živali oziroma bitij, ki podpirajo antropološko razlago fenomena smrti.

Večina od njih ima, kakor je za simbole nasploh značilno, svoj pozitiven in negativen pomen. Na tem mestu bomo izpostavili le slednjega.

### Zakaj krila in smrt?

Ko leteče bitje izgine iz polja našega zaznavanja, ne pusti za seboj nobene oprijemljive sledi, kot so na primer stopinje v pesku, rov v zemlji ali vzburkana voda. Let pusti za seboj komaj zaznaven piš vetra, podoben hladni zoni, ki nas spreleti v trenutku, ko se zavemo smrti.

Mnogo krilatih bitij nima sposobnosti letenja ali pa jo je že davno izgubilo. S tem ko pripnemo nekemu bitju krila, ga povzdignemo med duhovna bitja. V svetu duhovnih bitij pa je let mogoč tudi s kamnitimi krili. Pomen letenja je v osvobajanju od zemeljske težnosti, ki je vzrok za večino težav, s katerimi se otepamo v to - in onstranstvu.

Pri verovanju v posmrtno življenje je smrt sama le ovira, ki jo mora človek premagati, da doseže nesmrtnost oziroma ponovno rojstvo. Oviro pa premagamo najlažje tako, da jo preskočimo ali še bolje - da jo preletimo.

Kadar govorimo o paleolitskih grobovih z magijsko - religijskim pomenom, ne moremo mimo dejstva, da vsebujejo ostanke živalskih kosti in rogovja. Iz tega lahko le ugibamo o duhovni dejavnosti teh davnih pogrebcev in pri tem izhajamo iz opazovanj nekaterih današnjih arhaičnih ljudstev (otrok, obkrožen s kozorogovim rogovjem iz kraja Tešik Taš v Uzbekistanu, ali ženska lobanja, postavljena na čeljust in rog severnega jelena v Mas d'Azilu).

Ni še dognano, ali gre po večini za ostanke pogrebnih pojedin ali pa za dejansko 'opremo' pokojnika, ki bi potrdila verovanje v posmrtno življenje. Vsekakor pa je bila relacija človek - smrt - žival vzpostavljena na samem začetku človekovega zavedanja o bivanju in njegovem prenehanju.

Vodilno načelo paleolitske umetnosti je: na svetu so samo ljudje in živali, lovci in njihov plen; kar je vmes, ni bistveno in torej ne sodi v umišljen prostor, ki ga vidi umetnikovo oko. Točka na kateri se srečata lovec in žival, pa je smrt.

Ideologija lovskih kultur je pravzaprav šamanistična, saj je le šaman s svojim nadnaravnim darom sposoben prodreti do izvira živalskega življenja. Šamanistično ekstazo omenjajo nekateri avtorji že v zvezi s paleolitikom. Kaže na vero v dušo, ki je sposobna zapustiti telo in svobodno potovati. Na takšnem potovanju lahko sreča nadnaravna bitja in jih zaprosi za pomoč. (V jami v Lascaux naletimo na podobo na videz mrtvega človeka, ki bi ga lahko interpretirali kot vrača v transu. Na obrazu ima kljun, poleg pa je palica s ptičem, ki najverjetneje predstavlja duha zaščitnika.)

Dušo v podobi ptice, prav tako pa tudi ptico kot vodnico duš, srečujemo zelo pogosto: Egipčanska knjiga mrtvih opisuje 'mrtveca' kot sokola, ki vzleti; na prazgodovinskih spomenikih Evrope in Azije vidimo na vejah Kozmičnega drevesa ptice, ki najverjetneje simbolizirajo duše prednikov; v Mezopotamiji so se pokojniki prikazovali kot ptice...

Smrt je edina, ki lahko človeka preobrazi v ptico, in tako lahko šamani s svojimi nadnaravnimi sposobnostmi doživljajo usodo duše, ki je navadnim smrtnikom dostopna le v trenutku smrti.

Šamanistični ekstatični vnebohodi porajajo občutek transcendence, vzvišenosti in s svojo simboliko leta dajejo imaginarno izkustvo višine kot osvoboditve od težnosti (Eliade 1985, 1996).

## Resnično obstoječe živali

ARA - Kolumbijski Indijanci Bribi uporabljajo rdečo papigo kot pokojnikovega vodnika. Indijanci Bororo verujejo v zapleten cikel preseljevanja duš, med katerim se duše za nekaj časa utelesijo v ari.



ČUK - "Ne bo več dolgo, čuk ga je klical nocoj' ali pa 'Čuk ga je izpel', tako in podobno modrujejo stare ženice, kadar glave vkup staknejo, in žal se še celo od mož sem ter tja slišijo enake neslane besede. In tako je ubogi čuk zaradi svojega žalostnega glasu prav po nedolžnem razpiti kakor mrtvaški ptič. Marsikoga mrzel pot oblije, ko ga sliši v tihi noči čukati. Bedak ugiba sem in tja, komu bi utegnila veljati čukova pesem. Če nato noče nihče umreti, nobeden ne misli več na smrtnega sla. Če pa se res prigodi, da v soseščini kmalu kdo umrje, potem vražjim babjevercem ne izbiješ iz glave, da čukovo petje ni 'pomenilo' smrti" (Erjavec 1995, 476).

Čuku pravijo tudi smrtni ptič. Če prileti v bližino hiše, pomeni to skorajšnjo smrt za njene prebivalce. Podobno grozi, če ponoči slišimo čuka peti ali celo cviliti. Skoraj povsod po Sloveniji se boje njegovega oglašanja. Žal pa ta živahna sova rada prebiva blizu človeka - pod strehami, v sadovnjakih in cerkvah - zato vražavrnim vsekakor večkrat povzroča sive lase.

Čuki pa niso glasniki smrti le v Evropi, temveč jih srečamo tudi kot sle poglavarjev Xibalbe, dežele mrtvih pri Majih. V drugem delu svete knjige Indijancev Quiche POPOL VUH naletimo na štiri čuke:

Chabi-Tucur - hiter kot puščica

Huracan Tucur - enonogi čuk

Caquix Tucur - čuk makao z rdečimi krili

Holom Tucur - čuk, ki je imel le glavo in krila, nog pa ne.

Tudi dva varuha vrtov v Xibalbi sta bila čuka. Ker nista dobro pazila na tisto, kar jima je bilo zaupano, so jima gospodarji razklali kljun in odtlej ima čuk razklan kljun.

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KOKOŠ - Kot večina domačih živali je verjetno tudi kokoš romala prek daritvene sklede v kuhinjski lonec. Pri Grkih je bila kokoš priljubljena žrtvena žival revnih ljudi. Tudi Rimljani so se baje skrbno in praznoverno držali napovedi kokošjega preročišča.

Po vsej črni Afriki je razširjeno žrtvovanje kokoši, potrebno zaradi komunikacije s pokojnimi. V iniciacijskem obredu šamank pri Luluih kandidatki, po preizkušnji smrti in preporedu v jami, obesijo okoli vratu kokoš. Z njo bo poslej lahko mamila duše pokojnih medijev v gošči.

Zelo razširjen je strah pred kokošjim kikirikanjem. Žensko bitje z moškimi lastnostmi je vedno povzročalo nelagodje in strah. Gre namreč za združitev lastnosti oziroma moči dveh principov. Popolnoma smo sposobni razumeti, torej sprejeti, le enega. Taka združitev nima prihodnosti, je oboje in hkrati ni nič. Ne more se nadaljevati, torej ji grozi smrt.

Če začne kokoš peti kot petelin, grozi smrt gospodarju. Takšno kokoš - petelinko - je bilo potrebno brž zaklati, saj lahko "izpoje gospodarja". Če poje črna kokoš, izpoje gospodarja, če pa poje bela kokoš, "izpoje gospodinjo". Petje črne kokoši pomeni nesrečo pri hiši, petje bele kokoši smrt, petje rjave kokoši pa požar.

KOLIBRI - Azteki verujejo, da se duše mrtvih bojevnikov vračajo na zemljo v podobi kolibrjev ali metuljev.



KROKAR - "Črno perje, votlo krokanje, nenasitna požrešnost in roparska predrznost ga delajo skrivnostnega, groznega in pošastnega. Zato pa skoraj vsem narodom pomeni nesrečo, oznanja smrt" (Erjavec 1995, 398). Simbolika krokarja je dobila povsem negativen vidik šele nedavno in skoraj izključno v Evropi. Na splošno velja, da krokar ne obeta nič dobrega, da je glasnik nesreče in lahko napoveduje celo smrt.

Tudi v keltskem izročilu je krokar slabo znamenje. Njegovo podobo je privzela Morrigan, kraljica strahov, boginja vojne in podzemlja. Morrigan se pojavlja še v dveh podobah - kot "Norija" in "Poparjena vrana". Že pred bitko je oprala opremo tistih, ki bodo padli, in s tem že določila poraženca. "Krokari je črna ptica romantikov, ki se spleta nad bojiščem in kljuva trupla" (Chevalier - Gheerbrant 1993, 285).

Res je, da krokar zavoja mrhovino na zelo veliko razdaljo in se z njo tudi pogosto hrani, torej dejansko "sluti" smrt že na daljavo. Ta smrt pa je njegova hrana, njegov dejanski obstoj.

V Grčiji je imel krokar skupaj z orlom in labodom preroško funkcijo.

Pri nas pravijo, da lahko, kadar hišo preleti en krokar, računamo na smrt ženskega člana družine, če pa jo preleti več krokarjev, grozi smrt moškim. Mornarji so verjeli, da smrt prinašajo trije krokarji, ki letijo skupaj.

V Mahabharati krokarje primerjajo z glasniki smrti.

