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## Archetypical features of meditative parable narration

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**Abstract.** The article analyses the main archetypical peculiarities of a traditional parable as well as their modifications and realization in meditative parables by Anthony de Mello. Any parabolic narration, meditative one including, is based on a simile of a symbolic meaning. That meaning is revealed not in a direct but allegorically-figurative plane and in reader's cognition these two planes are juxtaposed. Parables, including meditative ones, are arranged around some definite idea or conviction important on both spiritual and secular levels. The events in a meditative parable are marked neither chronologically nor territorially. Contrary to the rhetoric of a traditional parable, that is imperative and instructive, the rhetoric of a meditative parable can be of an entertainment orientation. Compositionally a meditative parable consists of two parts: first – allegorical narration with the hidden symbolic meaning, second – idea revealing the meaning of that narration. However, some meditative parables are characterized by a shortened construction expressing some universal idea, absence of conclusions and definite answers to the questions. In sum, a meditative parable as well as any other parable provides two levels of interpretation – an event level and a philosophical one, or outer and inner (hidden).

**Keywords:** meditative parables, archetypical features, parabolic narration, rhetoric of a parable

The phenomenon of a parable and its modifications has been of interest to the researchers for many centuries. In a simple and understandable way parables trigger a person to think about the essence of life and primordial values. Being a genre, which history of development extends back over centuries if not millennia, there are researches dedicated to the study of a parable as a genre (T.V. Danylova, M.A. Sobutsky, O.O. Tovstenko), peculiarities of its development in different literatures (Yu.I. Klymyuk, A.H. Krasnov), in the works of different authors (V.I. Habdullyna, H.O. Polyakova, O.V. Tupakhina), the notion of parabolic character of literature in XXI century (A.S. Blyznyuk, Yu.V. Veremchuk, O.I. Kolodiy), the study of the parables of Christ (Ch.H. Dodd, M.A. Getty-Sullivan, A.J. Hultgren) etc. However, as is seen from the references, the investigations of a parable are carried out primarily within the framework of literature, while the linguistic aspect is represented rather scantily. Thus, the linguists analyze structural, semantic and ideologically-conceptual peculiarities of a parable based on the American literature (M.Ye. Ilyina, S.D. Shcherbyna), stylistically-compositional aspects of a German parable (L.S. Pikhovnikova), interpretation of parables through concepts (A. Wierzbicka), to mention only some.

The aim of this article is to trace the main parabolic features and their modifications and realization in meditative parables by Anthony de Mello, a Jesuit priest and psychotarapist from India.

A parable is a short tale that illustrates universal truth, one of the simplest of narratives. It asks, sketches a setting, describes an action and shows the results. It often involves a character facing a moral dilemma, or making a questionable decision and then suffering the consequences. Though the meaning of a parable is often not explicitly stated, the meaning is not usually intended to be hidden or secret but, on the contrary, quite straightforward and obvious [16, p. 1846].

A modern parable does not resemble edifications or directives any more, highlighting, however, a scope of moral and philosophical problems that needs a corresponding decision. "The parable of XX century is not a directive any more; it resembles some general philosophical reflections in which a reader participates as a co-author" [1, p. 140].

Despite the many-sidedness of the researches of a parable as a specific category all researchers claim unanimously that the works which can be defined as parables

share some dominant peculiarities of this genre. Thus, any parabolic narration, meditative one including, is based on a simile of a symbolic meaning in which something is said to be "like" something else. However, unlike a simile, a parable's parallel meaning is unspoken and implicit, though not ordinarily secret. That meaning is revealed not in a direct but allegorically-figurative plane and in reader's cognition these two planes are juxtaposed [1, p. 374].

Disclosing the illusiveness of our life, i.e. that *most people are asleep. They're born asleep, they live asleep, they marry in their sleep, they breed children in their sleep, they die in their sleep without ever waking up* [13, p. 5] the author provides the example where the father wakes his son up to school. He does not want to do it because the school is boring, children irritate him and he hates school. However, the father, in return, also points out three important arguments why he has to go there: firstly, it is his duty; secondly, he is 45 years old and thirdly, he is the principal of that school ...

Parables are devoid of descriptiveness. Neither character nor appearance features of parable characters are mentioned in the works in question. Although various things, natural phenomena or elements of flora/fauna may be used to depict the characters of a parable, only a person and his/her moral choice is emphasized [4, p. 474]. The above-mentioned aspect is well illustrated in the parable about an eagle. *"All his life the eagle did what the barnyard chicks did, thinking he was a barnyard chicken: scratching the earth, clucking, cackling ... And he would thrash his wings and fly a few feet into the air. Years passed and the eagle grew old. One day he saw a magnificent bird above him in the cloudless sky. "Who's that?" he asked. "That's the eagle, the king of the birds," said his neighbor. "He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth – we're chicken". So the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that's what he thought he was"* [13, p. 3].

Functional orientation of a parable as a literature formation presupposes the highlighting of some statement, rule, idea, motto that seems important on both spiritual and secular levels. Analyzing a parable a person should elaborate one important message [11, p. 13].

Parables of Anthony de Mello are arranged around an indisputable, in his opinion, statement that a person's life is defective and wrong, we don't understand our life mission, violating main moral and spiritual values. As a result, the author pursues one sole objective – waken (help

to get enlightenment) a person up from the dream of unconsciousness to a conscious, happy and fully-fledged life. We don't feel the necessary happiness due to the constant aspiration to achieve what other people have, whereas happiness is quite close because that is what we have right now. *Right here and right now you are happy and you do not know it because your false beliefs and your distorted perceptions have got you caught up in fears, anxieties, attachments, conflicts, guilt and a host of games that you are programmed to play* [15, p. 7].

