The Fight of Gods Myth and its Cultural Consequences

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Abstract
This article examines the myth of the fight of the gods, with particular focus on *Enuma Elish* and its reception in Greek mythology. Employing comparative mythological and philosophy-of-religion analysis, the authors argue that this myth introduces a dynamic conception of creation in which cosmic order emerges through conflict rather than primordial perfection. This transformation marks a shift from magical religion to moral theology, grounds ethical dualism within human nature, and enables the emergence of the heroic figure as mediator between the divine and the human. The study demonstrates the enduring cultural and philosophical consequences of this mythic model for Western religious and ethical thought.
Key words: fight of gods myths, heroic myths, Philosophy, mythology, philosophy of religion

Introduction

The mythycal complex of fight of gods is very old. First significant myths belonging to the drama of creation are Sumeran-Accadian myths, known under the name made of first words, sounding *Enuma Elish*(Landsberger & Wilson, 1961; Jacobsen, 1968; Dalley, 1989;ReligiaEncyklopedia – "Enuma Elisz", 2001/2002; Bromski, 1925) and Greek *Theogony* by Hesiod (Hezjod, 1999). The last ones are the myths describing the fight of As'es with Wans, described in Scandinavian myths (Słupecki, 2012: 80-95). To say the truth, the important element of those myths, the victory of gods over chaos, can be already found in Egyptian myth but there, it has no consequences for the human kind. Egyptian gods manage excellently without humans (Bator, 2012: 305). The matters are different in *EnumaElish* in which we can discern traces of Sumerian mythology (James, 1970: 205-208) and in *Theogony* of Hesiod where Middle-Eastern influences (West, 2008; Podbielski, 1978) can be found. In Babylonian and Greek myths, the harmony of cosmos is a state which is to be reached through consecutive divine interventions. It means that the source and principle of fertility of divine forces is not identical with source and harmony principle of those forces. That source and the fertility principle are brutal and immoral and the goal of cosmos is just harmony and moral order. One can perceive in this scheme civilisatory myth, similarily as to see in it the fight between reason and instincts which, thanks to Christianity, took hold in the West and which, contemporarily appears in psychoanalytical version. Mircea Eliade writes simply about demonic character of the beginning (Eliade, 1988: 52). Those two principles: chaos and harmony fight each other. Because of that, at the center of the religious life, but also of its social and political consequences, there is a theology of Holy War between gods of old and new order. To my opinion, the mythological complex proposing the cosmic order not as a model existing at the very beginning, but as a task to be accomplished, becomes also the basis for later mental turning towards future, characteristic for cultures of ancient Greece, thus becoming also the basis for later Western faith in progress. At the same time, the fact that cosmic order does not exist at the beginning of divine istory but requires being worked out becomes the basis for later myths of homo faber which sacralise human work, especially that being in some respect extraordinary one, as work of smiths for instance (Eliade, 2007). In the Accadian Enuma Elish, salty waters (feminine element) or Tiamat and sweet waters (masculine element) or Abzu are fertility principle. Next generation of gods

born of this couple: Ann, Enlil and Ea disturb the peace of the first one. A conflict emerges.

Discussion

Old gods get overpowered. From the blood of their leader, Kingu, the young gods created people who, thanks to that, posess element of evil in their own substance[1]. Only then the harmony of divine powers gets established. The comparison of this antropological conception with many other ones leads Eliade to evaluate it as pessimistic one". Already the very origin of man sentences him to doom„ – writes the Romanian scolar, adding that, the mitigation of pessimism consists in giving human nature a divine form by godEa, man's creator (Eliade, 1988: 52-53). Most certainly, the fight of gods myth is not an optimistic one as that was not concern of its creators. Assembling of divine form and demonic matter from which man was created in an extremely simple, one can say, brutal manner, explains the existence of evil in the very structure of man. It is not a random evil or one added to human being but a metaphysical, primal evil, not depending on human will. That scheme, inscribing the evil into very human nature will repeats itself in preserved Orific fragments concerning Zagreus, the son of Zeus and Persephone (Krokiewicz, 1947). Optimistical accents can be found only in popularized by Hesiod myth about succession of consecutive gods' leaders, starting from Uranos and ending with Zeus. The aim of Kronos'es deposition and of establishing the rule of Zeus was to bring moral order and spiritual harmony. In the Theogony myth by Hesiod, Titans fight with Zeus and young gods on the side of Kronos or on that of old gods, in the like manner as did it Kingu in the Babylonian myth (West, 2008: 373-411, 414-419, 421-424, 426-427, 432-433, 438-442).