V večini verovanj je sončni vidik, pogosto demiurg, vodnik duš na njihovem poslednjem potovanju, kajti kot psihopomp razkriva skrivnost teme, ne da bi ga to zmedlo. Pozitivno vlogo ima pri nomadskih, ribiških in lovskih ljudstvih, medtem ko velja pri stalno naseljenih in poljedelskih ljudstvih za negativnega. Alkimisti fazo gnitja in črne snovi imenujejo krokarjeva glava.

**KUKAVICA** - Kukavica je ptica, ki je povezana s pomladjo in prebujenjem narave, zato pri sibirskih ljudstvih pomaga šamanu in oživlja mrtve. V vedskem izročilu je kukavica simbol človeške duše pred inkarnacijo in po njej. Telo je kot tuje gnezdo, v katero pride duša. Če kukavica sede na suho vejo in tam zakuka, bo pri hiši kmalu nekdo umrl.

Kukavica v gnezdo, kamor odloži svoje jajce, prinese smrt, saj iz njega pomeče že zasnovane oblike življenja. Za svoj obstoj potrebuje torej smrt.

**LASTOVKA** - Če si lastovka spomladi pri hiši naredi gnezdo in ga kasneje zapusti, bo tamkaj gotovo nekdo umrl. Lastovka zato, ker je ptica selivka, simbolizira samoto, selitev in ločitev.

**NETOPIR** - Pri Majih je netopir eno izmed božanstev, ki inkarnirajo podzemne sile. V Popol Vuhu je netopirjeva hiša eno izmed podzemeljskih območij, skozi katera pridemo do dežele mrtvih. Netopir je gospodar ognja, uničevalec življenja, požiralec svetlobe. Je emblem smrti. Pravijo mu "tisti, ki trga glave". Prikazan je z mrtvimi očmi. Božanstvo smrti je tudi pri Mehičanih, ki ga povezujejo s severom. Pogosto je prikazan z odprtim gobcem ali žrtvenim nožem namesto gobca. Dvoličnost hibridne narave, miši in ptiča, v alkimističnem izročilu razlaga ambivalenco netopirjeve simbolike: netopir predstavlja androgina, krilatega zmaja, demona. Njegova krila so krila peklenskega prebivalca (hudič ima modra krila, podobna netopirjevim). Netopir mora mahati s krili, zato ne pozna počitka v mrtvem letu. Narava išče krilo, najde pa grdo kosmato opno, ki vendarle deluje kot perut...



**PETELIN** - Tako kot kokoš tudi petelin po verovanju preprostih ljudi ne pomeni nič dobrega. Če je petelin sedem let star, znese jajce, iz katerega se izvali hudič - bazilisk. Kot zaščitnika pred slednjim so ga upodabljali na ščitih, amuletih in nagrobnikih.

Tudi petelin, čeprav v redkih primerih, napoveduje smrt - npr. če zakikirika malo pred polnočjo.

V Grčiji ima vlogo psihopompa. Pokojnikovo dušo naj bi napovedal na drugem svetu, nato pa jo tja odpeljal; odprla naj bi oči v novi svetlobi, novemu rojstvu. Dodelili

so ga Hermesu, glasniku, ki potuje po treh ravneh kozmosa, od pekla do nebes. Pri starogermanskih pogrebnih obredih so petelina darovali mrtvim.

Med očiščevalnimi in izganjalnimi obredi po smrti pri nekaterih altajskih ljudstvih privežejo petelina k pokojnikovi postelji: petelin predstavlja smrt, ki jo šaman nato izganja.

SLAVEC – Ljudje verjamejo, da slavčev spev umirajočim omogoča blago smrt. Slavec s svojim prelepim petjem opozarja na minljivost in z njo v zvezi na tenko steno med ljubeznijo in smrtjo.

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SOKOL - Podoba sokola, povezano s smrtjo, najdemo po večini v starem Egiptu. Najpogosteje nastopa kot BA, ki predstavlja duhovno moč, dušo. Ba ima sokolje telo, človeško glavo in božjo brado. Ko je telo ob posmrtnem obredu povečano, ga ba zapusti in se nato svobodno giblje. Podnevi sledi soncu na obzorju, ponoči pa se vrne v podzemlje, v svoje telo, ki je njegovo pravo bivališče, in se nahrani s pogrebnimi darovi.

Sokar (tudi Seker), memfiški bog mrtvih, teme in razpadanja v zemlji, ima sokoljo glavo, podoba sokola pa privzema tudi eden od štirih Horusovih otrok - Kebehsenef. Gre za štiri zaščitnike trupla, ki so umrlega varovali pred lakoto in žejo. Vsak od njih je bil zadolžen za eno od strani neba. V posebnih posodah, kanopah, so shranjevali notranje organe. Kanopa s Kebehsenefovo podobo je vsebovala trebušne organe in je predstavljal sever.

SOVA - "Sove so jeznorite, plahe, neumne in požrešne ptice. Zaprte sove se med seboj koljejo in žro; razen nekaterih malih se s človekom nikoli ne sprijaznijo, zmeraj ostanejo divje in togotne. Če poleg tega pomislimo še na njihovo neprijetno zunanost, na tiho letanje in nočno dejanje ter na njihov neprijetni glas, bomo lahko razumeli, da so vse sove človeku odurne, za neukega in praznovernega imajo pa še celo nekaj groznega, skrivnostnega in pošastnega. Vraža je sovo naredila za mrtvaško ptico in zato jo bajeveren in nespameten svet preganja" (Erjavec 1995, 470).

Sova je nočna ptica, povezana z luno, ne prenaša sončne svetlobe. Leta nizko, tiho in počasi. Njena sposobnost videti v temi jo je naredila za simbol jasnovidnosti in je zato atribut prerokovalcev.

Pri Indijancih Srednje in Južne Amerike je sova simbolična žival peklenskih božanstev. V več azteških kodeksih je prikazana kot čuvarica zemeljske temne hiše. "Povezana je s htoničnimi silami in je tudi avatar noči, dežja, viharjev. Ta simbolika jo povezuje s smrtjo. Na predmetih predinkovske civilizacije Chimu je pogosto prikazan žrtveni nož v obliki polmeseca, nad njim pa je podoba polčloveškega in polživalskega božanstva v obliki nočne ptice - sove. Ta simbol, ki je očitno povezan z idejo o smrti ali žrtvovanju, je okrašen z ogrlicami iz školjk in biserov. Prsi ima rdeče pobarvane, zraven nje pa sta večkrat prikazana psa, katerih pomen psihopompa je dobro znan. Sova pogosto drži v eni "roki" žrtveni nož, v drugi pa vrč, v katerega naj bi stekla kri žrtve. Sova je še danes božanstvo smrti in čuvarica pokopališč pri številnih indijanskih ljudstvih" (Chevalier - Gheerbrant 1993, 564).

Sova je poleg pajka in netopirja atribut azteškega boga smrti in podzemlja Mictlantecutlija. V vlogi glasnice nastopa pri majevskem bogu smrti, posebitvi nesreč,



mraka in mraza ter gospodarju Mitnala, kraljestva mrtvih, Hunahau. V knjigi POPOL VUH je vrač - sova eden izmed vračev, ki Stvarniku in Tvorcu pomagajo uničiti nevhvaležne ljudi, ki sta jih ustvarila. Vrač - sova jim polomi kosti, zdrobi živce, jih zmelje in raztrese ostanke njihovih kosti.

Sova igra skupaj z golobom glasniško vlogo tudi pri vedski boginji Niriti.

Simbolna žival judovske nočne demonke, ki ogroža nosečnice in mori dojenčke ter se podi po ruševinah, je prav sova, ki jo tudi dejansko lahko srečamo na zapuščenih krajih.

Na Kitajskem je sova negativna protiutež feniksu in prav tako napoveduje nesrečo.

Simboliziranje sove kot glasnice smrti zaradi njenega samotnega življenja in zamolklega zagrobnega oglašanja je že prastaro in dobro zasidrano v zavesti ljudi. Gorje, če ima ta boljšeča ptica poseben glas in pri tem zaide v bližino hiše! Več sov skupaj nesrečo še poveča, torej ni čudno, če sovo imenujejo tudi mrličeva kura.

VRANA - Če se je vrana spustila na streho, je to pomenilo, da bo v tej hiši moral nekdo umreti.

ŽOLNA - Če v bližini hiše večkrat zapoje črna žolna (imenujejo jo tudi smrtni ptič), bo v bližini zagotovo kdo umrl.

## Izmišljena bitja



BAZILISK - je nadnaravno mešano bitje judovsko - krščanskega izvora. Najpogosteje je upodobljen kot petelin z zmajevim repom ali kot kača s petelinjimi perutmi in svetlo liso v obliki krone na glavi. Število nog se na upodobitvah spreminja in doseže celo število osem. Na začetku srednjega veka so ga upodabljali kot štirinožnega petelina s kronico, rumenim perjem, velikimi bodičastimi krili in kačjim repom, ki se včasih konča tudi z drugo petelinjo glavo. Spočet je bil v petelinjem jajcu, položenem v gnoj, brez matere. Zvalila ga je krastača ali žaba. Prebiva v vodnjakih in kletih, po nekaterih virih pa v puščavi, ki jo sam ustvarja, saj k njegovim nogam mrtve padajo ptice, okrog njega pa zgnijejo vsi sadeži. Reke, v katerih se napaja, ostanejo še cela stoletja zastrupljene.

Je utelešenje zla in smrti. Njegov zli pogled ubija. Ubije ga le vonj po podlasici, kikirikanje petelina ali ogledalo, iz katerega ga je zadel lasten pogled. Predstavlja smrtno nevarnost, ki je ni mogoče pravočasno zaznati. Popotniki so se za prečkanje neznanih pokrajin oskrbeli z živimi petelinimi. Borges v zvezi z baziliskom navaja Quevedovo romanco, ki pravi:

Če je živ tisti, ki te je videl,  
je vsa tvoja zgodba laž,  
kajti če ni umrl, te ni videl,  
če pa je mrtev, nam tega ne more potrditi.

