

The Myth of Hero, morphology and semantic of heroic archetype

Hugo Francisco Bauzá. (2007).
Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura
Económica.
Pp. 191.
ISBN 978-950-557-245-8

One of more characteristic features of modernity seems to be the passion that citizens feel for their sports. Even though in different manners, many people are today prone to consider these types of games as a mean of social upward worldwide. For part of the third world, families encourage their sons to play soccer or other discipline as a form of alleviating the poverty and improving material conditions wherein they live; in a same manner, in First World countries invest a considerable amount of money in training their athletes with emphasis on a good performance in international competition. Even if classical anthropology has devoted considerable attention in the study of myths in ancient and contemporary tribes, less attention was given to the influence of mythical archetype in modern sports.

Metaphorically, figure of Hero is imposed over the rest of mortals by divine desires; their names, feats and traversies are reminded in the light of oral tradition passed from generation to generation. Under such a context, we examine *The Myth of Hero*, a work authored initially by Professor Hugo Francisco Bauzá who studied rigorously universal categories of heroism present in ancient and modern civilizations.

Following the contributions of Lord Raglan and V. Propp, Bauzá dwells on the consecutive variables that characterize the life of heroes; beyond the boundaries of cultures all legends and mythical corpus share similar points of discussion in relation to this topic. To put this in brutally, these types of outstanding people are born from a mother who is a goddess or a virgin. Even though their birth occurred in strange circumstances it is common to denote that one or both parents belong to aristocracy or even nobility. Frequently, in their childhood heroes are kidnapped from the arms of their mothers and adopted by a humble family. Of course, many years later, they return to home by claiming their rights to the throne; like Oedipus who had been accompanied with the ignorance his own origin, heroes frequently had an uncer-

tainness home and lineage. Moved by evil possession or recurrent attacks of fury, these personages have committed a crime that should be expiated. As a means of gaining their forgiveness, heroes are exiled and obliged to come across with many obstacles, which sometimes jeopardize their life, and sometimes put them face-to-face with Gods. Regardless the culture and time, these are the typical cases observed in Prometeo, Gilgamesh, Christ, Heracles, Sigfried and Aquiles.

For instance, mythical systems have been fragmented, altered and adapted depending on environmental circumstances and quests of each civilization. From this turn of mind, not only these processes are subject to political manipulation but also legends are valorised as vehicles towards hegemony and indoctrination. Since heroes are characterized by a dark side which still remains occulted for the rest of persons, redemption of their sins should be accomplished following their own sacrifice. Once done, heroic sacrifice is created as a mirror in basis on the projection of fears, frustrations and concerns that a society daily experiences. In times of conflicts, heroes take a negative profile characterized by violence whilst in epoch of cooperation or peace they play a role related to altruism.

As the previous argument given, modern public games are often organized as a pre-requisite aimed at reinforcing the legitimacy of political regime. This is feasible due to the manipulation of biography of Heroes who allows leading tension and hopes into an emotional circle of belonging; it is important to mention that in these sites demonstration of ability, strength and capacity are covertly enrooted in the belief of certain superiority which drives toward ethnocentrism. Even though there is no consensus in scholars, it is hypothesized that officials dispose of these types of organizations to dissuade enemies of a potential attacks at the time of considering themselves in superior conditions than other outgroups.

In a similar manner, travels, expeditions and adventures are circumscribed to the appetite of domination. That way, chronicles derived from these experiences may very well exacerbate hero's skills. In general, these narrations emphasize on outstanding achievements wherein heroes descend to the rise of underworld defeating terrible demons, monsters or

creatures. Inasmuch as dangerous the adventure is more fame gains the involved warrior. Afterwards a process of apotheosis, they are considered as intermediaries among human beings and Heaven. In XVII century AC. Giambattista Vico (1964) contends that a nation should be studied following a model based on three stages. At a first phase, nations were linked to gods, secondly, that linkage was re-forwarded to the devotion of heroes and finally towards human beings. In opposition to the idea that humans are irrational, Vico argued that customs as well as social traditions are shaped by interaction of rationality with irrationality; unless otherwise resolved, both are often oriented to conciliate symbolic contradictions of the world. Unlike many scholars in medieval times who argued that myths are a product of evil temptation, for Vico mythical archetype is not other thing than the outcome derived from the human capacity of imagination. Typically, not only a myth should be deemed as the passage from a natural to cultural order but also as an imaginative feature in humanity. One of the main functions related to mythical archetype is to respond substantial questions such as origin of the world as well as the role played by humans in such process.

In an erudite review of previous literature, Bauza examines the role of heroism in modern sport. In these kind of competitions, public audience aims to seek an archetype wherein their own illusions being self-represented. It is not surprising that people accustomed to be in subordination of a working routine find in these outstanding locales a new reason to live. In other terms, imaginary of heroes valorises all those capacities beyond the possibilities of an ordinary person. Following this explanation, popular wisdom merges their idols constructing a legendary discourse based on the life in an extemporal time-line wherein justice and harmony were possible concepts. In condition of an extraordinary personality, sportsmen enter in competitiveness alternating symbolic and ritual elements of prestige and status. Finally, Bauza examines the reasons as to why this cult of heroism generates pathological behaviour such as obsessions, riots, suicides, or acts of other nature which seems to be product of modern depersonalisation, social fragmentation and emotional diseases. But this is a surface manifestation of a much more deep-sea-

ted issue that merits to be investigated in future approaches.

In brief, the present review has been intended to highlight critically the most important contributions of Professor Bauza in the study of leisure, mythical archetype and modern sporting spectacles. Most certainly, in his work (written in a polished and clear style), author explains further regarding the general features and sociological functions of classical and modern heroism in leisure

research; in other words, a book not only highly recommendable for sociologists, anthropologists, philologists and historians but also material of permanent consult for all who have of myth-poesies their object of study.

References.

- Bauzá, H. F.** (2007). *The Myth of Hero: morphology and semantics of heroic archetype*. Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Clavel-Leveque, M.** (1984). *L'Empire en Jeux. L'Espace symbolique et pratique sociale Dans le monde Romani*. Paris, CNRS.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (2003). *El Pensamiento Salvaje*. México, Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Propp, V. (1981). *Morfología del Cuento*. Madrid, Ed. Fundamentos.

Raglan, Lord. (1937). *The Hero. A Study in tradition, Myth and Drama*. Nueva York: Oxford University Press.

Vico, G. (1964). *La Ciencia nueva sobre la naturaleza común de las naciones*. Editorial Buenos Aires, Aguilar.

KORSTANJE MAXIMILIANO

Departamento de Ciencias Económicas.
Universidad de Palermo, Argentina