It is probably an archaic remnant used by Orifics. In the Orific myth Titans kill Zagreus for which Zeus burned them up with a thunderbolt. Before it happened, they managed to dismember and eat Zagreus up. From the ashes of Titans people were formed (West, 2008: 44), and because of that they posess divine nature, originating from small parts of Zagreus eaten by Titans and, the Titanic nature, principally the anti – divine one. Those two natures – Titanic and divine ones, fight each other in every human (West, 2008, 44-45). Metaphysical dualism of two principles; divine and anti-divine, that of spirit and body, acquired in a course of time, more and more a moral character (West, 2008, 72-74), what was later continued by Christians and gnostics who gave it a much more elaborate character. Earlier, before Christianity, e can find its remnants in apocryphic versions of biblical history of creation, in the conquered by Jahwe figure of Leviathan, identified by prophets with Lucipher (Graves &Patai, 2002) and with Satan by Christians. In each of those cases it is the question of the principle of evil preceding the creation of human kind the principle which co-created human nature. People are not guilty because of commiting sin but because they were created to impersonate the principle of good, entangled in principle of evil. In gnostic myths and in cabalistic gnosis this scheme will play a decisive role. Particles of light, as human souls got imprisoned in dark matter and wait to be freed(Scholem, 1997;1996).

In this context it can be understood why, in all Greek heroic tragedies, a motive of destruction of heroes'es earthly part repeats itself in order to bring him to deification. That cannot be understood without myths describing the fight of gods. According to those myths, he human nature, such as we know it, is a result of certain events which

[1]Blood as *substancje*has a special meanning here – according to Akkadian terms, it is an inheritance conveyor. The people who rose from the blood of defeated King automatically guessed his guilt to the gods! Therefore, already at the moment of the creation, man is hereditary burdened with sin.Through bad blood they inherited the guilt of his close and distant descendants. See:„Krew",in:(Religia. Encyklopedia, 2002: 97-98).

took place before man was created by gods. Man is not alone in the sense, that his existence and nature are not indifferent to divine history. Each one of us summarises in him/herself the spiritual history of the world. He or she is a mirror in which gods look at themselves. The existential monstrosity of human being is not the result of a human whim, is inscribed into condition of man. It originates from the matter containing in itself demonic features as it contains the flesh of conquered monster. Also the heavenly form which shaped this demonic substrate is not solely a purple haze of our dreams but stems from the highest of gods. Is it possible to imagine a more synthetic and adequate description of human condition? But most probably that concept is already a Near-Orient's innovation of creational myths, belonging to myths coincidentiaoppositorum. In the *Babylonian Cosmology and Alchemy* Eliade mentions older concepts ,according to which Marduk, in order to create man, commited self-sacrifice (Eliade, 2000: 68-69), and in the *History of Beliefs and Religious Ideas* he cites fragments of *Enuma Elish* according to which, from particular parts of killed Tiamat, corresponding parts of the world arose (Eliade, 1988:51). According to Józef Bromski, the version of Marduk's selfsacrifice is corroborated by fragments of Berosud (Bromski, 1925: 89). It may be so that the story about creating humans from the blood of killed demon Kingu, the leader of conquered gods and Tiamat's husband, is already a dualistic innovation of the Hindu self-sacrifice myth which, in its clear form, reached us as a myth about self-sscrifice of Parusha (Kudelska, 2002: 91-102).We will see that the myth about gods' fight as well as that of *coincidentiaoppositorum* comprise the myth about the fall as a logical completion.