**CACHIRU** (tudi Cachuru) - zlobno božanstvo, ki ga poznajo na območju Santiaga del Estera, Argentina. Prikazujejo ga kot nenavadnega skovirja z ogromnimi kremplji in ostrim kljunom. Njegovo perje je temnosivo in raskavo, proti nogam pa prehaja v ščetine. Njegove ogromne svetlikajoče oči žarijo v senci kakor ognji. Ta luč in njegovi nesrečo naznanjajoči kriki so edino, kar izdaja njegov neslišen let. Pravijo, da lahko dvigne človeka v nebo ali pa ga v hipu raztrga. Najpogosteje pa ugrabi dušo ob smrtni uri in jo spremeni v grozljivo prikazen. Živi v najbolj nedostopnih predelih gozda, kamor človeška noga ne more stopiti. Ker pa se gozdovi krčijo, se njegovo kraljestvo oži, če ni že domala izginilo.

262 **CHONCHON** (tudi Chonchonyu) - božanstvo Indijancev Mapuche. Zli duh, pravzaprav človeška glava z ogromnimi uhlji, ki jih uporablja kot peruti. Kroži v bližini bolnikov in čaka na priložnost, ko ni ob njih nikogar. Takrat jih ubije in jim popije kri...



Ta bizarna pošast se nam bo mogoče zdela manj tuja, če se spomimo na demone z dolgimi ušesi v srednjeveškem kiparstvu in grafiki. Taki "uhatci" se pogosto vrtijo okoli umirajočega. Prav tako pa poznajo uhate demone v funkciji čuvarjev grobov na Daljnem vzhodu. Neizmerena ušesa so kakor krila ali školjke, v katerih odzvanjajo šumi sveta.

**GORGONE** - gr. skupina treh sester, pošasti z grozljivim obličjem. Ob pogledu nanje je vsakdo okamenel. Živele so na skrajnem zahodu zemlje. K njim spadajo: Steno, Evriala in Meduza. Upodobljene so z zlatimi krili, bronastimi rokami, s sikajočimi kačami namesto las in merjaščevimi čekani v ustih. Gorgonina glava ob svetiščih in grobovih odvraca zle moči.

**HARPIJE** - demonske viharne boginje stare Grčije. So krilate pošasti, mešana bitja s ptičjim telesom, žensko glavo, dolgimi razpuščenimi lasmi, ostrimi kremplji in kužnim zadahom. To so mrhovinarji v ženski podobi. Vse, kar vidijo, požro in onečastijo s svojimi izločki. Napogostejše so: Viharna, Hitroleta in Mračna.

Harpije poseebljajo pohlepno lakoto. Mučijo duše, saj jim z nenehnim nadlegovanjem ne dajo miru. So vražji del kozmične energije, pekel polnijo z nenadno umrlimi. Veter, ki jih edini lahko prežene, je sapa duha.

**KERONKEUKEN** (tudi Keronkenken, Kerol Kenk) - mitična žival Indijancev Tehuelche. Nima natančno določene oblike, najpogosteje pa ga opisujejo kot velikega ptiča s črnim repom, kot sovo ali celo kot žrebička. Je zelo hudobno bitje, pojmujejo ga tudi kot čarovniškega odposlanca. Če kroži ponoči okoli hiše, bo vzel življenje njenemu stanovalcu tako, da bo le-ta ob zori zbolel in popoldne umrl.

Lahko ga primerjamo s krokarjem, ki prav tako večkrat z nič kaj prijaznim poslanstvom nastopa kot čarovniški sel oz. kot njegovo zločesto orodje.

**LASE** - etrušč. skupina mladostnih boginj služabnic, ki stražijo predvsem grobove. Upodobljene so večinoma s krili in bolj ali manj gole. Njihova atributa sta venec in ogledalo.

**MANTUS** - etrušč. vodnik mrtvih in čuvaj v podzemlju. Na sarkofagih so ga upodabljali kot čokatega moškega, s krili, divjimi obraznimi potezami, satirskimi ušesi in velikim kladivom.

**NASU** - iran. demonka mrtve snovi, trupla in oskrumbe. Takoj po človekovi smrti prileti k truplu v podobi muhe in sosede okuži z boleznijo. V nosača trupla prodre skozi eno od devetih telesnih odprtín.

**NAVJE** - psł. ime za umrle; po sprejemu krščanstva je bil pomen zožen na duše prezgodaj umrlih, nekrščenih otrok. Včasih se navje pojavljajo kot velike ptice in napadajo nosečnice. Ponekod navje pomeni deželó mrtvih. Beseda je nastala iz korena \*naHu" - ladja. Navezuje se na predstavo o deželi mrtvih nekje za morjem, do katere je treba odpluti...

**PAZUZU** - akad. zli demon, ki prinaša vročino in mrzlico in poseblja jugovzhodni veter. Upodobljen je s štírimí krilí, spačénim obrazom, dolgími lasmí, levjímí šapámí, ptičjímí krempljím na nogah in škorpíjonovím želóm.

**PIHUCHEN** (tudi Piguchen, Pihuechengu) - Mitično bitje Araukancev, s kači podobnim podaljšanim trupom, ki je pokrit s perjem. Ima peruti in včasih dve kačji glavi. Leta samo ponoči in med letom žvižga ali pa oddaja srhljive piske.



V veliki vročini se drži drevesne skorje in pušča na debelu rdečo sled. To je kri, ki jo sesa ljudem in živalim, dokler jih popolnoma ne izsuši. Njegov žvižg je zanesljiva najava smrti, razen če nam pošast uspe videti prej, kot ona opazi nas. Pravijo, da si ljudje pokrívajo ušesa, da je ne bi slišali, da pa je ne bi videli, je potrebno namočiti tla.

**SFINGA** - 1. egipč. pošast in mešano bitje večinoma moškega spola, s človeško glavo in levjim telesom; 2. gr. pošast in demonsko mešano bitje z žensko glavo in prsmi ter krilatim levjim telesom. Sedeč na pečini pri Tebah je mimoidočim zastavljala uganko in požrla vsakogar, ki je ni znal rešiti.

**SIRENE** - gr. dve do štiri demonke škode, mešana bitja z žensko glavo in ptičjim telesom. Živijo v Hadu, na rajskih poljanah ali na otoku ter s svojim zapeljivim petjem privabljajo mornarje in jih nato požrejo.

**ŠKOPNIK** - leteči demon, znan v Alpah. Leti kot goreči snop slame (škop) ali metla in skozi dimnik vdira v hišo. Po funkciji je podoben škratu.

**ŠTRPED** - polh, ki je imel namesto prednjih nog sokolja krila. Iz ušes so mu rastle jesenovi listi. Njegove oči so bile sokolje, dlaka pa bela (dobri Štrped) ali redkeje črna (Štrped, ki je prinašal nesrečo in smrt). Izlegel se je vsakih sedem let ob pomoči polne lune in zlatokljunega sokola Lunja. Bil je izredno plašljiva žival. Vse, česar se je črni Štrped dotaknil, je izginito v nič.

**TANATOS** - gr. bog ter posebitev naravne in nasilne smrti. Umrle nosi v Had. Upodobljen je kot krilati demon s povešeno baklo.

**TIFON** - gr. 1. orjaška pošast v podzemlju s stotimi zmajskimi glavami in s kačami namesto nog ter utelešenje uničujočih sil narave; 2. grozljiva pošast s kačami namesto nog in s krilí, ki so zakrila sonce.

**TOT** - pomaga Ozirisu na onstranskem sodišču, zato je bog mrtvih. Nadzira tehtanje src in zapisuje razsodbe. Ker pot do Ozirisa vodi mimo njega, dušam umrlih utira pot in jih vodi v onstranstvo. Upodobljen je z ibisovo glavo ali kot ibis.

TURMS - etrušč. božji sel in vodnik mrtvih v podzemlje. Upodobljen je s krilatimi čevlji in glasniško palico (ustreza Hermesu in Merkurju).

VANTH - etrušč. demonka podzemlja in mrtvih ter glasnica smrti in pomočnica pri umiranju. Upodobljena je s krili. Njeni atributi so kača, bakla in ključ.

VELES - slovan. bog čred, imetja in podzemnega sveta. V Velesovem cesarstvu so duše umrlih in pozimi ptice.

## Nekaj teoretičnih sklepov

264 Kaj lahko sklepamo na podlagi povedanega v prvem delu našega eseja? Predvsem bi morala biti naša naloga poiskati kulturni pomen, ki ga imajo živali, ki simbolizirajo smrt. Ali lahko gradimo na predpostavki, da so 'živali' pravzaprav kulturni objekti posebne vrste? Za tistega, ki je posvetil svoje življenje iskanju poti, ki bi ga popeljala k ustrezni razlagi človekove kulture, se bo nemara zdel predlog zgolj slaba šala. Vse takšne antropologe in sociologe bomo spomnili na članek Roberta Wuthnowa, v katerem posveča kar nekaj prostora opisu zgodovinskega razvoja dveh pojmov: 'kulture' in 'smisla' (Wuthnow 1987). Po njegovem mnenju moramo ločevati med tremi različnimi obdobji v razvoju teh dveh konceptov. V prvem obdobju je bila pozornost kulturnih teoretikov (Durkheima, Marxa in Webra), usmerjena k vzniku kulturnega pomena na podlagi delitve subjekta in objekta. Čeprav je kulturni objekt samostojen, pa ni nujno narejen iz materialne substance. Za Durkheima je kolektivna zavest v pravem pomenu besede samostojna družbena entiteta in je kot taka od posameznika ločena. Posamezniki so prisiljeni nositi breme lastne kulture in ne morejo ubežati družbeni prisili. Druga generacija kulturologov (neoklasicisti, kot so Berger, Luckmann, Bellah in Geertz) si je prizadevala povrniti ustrežno zvezo med subjektom in objektom. V skladu z njihovo namero so lansirali idejo družbene konstrukcije realnosti, deloma navdihnjeno z idejami fenomenologa A. Schutza (Luckmann in Berger 1991) in deloma z interpretativno sociologijo Maxa Webra (Geertz 1993). Kulturni pomen je dobil mesto temeljnega koncepta v teoriji neoklasicistične paradigme, in ker je bila njihova teoretična pozornost usmerjena k družbeni konstrukciji realnosti, so veliko pozornost posvečali položaju jezika v vsakdanji komunikaciji. Kulturni objekt ni nekaj, kar bi bilo zunaj posameznikovega horizonta. Nič čudnega torej, da so si svojo najbolj priljubljeno metodo izposodili od fenomenologov in hermenevtikov. Naslednja stopnja v razvoju kulturologije je poststrukturalizem (Habermas, Foucault, Lévi-Strauss). Če neoklasicisti še vedno verjamejo v aktivno vlogo posameznikov v procesu nastanka kulturnega smisla, pa so se poststrukturalisti odpovedali aktivni vlogi akterja. Vse svoje moči so vložili v razlago temeljnih principov družbe in kulture s pomočjo vloge jezika in komunikacij med posamezniki. Tako se je kulturni objekt ponovno znašel onkraj dosega posameznikov.