Still, something different is of importance for the symbolic analysis of culture. Orific, even Accadic version of creation drama positions metaphysical dualism inside every human. This dualism becomes in practice a moral one, constituting the awareness basis for human choices between good and evil. In the European history however, there were periods when, as a result of various factors, people wanted to get rid of complicated entanglement of good and evil in their nature and reduced this divide to a simple version, freeing them from metaphysical stress and moral uncertainty. This simplicity usually in maximal simplification according to the scheme; we are good as we represent forces of light and they are bad as they represent forces of darkness. The history of radical sects and criminal political systems has its source in this scheme. Projection of one's own psycho-spiritual inner qualities is an universal right of human nature, thus such projecting cannot be completely avoided. One can only wonder what circumstances favour the escalation of such kind of uncritical divisions into good and bad ones and which ones do not allow them to occurr. Whether, for instance, the freedom of searching out metaphors of good and evil in literature and art does hamper projecting the evil onto others? Uniformity of styles in the domain of artistic creation, introduced usually by dictators could testify it.

Both mythologies; the drama of creation and the myth about fall are constatation of world's imperfection, they answer the question: where is evil from?, the question which to this day torments the rational Europe. But not only this question alone, was the keystone of European mentality but also kind of answer given for it. Persian Zaratustranism belongs also to he creation drama, and it too, stimulates the ethical dualism. It does not break however, with the mythology of perfect creation as it situates the causes of good and evil outside of man. Good and bad spirits persusde man to follow their persuasions but man can make a souverain choice (Składankowa,1989; 1984; Curtis, 2000).

It is differently in Sumerian-Babylonian mythology. Here, the divide into good and evil does not take place outside of man. He is entangled into the fight between good and evil; this fight is carried out within his person, constituating it, downright. As mentions it Gabriel Auzou, writing: "We have already come across the idea of man being born of god's blood and this idea is an extraordinary one. Here is also hidden an

astoundingly profound thought: humanity was created from the blood of guilty god, recognised as guilty among others and in place of them, god subjected to ordeal and killed in sacrifice which was to bring peace ! Does it evidence of humanity anticipating, in some way, its destiny as it knows something about its extraordinary, divine origin, associating it however with mystery of evil, getting anxious about, impossible to be proved, Innocence and guilt about commitment of which it did not know anything while looking, both in divinity and in itself, for the cause of so difficult and dramatic situation and striving towards freedom and redemption in divine sacrifice? And what to think about body of Tiamat which, being also the earth, rose in revolt?" (Auzou G., 1990, 49).

Man is guilty not because he chose the evil but because the guilt precedes his existence, as the evil circulates in his veins and grinds his look. That situation of being entangled in cosmic guilt demands something from man, it does not allow him to dwell in spiritual passiveness. Maybe, because of that, the king in Babylon is at the same time the central penitent in the state (James, 1970: 137). Along with the appearance of gods' fight myth in the culture of Sumer, a spiritual dynamism starts, contained in myths about the beginning. That outdistances the existing mentality, recognising the monolitical perfectness of divine beginnings. In Babylonian and Greek myths, there are contained some heroic motifs as it is heroic leader of gods who brings about the final harmony of divine mights. This undermines the thesis of Paul Ricoeur that, heroic myths which are tragic, and the myths about gods' fight, i.e. myths about the drama of creation do mutually exclude themselves (James, 1970: 137). One can give telling counterexamples for the Ricoeur's thesis – Gilgamesh is tragic and tragic is Hiob. Anyway, the personage of Hiob has its Sumeric prefiguration (Kramer, 1961: 149-154; Bielicki, 1969: 256-258). Both characters belong to mythologies which according to Ricoeur exclude the tragic. It turnes out however that not always it is true.

Theoretically, Ricoeur is right. Gilgamesh who functions in the drama of creation, thus that of gods bringing order in the fight with forces of chaos should not be tragic as he knows where the evil comes from. It should be dramatic, at most. It suffices however to refer to Gilgamesh to see that the matters are different (Stiller,2004; Krakowiak, 2005: 156-158). Not negligent in creation of this tragic character, was the role of personal talent of author or authors of the Sumeric story as well as of decadent mood resulting in existential distance to myths describing the origin of evil. Gilgamesh does not know why just so, and not otherwise, the world has been arranged. He should know it because myths about beginning tell it but he trusts only his own heart which knows better?? This withdrawal of the hero to his intimate awareness becomes, as in life of Socrates, the cause of tragedy. Those are gods who shattered earthly happiness and peace of both personages. Why did they do it? Is it because they wanted to bestow them with happiness on the measure of divine, supernatural part of man? Surely so, but exactly this part is hidden from awareness. Earthly happiness of Gilgamesh, Oedipus, Heracles, Theseus, Jason gets destroyed from the will of gods, and the spiritual happiness to which they are led by them, is not known. A heroes knows at most a tiny spark of spiritual happiness awaiting him among gods. One can see in it a metaphysical dualism of spirit and matter and its existential consequences. Robert Graves, always sober, is of opinion that the myths describing fight of gods are poetical transformation of history of fights between various tribes populating Greece (Graves, 1974: 53, 57). Such explanation however is little convincing as is contradicted by occurence of the same myth in Anatolian tradition where, already at the beginning of second millenium before Christ an identical motif can be encountered – borrowed besides, from Mesopothany and creatively elaborated locally. Not only the order of appearing deities (Awalu = Chaos, Anu = Uranos, Kumarbi = Kronos and Teshub = Zeus) and their attributisation are identical with that in Hellenic myths but, additionally ,the same motifs occurr

(castration of the conquered god of heaven, swallowing of 3 deities by jealous father, wonderful expulsion from the inside of a parent, and the like)are here identical (Popko, 1976: 121-124).

Surely, to my opinion, it can be so that first impulses for creating such myths originate from concrete stories. Something different however is the impulse for appearing of a myth and something other is its spiritual message, similarly as something different is a concrete impulse for creation of great work of art and something other is this work as such. Reductionistic, in this case, historical explanation of a myth is only one of many possible explanations. Of my intereast is myth's cultural sense. From the cultural point of view, of exceptional importance is the innovation in the fight of gods myth made by Hesiod who, according to Podbielski and West, made use of Babylonian myths. The narration about fight of gods contained in *Theogony* shows a picture of classical fight between generations of gods but does not limit itself to it. Amoral Uranos is deposed by Kronos who, in turn, is conquered by Zeus. This does not end, however, the history of gods. Final harmony of gods requires a reconciliation between race of gods and race of Gigantes. Using words of Kirkegaard, a synthesis of that what is divine and that what is human has to be worked out. Such is, among others, the meaning of mission of Heracles in his story about revolt of Gigantes written down ,to say the truth, only by Apollodoros but being of much earlier origin (Graves, 1974: 133-135). The description of fights of particular Olympic gods with Gigantes (Graves, 1974: 134)contains much larger load of psychological content than conquering old gods by new ones, grouped under guidance of Marduk. When we compare the Greek myth with its Babylonian counter part it turnes out that, the true innovation of the Greek myth consists in central role of Heracles. Prophecy of Hera predicated that no god but only man in lion's skin will manage to conquer the Gigants (Graves, 1974: 131). We can suppose that here is the question of fight between spiritual powers and their psycho-physical counterparts as often seen in Indian mythology. To my opinion, the sense of this fight consists in consolidating the spiritual power in human soul: is man reigned by divine powers unified in spiritual humanity or is he under reign of their psycho-physical counterparts the human psychophysical organism is made of. By introducing Heracles and granting him a decisive role, the Greek mythology suggests it much stronger than mythology of India though, in Ramajana, we can come across the homolog of Heracles in the personage of Rama and the counterpart of gods' fight as one between gods and asurs(Narayan, 1984).

From the victory of spiritual elements, i.e. the Olympian gods over psycho-physical ones, i.e. Gigantes, depends the happiness of man, speaking with the language of myth, the happiness of whole world. Because of that Heracles is awaited as a Soter-redemptor. Unprecedented innovation of Greek mythology as regards Near-Eastern myths of gods' war consists in that some voluntary reconciliation of all divine and human powers is necessary and, that this reconciliation can be brought about only by heroes or an assemblage of god and man. Heracles is the son of Zeus and earthly woman, that is why he can perform the act to performance of which the gods alone, headed by Zeus, are not able. Zeus can inspire the rise of a whole-world harmony but, without half-god and half-man, he is notable to realise it. Individual sense of heroic myth consisting in accomodating divine and human spheres in ones own life is presented in this myth as something of universal dimension. Heracles is thus a model, one of a kind heros – he saves not only himself but the whole world, similarly to Jesus or Krishna. To bring harmony between divine and human spheres requires previous overcoming of evil existing on earth. It is demonstrable in the life of each of those three characters.