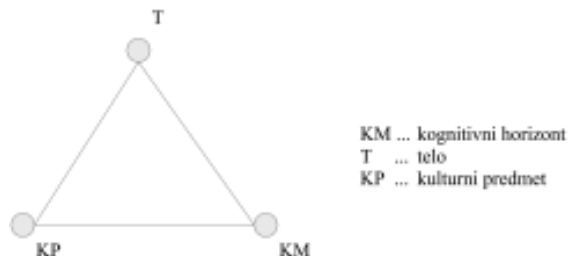
Na koncu svojega članka Wuthnow ugotavlja, da je vpliv posameznikov na kulturni smisel še vedno potrebno upoštevati, če želimo ustrezno razumeti delovanje človeške družbe. Na žalost pa njegova teorija ne more zadovoljiti naše intelektualne radovednosti. Ne glede na to, da so kulturni pomeni družbeno konstruirani, vendarle menimo, da mora obstajati svet onkraj družbenega in kulturnega pomena, ki nam pomaga le-taga

konstruirati, pa čeprav se tega morda sploh ne zavedamo. Predlagamo torej, da resno upoštevamo možnost, da kulturni predmeti obstajajo neodvisno od človekovega uma<sup>1</sup>. Kulturni objekt razumemo kot materialni predmet, ki pa ima v procesu doživljanja kulturnega izkustva to lastnost, da deluje kot nosilec družbeno konstruiranega kulturnega pomena. Zaradi določenih razlogov, ki pa zaradi vsebinskih omejitev tega eseja ne morejo biti natančno pojasnjeni, bomo razdelili kulturne objekte v dva tipa kulturnih objektov: telesa in kulturne predmete<sup>2</sup>. Metodološki okvir, ki bo omogočal naše razmišljanje, pa si lahko ogledate na spodnji sliki:



Slika št. 1: Razmerje med akterji v kulturni produkciji in percepciji (mikro nivo)

Zgoraj opisani metodološki okvir za preučevanje kulturnih pojavov (glej sliko št. 2) bomo uporabili na predhodno dobljenih podatkih. Pri tem moramo odgovoriti na naslednja vprašanja: Kateri je kulturni objekt v našem primeru? Kako pri tem pravilno razumeti vlogo telesa? In nenazadnje, kakšno vlogo ima socialno kognitivni horizont pri nastanku specifičnega kulturnega pojava, v našem primeru razumevanju smrti?



Slika št. 2: Metodološki okvir za preučevanje kulturnih fenomenov

Prepričani smo, da je potrebno pristopiti k analizi kulturnih fenomenov s stališča njihovega izkustva. V primeru smrti pa trčimo ob skorajda neprehodno oviro, kajti smrti ne moremo izkusiti več kot enkrat, če sploh lahko označimo te vrste dogodek z besedo 'izkustvo'. Če si ogledamo pojav smrti z znanstvenega vidika, ne moremo vedeti, ali nemara obstaja življenje po smrti. Morda obstaja, morda ne. Hipoteze, ki bi vsebovala bodisi prvo bodisi drugo trditev, ni mogoče znanstveno preveriti. Zato je edino smiselno, da se v polju znanosti odpravimo takšnim hipotezam<sup>3</sup>. Toda v realnem življenju je

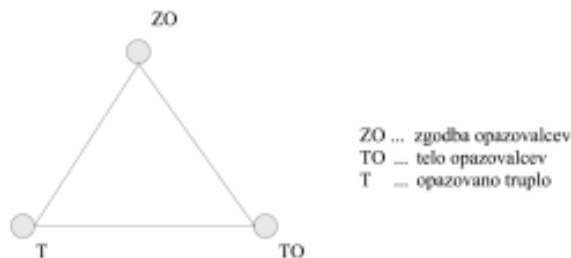
<sup>1</sup> Spomnimo se, kako je naša ideja o samostojnosti kulturnih predmetov v nekaterih niansah zelo podobna Popperjevi ideji Sveta 3 (Popper 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Novi pristop v razumevanju nastanka kulturnega smisla se močno naslanja na delo Strauss in Quinn (1997) ter na metodološki model, ki ga je razvila Wendy Griswold (1987).

<sup>3</sup> Zahteva je v skladu s Popperovimi metodološkimi tezami, razvitimi v njegovo knjigi *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (Popper 1992).

situacija mnogo bolj zapletena, saj oseba, vpletena v fenomen smrti (najsi bo umirajoča ali pa zgolj prisotna pri umirajočem), običajno nima ustreznega znanja in metod, da bi takšno znanstveno odločitev sploh lahko sprejela. Še bolj pomembno pa je, da posameznikom v vsakdanjem življenju takšne odločitve sploh ni potrebno sprejemati, kajti način delovanja vsakdanjega življenja je značilno drugačen. Njegova prisotnost in oblika sta posamezniku kot taka dana (glej Schutz in Luckmann 1974). To, kar posamezniki v takem trenutku potrebujejo, je uporabno znanje, na podlagi katerega lahko delujejo. Če se posameznik znajde v situaciji, ko mora poskrbeti za truplo pokojnika, mora biti seznanjen s posmrtnimi obredi. Vedeti mora, kako obrede pravilno izvajati in kaj je potrebno storiti s truplom pokojnika, da se ne bi zgodilo, da bi bila duša pokojnega prekleta ali kakorkoli drugače pogubljena. Seveda pod pogojem, da posameznik, ki je postavljen pred takšno nalogo, verjame v posmrtno življenje. Telo pokojnika je lahko pokopano, upepeljeno ali izpostavljeno na odprtem prostoru, kjer ga lahko pojedjo divje živali, itd.

V skladu z našim metodološkim okvirom, razvitim za potrebe raziskovanja kulturnih fenomenov, moramo poiskati tri elemente, iz katerih je kulturni fenomen sestavljen (glej sliko št. 3). Ob smrti nekega posameznika je mrtvo telo edino, kar ostane za njim. Nemara se sliši nenavadno, toda v primeru kulturnega fenomena smrti je edini resnično obstoječi kulturni predmet truplo umrlega. Razlika med mrtvim in živim telesom je vse preveč očitna, da bi jo lahko zanemarili, zato so si ljudje prisiljeni izmisliti primerno razlago za nastalo spremembo. Takšna razlaga lahko nastopi kot zgodba ali mit, v katerem običajno najdemo tudi navodila glede postopanja v primeru smrti. Vsebuje lahko tudi odgovor na vprašanje, kakšen je pomen smrti ali kam se preseli duša umrlega in druge podrobnosti glede obstoja posmrtnega življenja. Tretji element, ki nastopa v našem modelu, pa je telo posameznikov, ki fenomenu smrti prisostvujejo. Delovanje slednjega je uganka posebne vrste. Zakaj?



Slika št. 3: Mikro situacija v primeru fenomena smrti

Med iskanjem odgovora na zgoraj postavljeno vprašanje moramo izpostaviti eno izmed najpomembnejših družbenih značilnosti. Kultura in družba ne moreta uspešno trajati, vsaj ne prav dolgo, če znanje in vedenje nista relativno uspešno prenesena iz ene v drugo generacijo. V primeru prenašanja obredov, povezanih s smrtjo, z ene v drugo generacijo, je vsakdanja izkušnja smrti običajno omejena na opazovanje naključnih smrti v neki skupnosti. Ni običajno, da bi neko osebo ubili, pa čeprav naključno, z namenom, da bi s tem nazorno prikazali smrt in poučili potomce, kaj smrt je in kako iz-

gleda. Vsekakor bi bila to draga odločitev, saj ima posameznikovo življenje vrednost za skupnost, v kateri biva. V preteklosti je bil posameznik še posebno dragocen, saj je ekonomija temeljila predvsem na fizični moči človeških bitij. V moderni dobi pa je posameznik dragocen predvsem zaradi občutja svoje enkratne individualnosti. Drugi razlog, zaradi katerega je bilo ubijanje ljudi v večini kultur omejeno le na religiozni obred, pa tiči v slabi razvitosti izobraževalnega sistema. Le od časa do časa so se v človeški zgodovini pojavili svetli otoki sistematičnega učenja. Prevladujoča strategija v prenosu znanja med generacijami je bila utemeljena v osebni izkušnji učečega. Če je situacija, v kateri se je posameznik znašel, zahtevala neko določeno znanje, da bi lahko svojo nalogo dobro opravil, potem si je potrebno znanje največkrat zagotovil neposredno<sup>4</sup>. Seveda je od tistih časov preteklo mnogo vode in družbena struktura se je spremenila tako temeljito, da neposredno prenešeno znanje ni več najpomembnejša oblika učenja (glej Schutz 1975).

Praktične težave, ki spremljajo socializacijo posameznikov v primeru fenomena smrti, zahtevajo rešitve, ki jih lahko razdelimo v dve kategoriji. Temelj, na katerem stoji naša odločitev, je prvi del našega eseja, v katerem smo se ukvarjali s konkretnimi primeri živali, ki simbolizirajo smrt. Najbolj primerno se zdi, da zamenjamo kulturni objekt, ki neposredno simbolizira smrt, s takšnim kulturnim objektom, ki predstavlja smrt le simbolično. Če si izberemo primeren kulturni objekt, ki za povrh še dejansko obstaja (glej sliko št. 4), bomo morda lahko zgradili zanimivo zgodbo, kjer bo na novo izbrani kulturni objekt lahko dobil ustrezno mesto, s katerega bo uspešno simboliziral fenomen smrti. V primeru, ko pripadniki neke skupnosti razumejo smrt kot skrivnostni pojav, je fenomen, s katerim si ga poskušajo razložiti, prav tako zavit v tančico skrivnosti. Vzemimo na primer zgodbo o kokoši. V primeru, ko kokoš brez pravega vzroka zakikirika, kar se pričakuje le od petelina, velja, da je gospodar hiše v smrtni nevarnosti. Glavo si lahko reši edinole tako, da kokoš nemudoma zakolje. Kje v tej zgodbi je primeren prostor za skrivnost? Ta tiči v razliki med običajnim obnašanjem izbranega kulturnega objekta (kokoš vali jajca in kokodaka kot kokoš) in njegovim spremenjenim načinom obnašanja (kokoš kikirika, kot da bi bila petelin).



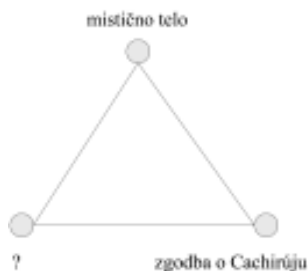
Slika št. 4: Kulturni fenomen v katerem je kulturni objekt zamenjan z resnično obstoječim bitjem

<sup>4</sup> Lep primer takšnega obnašanja lahko vidimo v razmerju med srednjeveškim mojstrom in vajencem (Hawalt 1993).

Rekli smo že, da je tretji element v našem metodološkem modelu telo, v tem primeru telo uporabnikov kulturnih pomenov in smislov. Kakšne vrste telesa lahko pričakujemo v tej kulturni situaciji? V tem primeru pričakujemo normalno delujoče telo. Ko pravimo normalno delujoče, imamo pri tem v mislih telo, ki omogoča njegovemu uporabniku jasno percepcijo. S čistostjo percepcije pa se bomo v nadaljevanju še srečali.

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Toda, kaj bi se zgodilo, če bi zamenjali dejansko obstoječi kulturi predmet (mrtvo telo) s popolnoma izmišljenim kulturnim predmetom, kot je na primer Cachirú (glej sliko št. 5)? V tem primeru bi se situacija spremenila, kajti posameznikova pozornost bi se obrnila od dejanskega k izmišljenemu liku, v tem primeru k zgodbi. V uvodu v naš esej smo poudarili, da človeška zavest vedno potrebuje za svoj obstoj neki predmet zunaj sebe, da bi si s tem zagotovila normalno delovanje. Izguba konkretnega predmeta ima zanimive posledice za delovanje posameznikove zavesti. V primeru, ko možgani posameznika ne dobijo zadostnega vzbujenja iz okolice, si izmislijo svoj lasten svet na podlagi predhodno uskladiščenega znanja, spominov in hotenj (Dennett 1991). Iluzije in halucinacije predstavljajo splošen simptom v laboratorijskih raziskavah, povezanih z izpostavljanjem posameznikov nizki stopnji senzorne percepcije (Zubek 1969). Delitev kulturnega objekta v dva različna tipa (primarni in sekundarni tip) se pokaže kot zelo koristna. Jasno je, da um za svoje delovanje potrebuje neki svet onkraj sebe. Če mu je odvzet primarni kulturni predmet, potem se razum zateče k edini možni rešitvi. Svoje telo uporabi kot kulturni predmet, saj drugače ne more delovati dobro. Telo nam je vendar vedno na razpolago, saj je z umom neločljivo povezano. Toda na žalost lahko umu zagotovi le tiste informacije iz okolja, ki so že vskladiščene v spominu in genih. Telo je brez svojega okolja pravzaprav nemočno, in prav zaradi te svoje občutljivosti nam pogosto zagotovi 'napačne' informacije.



Slika št. 5: Kulturna situacija, v kateri je običajni kulturni predmet zamenjan z izmišljenim primerom živali

Pomanjkanje senzornih dražljajev (kulturni predmet) je le eden od načinov, da pride pri posamezniku do pojava iluzij in halucinacij. Druga pot za doseg tega cilja leži v namerni izpostavitvi posameznikovega telesa napačni percepciji zaradi specifičnega delovanja posameznikovega telesa. V zgodovini človeštva je bilo nemalo takšnih primerov, ki našo trditev dobro ilustrirajo. Včasih je nadnaravnim videnjem botrovala splošna podhranjenost neke populacije. Posamezniki s posebnim položajem v družbi so se namenoma izpostavljali uporabi halucinogenih substanc (glej Huxley 1979; Eliade 1985). Znanje, pridobljeno s pomočjo telesa, je za nekatere kulture in družbe bistveno. Za srednjeveško



družbo je to vsekakor ključna oblika védenja, toda kasneje je z upadom njegove pomembnosti na plano prišla nova oblika védenja: kognitivno razumetje (Mellor in Schilling 1997). Kulturni predmet v primeru smrti (truplo in proces samega umiranja) je bil potisnjen v posebna družbena polja (bolnišnice in sanatorije). Za moderno telo se poskrbi s posebnimi oblikami tretmaja (sistematična zdravniška nega in športno udejstvovanje posameznika), vsako njegovo zanemarjanje pa sprejmemo z neodobravanjem. Kognitivna struktura modernega posameznika je 'polna' mladih teles, medtem ko je smrt in z njo povezano staranje potlačeno v globine človekovega modernega mišljenja.

Ali je za mite in zgodbe, ki so nastali na podlagi narave, ob koncu iztekajočega se tisočletja še kaj upanja? Prav gotovo perspektive niso dobre. Prepričani smo, da jih posameznikova moderna kognitivna struktura ne odobrava. Pa ne zaradi tega, ker bi bila slednja v primerjavi s tradicionalnimi pogledi mnogo bolj racionalna (glej Luckmann 1997). Poglavitni razlog za to leži drugje. Človeško okolje se je v zadnjem stoletju dramatično spremenilo. Danes je narava prav tako daleč stran od človekovega pogleda kakor tudi sam mistični svet. Iz pepela starih mitov pa se je dvignil nov, moderen mit. Slednji je mit o čudežnih ozdravitvah, ne pa o smrti (bioenergija). Modernega mita posmrtno življenje pravzaprav sploh ne zanima več.

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# THE HEN, CACHIRU AND OTHER WINGED CREATURES

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Maja Šubic, Tomaž Krpič

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**Key words:** *death, mythological flying creatures, human body, cultural object, cognitive mindscape*

## Foreword

One of the most surprising characteristics of the human mind is how human thought cannot exist without some fixation on external objects. That does not mean that the object of fixation always has to be a material one. It can also be a mental picture in the human mind, although in this case it needs to be understood as something separated from what is experienced in that moment. This mental picture originates in the past and it looks like it has its own will to influence on our way of thinking. Nevertheless, our lives are generally filled with all kind of material stuff, because for a person it is normally much more simple to attain relationship to material world than to reach a complex state of reflection inside the human mind. Some might express regret. But being realistic, for an average person the everyday reality is mostly material. Beside all other reasons why human mind is mostly oriented toward material world, especially one is important. If the connection between individuals through the material world is interrupted, social world simply falls apart. And since everything is basically social (see Mead 1962, Schutz 1967) the science is also the part of society. For that reason social science should not neglect the material dimension of social life. For then we are no longer capable of proper scientific explanation of how interpersonal contacts in everyday life are possible at all.

Preliminary condition for sociological or anthropological investigation is quality knowledge about material world. In other words: the explication of specific social or cultural phenomenon depends on how skilful we are when we trace down cultural object. For someone whose primary intention is to elaborate cognitive conditions of human mind, this demand may sound odd. Nevertheless, we believe it is more than just necessary. Our first goal is to find as many examples of different animals that symbolize death as possible and classify them into different categories. Our second goal is to show how individuals through culture use their bodies and carefully choose among different types of objects that could be properly used as cultural object in the matter of death.

## A classification of the animals

This essay is a product of an enthusiasm caused by *The Book of Imaginary Beings* by J. B. Borges, a book with no ambition to classify or systematize in which the author collects those beings that turn the zoological garden into a mythological one. Like the author says, the book will never be complete, the same goes for this survey of the winged creatures that man has in this way or another connected to the death. The symbolism of the animal world is closely interweaved, therefore this essay collects beings and deities with no regards to historical or geographical frame. It does not include angels and dragons, which should be dealt with in a special chapter. Symbols usually have double meaning and obviously, in this essay only the darker ones are discussed.

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Why wings and death?

A flying creature does not leave behind a solid trace like footprints in the sand, a tunnel in the ground or stirred water surface. The flight makes a tiny little breeze like a cool shiver that dash through us in the moment when we become aware of death.

Many winged creatures do not have flying ability or they lost it long ago. By pinning wings to a creature we elevate it amongst spiritual beings. In the spiritual world, it is possible to fly with stone wings. The meaning of flying lies in freeing from gravity why gravity is the cause of most troubles in this life and beyond it.

If we believe in life after death, the death is only an obstacle which an individual must overcome to achieve immortality or resurrection. The easiest way to overcome an obstacle is to jump over it, or even better, fly over it.