It turnes out that the myths about the creation drama, also called myths about gods' fight do not make heroic tragedy impossible at all; to the contrary, they make it just possible. Ricouer is right insofar as in cultures in which heroic myths occurr, the

myths about fight of gods get overshadowed by them. The myths about fight of gods make also possible the the mythology of the fall in frame of which the mythology of Hiob functions. The mythology of fight of gods and the mythology of fall created together foundations of culture of antiquity and culture of later Europe as they outdistanced ancient mentality of Mediteranean sea basin in respect to archaic mythologies of powers and to Egyptian mythology of ideal divine world order, making heroic myths possible. Mieletinski is of opinion that, in *Enuma Elish*.

Which is the basis of New Years celebrations of Akitu there is a heroic motif in the form of Marduk's fight with Tiamat and her army (Mieletinski, 2009: 370). As we know it from preserved inscriptions and other Mesopotamian works, many other such prototypes of heroic personages exist. One of them can be god Nergal, described as Erra in the Erra epos (Joannes, 2007: 134-137). The position of Marduk is exceptional as regards the cult he won over. During celebrations of Akitu inscenisations of Marduk's fight with Tiamat took, place, of young gods with old ones. This religious theatre contained the figure of main hero. It was just Marduk, the head of young gods who was seen as a beginning of royal dynasty and a prototype of reigning monarch. It was with him, who conquered the powers of evil and brought blessing for the whole country, whom the king identified himself with. Some texts show simply the king as God's representative on Earth and that the real king is God himself (Drewnowska-Rymarz et al., 2005: 67).– Those ritual inscenisations, along with the whole religio-political context created an impuls for seeing in Marduk a hero, similar to Marduk; thus when king had some real or alleged achievements, they were described in mythical cathegories(Joannes, 2007: 11, 15). Significant is also the fact of king being worshiped only after death, only then sacrifices should be made to him (Zieliński, 1991: 222). In his lifetime he was someone between god and man (Ranoszek, 1986: 17, 294, 300). This ambiguous status of the king as a intermediary between gods and people thanks to what the figure of heros was born can be reflected in royal negative confession, connected with the festival of Akitu. At one moment of the Akitu feast the highest priest deposes the king, akes from him his royal insignia away, slaps in the face and a negative confession takes place.

"I did not sin, o Lord of the country
I was not slow in worshiping your godship;
I did not destroy Babylon,I did not bring it to its fall;
I did not neglect Esagila temple; I did not forget about its ritual;
I did not let down a hail of hits onto cheeks of my subjects;
I did not humiliate them; I cared for Babylon,
I did not allow its walls be ruined;"(James, 1970: 137)

After granting the king, in Marduk's name, forgiveness for sins and giving god's blessing, the priest spoke:

"Do not be afraid...
God Bel (listened to)your prayer;
He will make your reign great;
He will put your royal reign above all else;
On day of essesu (new moon)...he will have feast;
At the Gate opening feast he will purify your hands;
God Bel whose town is Babylon, whose temple is Esagila;
Whose subjects are people from Babylon, God Bel will bless you...forever
Will destroy your enemies" (James, 1970: 137)

On the one hand, the king is a representative of gods, on the other, he differs from them by the dependence and human sinful nature. As a matter of fact, the two first Sumerian heroses the knowledge of whom reached us, were kings. This situation is connected with the dependence of Babylonian kings on priestly councils. Investigating mutual relationships between Mesopotamian kings and priests throughout the whole three – thousand year history, and in all countries, is not an easy