Palaeolithic graves contain remainders of animal bones and antlers. That can only give us an idea about spiritual rituals of the ancient undertakers (a child surrounded by steinbock horns from a site in Uzbekistan or a woman's skull placed onto a jaw and antlers of a reindeer in Mas d'Azil).

It is not yet known whether these are remainders of funeral feasts or an actual equipment of the deceased which would confirm the belief of the life after death. In any case, the relation man - death - animal was established in the very beginning of the human awareness of existence and its end.

The major principle of the Palaeolithic art is: in the world there are only people and animals - hunters and their prey - nothing in between matters and does not belong into the imaginary space as seen by the eye of an artist. And the point in which the hunter and the animal meet, is death.

The ideology of the hunting cultures is actually shamanic. Only a shaman with his supernatural power is capable of penetrating into the very source of animal life. It is confirmed that the shamanic ecstasy existed as early as in Palaeolithic. This ecstasy suggests the believing in the soul that is capable of leaving the body and wandering freely. On these wanderings it can meet supernatural beings and ask them for help. (In a cave in Lacaux there is an image of a man that seems to be dead - a shaman in a trance, with a beak on the face, with a bird on the top of a stick, probably representing his protector).

Very often, we can meet a soul in the form of a bird, as well as a bird as the leader of souls. The Egyptian Book of the Dead describes the dead man as a hawk that flies

away, in prehistoric monuments in Europe and Asia we can see birds on the branches of the Cosmic tree, which probably symbolize the souls of the ancestors and also in Mesopotamia the dead appeared as birds...

Only death can transform a man into a bird and thus can shamans with supernatural powers experience the destiny of the soul, to other human beings accessible only in the moment of death.

Shamanic ecstatic ascensions bring about a feeling of transcendence, elevation and, with its symbolism of the flight give an imaginary experience of the height as the liberation from gravity (Eliade 1987, 1996).

## **The animals that really exist**

ARA – Colombian Indians use a red Ara as guide for the death person. The Bororo Indians believe in complicate migration cycle of souls, where souls are temporarily embodied in the Ara birds.

SCREECH OWL - “He will not last long - the screech owl called him tonight.” or: “The screech owl cried him out”. This is the wisdom of old ladies when they stick their heads together and say these unbecoming words, and unfortunately men as well. And thus the poor screech owl, due to its sad voice, became notorious as the death bird. Many people get the creeps when they hear it screech. A fool is guessing for whom it hoots. If then nobody wants to die, nobody thinks of the death messenger any more. If somebody really dies in the neighbourhood, the superstitious women will forever be convinced that the screech owl’s screech brings death.

A screech owl is also called the death bird. If it stops close to a house, it is said that somebody who lives there will soon die. The same thing threatens to us if we hear it sing or even cry at night. Almost everywhere in Slovenia, people are afraid of its sound. This lively type of owl tends to dwell close to people’s homes - under roofs, in orchards and churches, therefore superstitious people often get some grey hairs.

The screech owls do not announce death only in Europe, they are also mentioned as the messengers of the chieftains of Xibalba, Maya’s land of the dead.

In the second part of the holy book of the Indians Quiche POPOL VUH we meet 4 screech owls:

Chabi-Tucur - quick as an arrow

Huracan Tucur - the one-legged screech owl

Caquix Tucur - screech owl makao with red wings

Holom Tucur - screech owl with a head and wings and no legs

Two guardians of gardens in Xibalba were screech owls. They did not do their guardian job properly, so their masters cleft their beak and since then the screech owl has a cleft beak.

At night the screech owl is attracted by illuminated windows that were often a sign that people watch over a sick person or the deceased. It is said that its unfortunate

connection with the death comes from this. The physiognomy of its head with enormous eyes reminds us of a skull. Its restless flight is applied in human conception of the nearness of death.

HEN - Like most domestic animals, the hen also made a pilgrimage from the sacrificing bowl into the kitchen pot. In the Ancient Greece the hen was frequently sacrificed by poor people. Even Romans strictly and superstitiously followed the prophecies of the hen oracle.

274 In Black Africa the hen sacrificing is common, necessary for the communication with the deceased. When a Lulu shaman woman undergoes the experience of death and rebirth, she is hanged a hen around the neck to attract the souls of the deceased mediums in the bush.

Fear from the hen crowing is very spread. The feminine with male characteristics has always caused uncomfot and fear. Here the two principles and powers are united in one. This kind of union does not have a future, it is both and nothing at the same time. It cannot go on and therefore death or even extinction is inevitable.

If a hen starts to crow like a rooster, the master of the house is bound to die. A "rooster hen" had to be slain at once. If a black hen crows, it cries out the master of the house. A white hen, on the other hand, cries out the housewife. The crowing of the black hen means bad luck for the house, the crowing of the white one death and the crowing of a brown one fire.

HUMMINGBIRD - Aztecs believed that the souls of dead soldiers return back to the earth as hummingbirds or butterflies.

RAVEN - Black feathers, hollow croaking, insatiable ravenousness and predatory boldness make him mysterious, awful and monster like. That is why to all nations it means unfortunate and foretells death. (Erjavec, 1995, p. 398). The Raven became a negative symbol not long ago and almost exclusively in Europe. (...) It is general knowledge that the raven does not promise anything good, that it is a herald of misfortune and that it foretells death.

In the Celtic tradition the raven is a bad sign as well. Its image was adopted by Morrigan, the queen of fear, the queen of war and underworld.

Morrigan appears in two other forms - as Nori and Dispirited crow. Before the battle, she washed the equipment of those who were to die and thus determined the loser. "The raven is the black bird of the romantics which flies over the battlefield and pecks the corpses." (Chevalier - Gheerbrant, 1993, p. 285). It is true that the raven smells carcass from a great distance and feeds on it. Thus it really feels death at a distance. This death is his everyday bread, its actual existence.

In Greece, the raven had the function of a prophet, along with the eagle and the swan.

In Slovenia it is said that if a raven flies over a house, we can expect one of the feminine members of the family to die, whereas if a couple of ravens flies over the house, we can expect the death of a male. Sailors believed that three ravens bring death.

In Mahabharata ravens are compared to the heralds of death.

In most religions, the raven is a sun sign, a demiurge, a leader of souls on their last journey. It reveals the secret of the darkness. Nomadic, fishermen and hunting communities attach positive meaning to it, whereas agricultural and permanently inhabited peoples attach a negative meaning to it.

Alchemists name the phases of rotting a “raven’s head.”

COOKOO - Cookoo is a bird, connected with spring and the awakening of the nature, therefore it helps Siberian shamans to revive the dead. In the Veda tradition, a cookoo is a symbol of the human soul before the incarnation and after it. The body is like a strange nest in which comes the soul. If a cookoo sits on a dry branch and cries there, soon somebody in the house will die.

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The cookoo brings death into the nest where it leaves its egg, for it throws out the already existing life. Therefore it needs death to exist.

SWALLOW - If swallow in the spring built the nest near the house and later abandoned it, someone living there will pass away soon for sure. Swallow symbolises loneliness, migration and separation, for it is a migratory bird.

BAT - With the people of Maya, the bat was one of the deities which incarnated the underworld forces. In Popol Vuh a bat’s house is one of the underworld places through which leads the way to the land of the dead. The bat is the master of fire, destroyer of life, swallower of the light. It is an emblem of death. They call him “the one that tears heads.” The bat is depicted with dead eyes. It is a god of death with the Mexicans. They connect it with the North. The bat is often depicted with an open jaws or with a sacrificing knife instead of the jaws. A duplicity of the hybrid nature, the mouse and the bird, in the alchemist tradition explains the ambivalence of the bat symbolism: the bat represents the androgyne, a winged dragon, a demon. Its wings are those of a creature from the hell (the devil has blue wings, similar to the bat’s). The bat must wave with wings therefore it cannot rest during the flight. A nature seeks for a wing, but finds only an ugly hairy membrane which, nevertheless, functions as a wing.

ROOSTER - Like the hen, the rooster is also believed to bring bad luck. If it is 7 years old, it lays an egg out of which the devil - Basilisk hatches. The rooster was used as a protector against Basilisk on shields, amulets and tombstones.

On rare occasions, the rooster too foretells death - for instance, if he crows just before midnight.

In Greece it announces the arrival of the soul on the other world and then take it there. The soul would open its eyes to a new light, a new birth.

The rooster was assigned to Hermes, a herald that travels in three levels of the cosmos, from hell to heaven. Germanic nations believed that a bright rooster greets heroes on the bridge to Walhala, whereas on the door to the underworld there waits a black rooster.

During purification and exorcism ceremonies after death some Altay nations tie a rooster to the bed of the deceased. The rooster represents death which a shaman expels.

**NIGHTINGALE** – it is common believe that the singing nightingale helps dying person to passing away easier. The nightingale reminds us on the transitoriness of life and in connection with this on the thin line between love and death.

**HAWK** - The image of the hawk connected with death is found mostly in the old Egypt. It mostly appears as BA, representing a spiritual power, a soul. Ba has hawk-like body, human head and godlike beard. When the body is redeemed in the posthumous ceremony, ba leaves it and then moves freely. During the day, it follows the sun on the horizon, at night it returns into the underworld, into its body which is its real residence, and there it feeds with funeral gifts.

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**OWL** - "Owls are quick-tempered, timid, stupid and greedy birds. The captured owls bite and eat one another. Except from some smaller species, they never tolerate people. They are always wild and choleric. And if we only thought about their unpleasant look, on their silent flight in the night, not to mention their awful sound they produce, we could understand easily why owls are detestable to ordinary people. For unschooled and superstition person the owl is something mysterious and monstrous (Erjavec 1995, 470).

The owl is a night bird, and as such it is usually connected with the appearance of moon, for owl do not suffer the day light well. It flights low and silently and also very slow. Its capability of seeing in the dark made of owl the symbol of the clear-sightedness and it is an attribute of fortune-tellers.

The owl is also a symbolic animal of hellish divinities, worship by the Indians of Middle and South America. It is showed in Aztecs books as guardian of earthy dark house. It is connected with dark forces and it is also avatar of the night, rain and stormy whether. This is its connection to the death. On the artefacts of pre-Inca of Chimu civilisation, it can be seen well the knife using for sacrifice with an owl depicted over it in the shape of half human, half animal creature. The symbol, obviously bind with the notion of death and sacrifice, is ornamented with the necklaces made out of pearls and shells. Their breasts are purple, and there are some dogs lying by it. The owl sometimes holds a knife in one hand and a jar for victim's blood in the other hand. Owls are still divine creatures now days. They are guards of the graveyards by many Indian people (Chevalier – Gheerbrant 1993, 564).

Using an 'owl' as a symbol for announcer in the matter of death is well known fact, for owl usually live solitary life and at the same time owl produce dull sound. As such the owl can call a misery upon the house if owl sing near it. The situation is even worst if there is more then just one owl in the nearness. Small wonder than that people sometimes call it the dead person's hen.

**WOODPECKER** – someone will pass away in the nearness of the place where a singing woodpecker is seen if this is happening several times. That is why the woodpecker is often called a mortal bird.



## Fictitious Creatures

**BASILISK** - is a supernatural mixed creature of Jewish Christian origin. Most frequently depicted as a rooster with the tale of a dragon or as a serpent with rooster's wings and a bright crown-like spot on the head. The number of legs varies from two to eight. At the beginning of the Middle Ages it was depicted as a four-legged rooster with a little crown, yellow feathers, large spike-like wings and serpent tail that sometimes has another rooster head at the end of it. It was conceived in a rooster's egg put into dung, without a mother and brooded by a toad or a frog. It dwells in fountains and cellars, and according to certain sources in the desert which is created by Basilisk itself. Namely birds fall dead in front of it. All fruit around it rots and the rivers from which it drinks remain poisoned for whole centuries.

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It embodies death and the evil. Its evil look kills. The only things that can kill it are the smell of a weasel, a rooster's crow or the look in its own face in the mirror. It represents life danger of which one cannot be aware in time. Travellers took alive roosters with them when passing through unknown territories. Borges quotes Queved's ballad:

If the one that has seen you still lives  
Your whole story is a lie  
For if he had not died, he did not see you  
and if he is dead he cannot confirm that.

**CACHIRÚ** (also Cachurú) - An evil deity known in the region of Santiago del Estero, Argentina. It is depicted as an unusual owl with huge claws and a sharp beak. Its feathers are dark grey and coarse and become bristles towards the legs.

Its immense phosphorescence eyes radiate like fires in the dark. This light and his mischievous shrieks are the only thing that reveal its inaudible flight. It is said that it can heave a man into the sky or tear him apart in an instant.

Preferably, it captures the soul at the hour of death and turns it into a horrible apparition. It dwells in the most inaccessible parts of the forest where a man cannot penetrate. Because the forests reduce, its kingdom is getting smaller or has almost disappeared.

**CHONCHÓN** (also Chonchonyú) - A deity of the Mapuche Indians. An evil spirit, actually a human head with enormous ears used as wings. It circles around sick people and waits for a chance when nobody is around. Then he kills them and sucks their blood.

This bizarre monster may seem less strange to us if we mention that long-eared demons can easily be found in medieval sculpture and graphics. Such "earheads" often flutter around the dying person. Early demons are also known in the Far East as grave guardians. Their vast ears are like wings or shells, echoing the noises of the world.

**GORGONS** - monsters from the Greek mythology. 3 sisters with dreadful faces. Looking at them, everyone petrified. They lived in the extreme West of the Earth. They call themselves Stena, Euriala and Medusa. They are depicted with golden wings, bronze hands and hissing snakes for their hair and fangs of a boar. Around the temples and tombs, a Gorgon's head chases away the evil powers.

**HARPIES** - demonic storm goddesses of the Ancient Greece. Winged creatures, mixed creatures with the body of a bird, head of a woman, long and loose hair, sharp claws and plague breath. They are scavengers in the feminine form. They devour everything they see and disgrace it with their excrements. The most frequent are The Stormy One, The Fast-flying one and the Dark one.

The Harpies personify greedy hunger. They torture souls and constantly annoy them. They are a satanic part of cosmic energy and fill the hell with the unexpectedly dead. The wind that can chase them away is the breath of the spirit.

**KERONKEUKEN** (also Keronkenken, Kerol Kenk) - mythic animal of the Te-huelche Indians. It does not have a certain form but is usually described as a big black-tailed bird, similar as the owl or even stallion. Keronkeuken is very evil, also considered as the magician's messenger. If it circles around a house at night, it would like to take life from somebody in it so that he or she would fall ill at dawn and die in the afternoon. It can be compared to a raven.

**LASE** - Etruscan group of young goddesses servants guarding mostly graves. They are depicted mostly with wings and naked. Their attributes are wreath and mirror.

**MANTUS** - Etruscan leader of the dead and guard in the underworld. On sarcophagi it was depicted as a stout man with wings, wild facial features, satyre-like ears and a big hammer.

**NASU** - Persian demoness of inanimate substance, corpse and profanation. Immediately after a man's death she flies in the shape of a fly and infects the neighbours with a disease. She penetrates the pallbearer through one of nine bodyholes.

**NAVJE** - Preslavic name for the dead after the acceptance of Christianity, the meaning was narrowed to the souls of yet unbaptized children. Sometimes navje appears like big birds attacking pregnant women. In certain places navje means the land of the dead. The word originates in the stem "naHu" - ship - a notion of the land of dead somewhere beyond the sea, where one has to sail to.

**PAZUZU** - acad. evil spirit which brings fever and shivers and personifies the Southeast wind. It is depicted with 4 wings, deformed face, long hair, lion paws, bird claws on the legs and scorpio sting.

**PIHUCHEN** (also Piguchen, Pihuechengu) - Mythical creature of Arawakans with a snake-like trunk, covered with feathers. It has wings and sometimes two snake heads. It flies only at night and during the flight whistles or produces thrilling whistles. In the heat, it is attached to the bark of the tree and leaves a red trace of blood he sucks from people and animals as long as it sucks them dry. Pihuchen's whistle is a reliable announce of death, except if we see the monster before it sees us. It is said that people cover their ears not to hear it and in order not to see it, it is recommended to moist the ground.

**SPHINX** - 1. Egyptian monster and mixed creature of mostly masculine gender with a human head and the body of a lion. 2. Greek, monster and demonic mixed creature with a woman's head and breasts and winged lion body. Sitting on a cliff near Tebe it posed a riddle to passer-bys and ate everyone that could not solve it.

SIRENS - Gr. 2 to 4 demonesses of harm, mixed creatures with woman's head and birdlike body. They live in the Hades, on Paradise fields or on an island,

and with their seducing singing attract sailors and eat them in the end.

ŠKOPNIK - flying demon from the Alps. It flies like a burning bale of straw or a broom and forces its way into a house through a chimney. Similar to the goblin.

ŠTRPED - a dormouse with wings instead of the front legs. Ash leaves grew out of its ears. Its eyes were those of a hawk its hair white (the good štrped) or black (štrped who brought misfortune and death). It hatched every 7 years with the help of the moon and the goldbeaked hawk named Lunj. A very timid animal. Everything it touched vanished.

TANATOS - Greek god and impersonation of natural and violent death. It carries the deceased into the Hades. It is depicted as a winged demon with a lowered torch.

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TIFON - gr. 1. a gigantic monster living in the underworld. It has hundred dragon-like heads and snakes instead of its legs. It is the incarnation of devastating forces of nature. 2. horrible monster with legs replaced by snakes and with wings, which can cover up the sun.

TOT - he helps Osiris with judgement in the underworld court, so he is the God of dead persons. He supervises the balancing of the hearts and he write down the judgements.

While the path to Osiris leading by him, he helps the dead one and leads them. He is depicted with the head of Ibis or as Ibis him self.

TURMS - he is the messenger of God and leader of the dead person to the underworld, depicted with winged shoes and the stick of announcer.

VANTH - Etr. the demon of the underworld and death. She is depicted as winged creature, with snake, key and torch.

VELES - Slavic God of herds, property and underworld. In the empire of Veles the souls are settled and also the birds in the winter.

## A few theoretical conclusions

What can be said on the basis of our previous assignment? Above all, we should find the cultural meaning of animals signifying death. Can we assume that the animals are in fact cultural objects? For anyone who devoted their life to illuminating a way for proper understanding of the human culture, this statement might sound as some sort of a bad joke. We shall remind all those anthropologists and sociologists of an essay written by Robert Wuthnow where he elaborated the historical development of the notions 'culture' and 'meaning' (Wuthnow 1987). In his opinion the difference between three stages of that development must be drawn. At the first step the attention of *classical* social theorists (Durkheim, Marx and also Weber) were pointed toward the division between subject and object from where the meaning originated. Although culture object is independent, it is not made only of material substance. For Emile Durkheim collective consciousness was literally a social entity and it was in some way separated from individuals. Persons are forced

to carry the burden of their culture, but they cannot do much to reduce its power. The second generation (*neoclassicists* like Berger, Luckmann, Bellah and Geertz) endeavoured to bring back the notion of united object and subject. In accordance with their intention, they launched the idea of social construction of society, partly inspired by the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz (see Luckmann and Berger 1991) and partly by interpretative sociology of Max Weber (see Geertz 1993). Meaning became an important element of neoclassicists' interests, but while their theoretical attention was pointed toward social construction of reality, they paid a lot of attention to symbolic language and its use in everyday life. The cultural object is no longer something outside the human mind. No wonder the preferred methodological approaches that emerged within the neoclassical tradition were phenomenology and hermeneutics. The next stage in the history of cultural theory is called poststructuralism (Habermas, Foucault, Levi-Strauss). If neoclassicists still believed in important role of the individual in the construction of society, the poststructuralists rejected the idea of the author. They put all their efforts in demonstration how the basic principles of society and culture can be uncovered in language, communication, speech and discourse. Once again the cultural object was put beyond the reach of human individuals.