task. Some scolars are of opinion that, the power of Babylonian kings was less strong than that of Assyrian ones as they were dependent on big towns and cult centers functioning in them(Joannes, 2007: 109).
In Asyria, king was the highiest priest (Joannes, 2007: 58), what could assure him the fullness of religious and secular power. On the other hand however, the kings were dependant on oracles which were totally in hands of priests (Joannes, 2007: 59). The power of priests can be witnessed by the fact that not always it was the eldest son who assumed the throne after late father. God could, through his priests, point to the heir to the throne (Joannes, 2007: 71) The concept of total power of kings is contradicted by the cited fragment of Akitu ritual describing king's deposition. Another important proof that, in the culture of „(Land) Between Rivers", king was not regarded as god are royal prayers containing phrases which show differences between king and god the king is praying to (Joannes, 2007: 133-134). Marduk, my lord. Look graciously at my deeds, that by your noble command the work, creation of my hands, lasts forever" (Łyczkowska, 1983:5)

> "To Marduk, my lord, I pray and rise my hand. (O) Marduk, wisest
> among gods, mighty prince. You created me and entrusted reign
> over all. people./.../. So as I love your, arousing fear, divinity
> and always await your majesty,
> so you be gracious to my hand rising,
> my prayer" (Łyczkowska, 1983:5).
> "Shamash, my god great
> When to Ebarra, your shiny temple, you enter with joy,
> look trustfully at the noble work of my hands;
> (let) your grace for me
> be put into your mouth..." (Łyczkowska, 1983:6)

Similar applications to gods occurr in many royal prayers (Łyczkowska, 1983:4-10). They prove the essential difference in the image of Egyptian and Babylonian rulers. In Egypt, Faraon is God, in Near-Eastern culture a ruler seeks favor of gods Egyptian understanding of the highest ruler is more magic than that in the culture of the „Land Between Rivers" (Owusu, 2002: 157-175). In the hymn to Shamash there are no magical elements. (Stępniowska, 1984: 3-8). „Gods are clean" is pronounced in many religious texts in Mesopotamia (Drewnowska-Rymarz et al. 2005:47, 82, 92-93, 108). Ritual confession of the king tells that he had to be moral to deserve the grace of Gods (Sołtysiak, 2002: 53-54). AlsoNabonid's Prayer to Sin witnesses moral cathegories in thinking of the Babylonian ruler.

> "Sin, my lord, king of heaven and earth,
> of gods and gods...
> living in great heavens,
> when you happily enter this temple,
> let blessings be in your mouth
> to Esangil, Ezid, Egisirgal, your great divinity.
> let fear of your great divinity penetrate hearts of your people
> that they do not sin against your divinity./.../
> (to) Belshurasur, the firstborn son,
> offspring of my heart,
> put the fear of your great divinity to (his) heart.
> Let him not lean toward sins,
> let him enjoy life to the fullest" (Łyczkowska, 1983: 100)

This fully moral approach to the contact with god and not a magic perception of human life distinguishes fundamentally the personage of Babylonian king from that of Egyptian pharaoh. Pharaoh, as god impersonated can not be anything more than he is,

but the Babylonian king, by all means, can. He may or may not obtain grace from god. It will be always his individual result of his individual piety or of his personal sins not of, prepared for every occasion,magic formulas as in case of Egyptian ruler. Pharaoh was for Egyptians a god-king, the earthly reflection of Creator of World and his role in relation to humanity consisted in that he was, at the same time, the only holder of *maat* or of the universal World Order which limited his power however; as the ruler could not act differently than so as it resulted from that Order. By transgressing the *maat* the king invalidated his divinity and legitimity and that could not be remedied by any magical formula. Not wanting to equate kings with mere mortals, kings were recognised as gods only after their death. Heroisation of late kings is attested by Herodot. Zieliński thinks they were usually kings, founders of city-states, thus benefactors of given community, what constituted sufficient proof for being endowed by gods with extraordinary power (Zieliński, 1991: 85).All later Greek, biblical characters and their Christian counterparts as figures of saints fit totally into this pattern. All or almost all founders of Christian monastic congregations have been canonized.

Conclusion

The fight of gods myth, written in *Enuma Elish*, distances Near Eastern mentality from archaic myths of perfect beginning and shifts theology of Holy War to the center of religious life. Independently of any manipulations, there comes to transformation from religion of magic to that of moral purity. New space is created for the personage of hero who brings about reconciliation of the human with the divine.

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