At the end of his article, Wuthnow concludes that the influence of individuals on the origin of meaning is still necessary for understanding the human society. Unfortunately his theory would not satisfy well our intellectual imagination. In any case, meaning is socially constructed, but we still think that the world outside the meaning which helps us construct it is necessary, irrespective of the fact that we might not be well aware of it. So I suggest we seriously take into consideration the possibility that cultural object exist independently from the human mind<sup>1</sup>. In this example we understand the culture object as something material which in the process of experiencing culture is able to carry socially constructed meaning. For the reasons that cannot be explained here more precisely, the cultural object will be divided into two kinds of cultural objects (the body and other objects)<sup>2</sup>. The picture of our methodological framework should be like it is depicted in the picture below (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: The relationship among actors in cultural production and reception (micro level)

It is time we used this methodological framework (see Figure 2) on our previously got data, so the next few puzzles should be solved: What is cultural object in our situa-

<sup>1</sup> Later on we remembered, how close our idea of cultural object is to the notion of the world 3 in the philosophy of Karl Popper (see for instance Popper 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Our new approach towards understanding the constructig of meaning in culture and society is rudimentary the same as it has been shown by Strauss & Quinn (1997).

tion? How should the role of the body be understood? And last but not least, what is the function of social cognitive mindscape in the origin of the cultural phenomenon of the death?

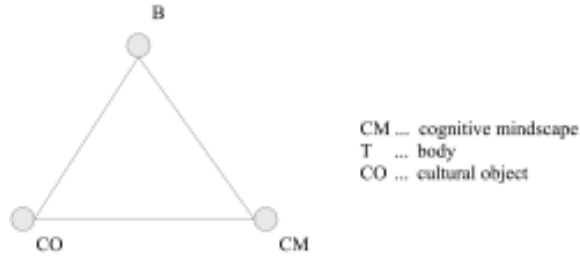


Figure 2: A methodological framework for cultural sociology

We believe the cultural phenomenon should be studied first from the point of its experience. In the matter of death, we collide into an insurmountable barrier, because death can be experienced only once, if we dare to label such phenomenon with the word ‘experience’ at all. Looking from the scientific point of view, we do not know if there is life after death. Maybe there is, maybe there is not. Hypotheses that contain whether the first or the second idea, cannot be tested scientifically. The only proper conclusion would be to eliminate such hypotheses from the area of science<sup>3</sup>. But in real life the situation is much more complicated, while the person involved in the process of death (whether dying or just looking at someone dying) usually does not have an adequate knowledge and methods to make such a scientific decision. And even more important is that people in everyday life do not have to make such a decision, while the logic of the everyday situation is characteristically different. Its presence and form are ‘taken for granted’ (see Schutz and Luckmann 1974). What individuals need is a useful knowledge on the basis of which an applicable action can be carried out. If someone finds himself in a situation to find a dead body, that person should know which rituals must be properly executed and what should be done with the dead body, unless the soul of the dead is cursed or in some other way condemned. Of course, if that particular individual believes in the supernatural world. The body can be buried, burnt or exposed in the open to be eaten by animals, etc.

In accordance with our methodological framework developed for cultural investigation, we must take into account three elements of culture (see figure 3). When someone dies, the other members of a group or a society are brought face to face with the corpse. No matter how odd this might sound, in the matter of death, the dead body is the only real cultural object. People notice very well the difference between alive and dead person. They are forced by cognitive process in their mind to generate necessary explanation. This explanation might have the form of a story or a myth in which some basic knowledge about what should be done in the matter of death, or what is the essential meaning of the death, or where the soul of a dead person goes after the death, or if there is any ‘life’ after death, should be proposed. The third element in our cultural

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with methodology presented in Popper’s book *The Logic of Science Discovery* (1992).

model is the body of the participant in the cultural phenomenon of death. It remains the key puzzle. Why?

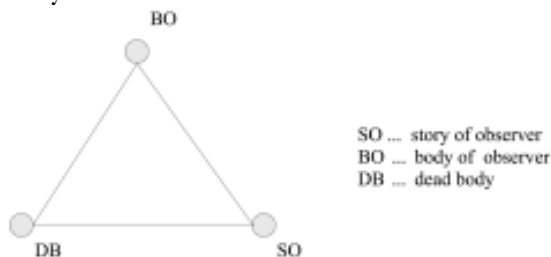


Figure 3: Micro situation in the matter of death

When we try to find the solution to this particular question, one specific element of the nature of society must be taken under scrutiny. Culture and society can not successfully endure, at least for a long time, unless the knowledge is transmitted from one generation to another. In the case of transferring rituals of death from one generation to another, the everyday experience of passing away is limited to accidental death among the population. It is not usual to subordinate a person chosen at random to execution with intention to teach youngsters what death is or what it looks like. This would be a costly decision, because the individual's life has a specific value for society. In the past, the life of the individual was precious, because the economy was mostly based on physical power of human beings. Modern society is now concerned for the individual on account of a higher self esteem. The second reason why the sacrifice of people in most cultures and societies was restrained to religious rituals, is revealed if we take into consideration the level of development of the educational system. Although only from time to time, in the history there appeared a few bright islands of systematic teaching and learning. The prevailing strategy in transferring knowledge from one generation to another was basically forced by the structure of experience. If a situation required a specific knowledge for accomplishing a task, the individual was given this knowledge directly<sup>4</sup>. Well, from those times social structure has changed a lot. And the directly transmitted knowledge is no longer the most important form of learning (see Schutz 1975).

The practical problems that accompany the socialization of individual person in the matter of death demand solutions, which can be classified into two different categories. These two categories can be drawn on the basis of our inquiry presented in the previous chapter of this essay. An elegant solution would be to change the cultural object that directly presents death, with such cultural object that represents death only symbolically. If we choose an object that really exists (see figure 4), maybe we will be able to build a nice story where the selected cultural object can find a nice place for signifying the death. If the members of a society comprehend the phenomenon of death as something mysterious, the proper cultural object signifying death should also be a mysterious object or process. For example, the story of the hen. If a hen suddenly, without any reasonable cause, crows like a cock, it means that death will come and take

<sup>4</sup> Like in such social institution as it was relation between master and apprentice.

the life of the master of the house, unless the hen is killed immediately. Where in this story is the place for mystery? The mystery rises out from the difference between what is the primary role of the cultural object (hen hatches eggs, and cackles like a hen) and what is the secondary role of the cultural object (hen crows like a cock, and thus symbolizes death). The third element is the body of the users of cultural meaning. What kind of body is desired in this cultural situation? We believe that the body should be the normal functioning body, and when we say normal functioning body we have in mind a body with clear perception. We are going to explain more precisely why in the continuation of our essay.



Figure 4: Cultural situation, when the cultural object is replaced by a real existing animal

But what would be the result if we changed our cultural object (the dead body) with fictitious cultural object, like for example Cachirú (see figure 5)? Then the situation changes, while the centre of gravity is moved from a really existing cultural object to fictitious cultural object, in this case to the story. In the foreword of our essay, we assert how the human mind always needs a concrete object for its concentration in order to assure its normal activity. The lack of a concrete object causes interesting consequences in the case of the human consciousness. When the brain cannot get enough stimuli from the outside, it produces its own world on the basis of previously stored knowledge and aspirations (Dennett 1991). Illusions and hallucinations are general symptoms in the experiments where the individual is subject to sensor reduction in laboratory tests (Zubek 1969). The division of the cultural object into two separated kinds of cultural objects (primary and secondary) is now showed as a very fruitful idea. Obviously, our mind for its acting necessarily needs an object outside the mind. If the primary cultural object is taken, the mind helps itself with leaning on the only possible solution: the mind desperately looks for the body, otherwise it cannot function right. The body is always here associated with its mind, but unfortunately it can provide only the information about its environment which is already stored in the memory or in the genes. The body is helpless without an environment, and sometimes because of its vulnerable position the body provides the ‘wrong’ data.

The lack of the sensory stimuli (cultural object) is only one mode to get the experience of illusions and hallucinations. Another way to get a mystical situation is to deliberately manipulate the function of the body with the intention of wrong perception. Through the history of the human mind, there have been a lot of examples that are good illustrations of what has been just said. Sometimes a general deficiency of nour-



Figure 5: A cultural situation when the cultural object is replaced by a fictitious animal

284 ishment helps to cause a supernatural seeing. Individuals with a special position in the society were deliberately exposed to hallucinogen substances (see Huxley 1979; Eliade 1985). The knowledge, acquired through the body, is essential for some cultures and societies. The carnal knowledge was significant for medieval culture, but later with its decline, the shift from carnal to cognitive comprehension can be traced (Mellor and Schilling 1997). The cultural object (the process of dying and the dead body) was pushed to a specific area of society (hospitals and sanatoriums). The modern body is taken care of with special treatment (systematic medical care and participation in sport). Its negligence should be disregarded. The cognitive structure of modern individuals is occupied with pictures of young bodies, while the thought of death is being oppressed deep in the human mind.

Are there any good prospects for myths and stories founded on nature at the end of the millennium? It does not look good, that is for sure. We believe that the cognitive mindspace of modern individuals does not permit it. Not that modern strategy of thinking is so much more rational in comparison to traditional (see Luckmann 1997). The main reason lies somewhere else: the environment of human race has been drastically changed in the last century. Today, the nature is as far away from human eyes as the mythological world itself. A new kind of myth has been born from the ashes of the traditional believing. The story of the modern myth is the story of miraculous recovery from illness (bioenergy). Modern myth is no longer interested in posthumous life.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY see page 269

#### BESEDA O AVTORJIH

Maja Šubic, akademska slikarka, deluje kot svobodna umetnica.

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