The author's aim of stimulating a person to some philosophical considerations and self-analysis is projected onto the thematic stratification of the parables in question which, in its turn, is defined by life and spheres of interests of a person covering the aspects of spiritual, professional, secular, family planes. So the thematic orientation of the parables is determined by the author himself by the subdivision of parables into the following lexico-semantic groups: "Prayer", "Awareness", "Religion", "Grace", "The Saints", "The Self", "Love", "Truth", "Education", "Authority", "Spirituality", "Human Nature", "Relationship", "Service", "Enlightenment". The above-mentioned subdivision is presented in the collections *"The Prayer of the Frog: Volume I"* and *"The Prayer of the Frog: Volume II"*. In other collections the author does not classify the parables into groups, however, the texts correspond to the above-mentioned classification and as is seen from the division cover various spheres of life, concentrating attention on its both positive and negative aspects.

The events in a meditative parable are marked neither chronologically nor territorially. The parable tells about reality in a generally-transformed plane elaborating the problems of a philosophically-secular character, i.e. its important peculiarities are universal sounding, oversocial and overtime character [2, p. 3]. Universality of a parable presupposes that its problematics will be topical for a reader despite the social period he/she lives in as "the tense of a parable is overhistoric and universal" [8, p. 17]. Fragmentary reference or concrete definition of a socially-historic period via pointing out the corresponding historic names or dates is used by the author to highlight his ideological conception of the world structure and universalization of the truth. "Compassion upon characters of a historic epoch leads to the remorse and purification of a recipient that is, actually, the main intended purpose of any parable" [7, p. 16].

The parable *"Stand Up and Be Counted"* tells about M. Khrushchev delivering his speech aimed at down-grading the cult of Stalin. One of the listeners asked where he was when millions of innocent people perished. Khrushchev, in its turn, asked a person to stand up, no one actually did it. *Then Khrushchev said, "Well, whoever you are, you have your answer now. I was in exactly the same position then as you are now"* [14, p. 87].

Reference to some definite period is used by the author as an additional stress that despite historic epoch, political situation or regime, real values and priorities remain unchanged. On the contrary, the mankind always creates conventions and rules which seem to be life-determinative.

Parable, legend and anecdote are three primordial in a typological relation oral genres which define genre-creating traditions, each of them with its specific contents

– communicative strategy [5, 64]. Other researchers analyze parable in some larger perspective treating it not just as a historic genre but associating it with "mind in general" [12, p. 44].

Interesting in this reference is the work by M. Turner which combines the achievements of cognitive science, linguistics, neuroscience, psychology and philosophy that changes altogether the status of a parable as a literary phenomenon created by people, transferring it into the sphere of inherent ways of reality comprehension. M. Turner argues that the literary mind – the mind of stories and parables – is not peripheral but basic to thought. Story is the central principle of our experience and knowledge. Parable – the projection of story to give meaning to new encounters – is the indispensable tool of everyday reason. We use parable to understand space and time, to grasp what it means to be located in space and time, and to conceive of ourselves, other selves, other lives, and other viewpoints. Turner argues that story, projection, and parable precede grammar, that language follows from these mental capacities as a consequence. Language, he concludes, is the child of the literary mind, i.e. language is not the source of parable but instead its complex product [17, p. 67].

To understand the meaning of a parable some cognitive activity of a reader/listener is required directed towards the interpretation of the parable contents. That is, the text of a parable presupposes the act of a common author's/reader's cogitation and compassion. "The author does not make the reader accept his ideas, on the contrary, he tries in all the possible ways to stimulate the reader to come to his/her own conclusions and problem solving" [6, p. 172].

Rhetoric of a traditional parable is the rhetoric of imperative, instructive, monolog statement [9, p. 9] which presupposes the proper interpretation of a parable as a traditional parable is directed primarily onto instruction and moralization. V.N. Habdullyna is, for example, of the opinion that didactic intention and address monolog belong to the basic, compulsory parameters of a parabolic (communicative) strategy [3, p. 24-25].

The sole imperative-instructive rhetoric of meditative parables contradicts Anthony de Mello himself. In the preface to the collections *"The Song of the Bird"*, *"The Prayer of the Frog"*, *"One Minute Wisdom"* and *"One Minute Nonsense"* the author states that his parables may be read also for entertainment, as usual stories about some funny incidents from life.

Compositionally a meditative parable consists of two parts: first – allegorical narration with the hidden symbolic meaning, second – idea revealing the meaning of that narration. However, in some other parables of the author, that additionally proves that a meditative parable belongs to the formations of this genre, one more parabolic strategy is actualized when the idea of a parable is verbalized not via comparison or analogy, but "it is hinted upon from the context and the reader is supposed to grasp it himself" [10, p. 25].

Thus, in one of the parables (*"The Slave Girl"*) we read about the Muslim king who fell in love with a slave girl, proposed to her and offered to make her his favourite wife. But suddenly the girl fell ill. No medicine could help her. One day after the conversation with the girl, the doctor informed the king that the disease could be cured. She was in love with one of the servants and if the king

allowed her to marry him she would immediately get better. *Poor king! He wanted the girl too much to let her go. He loved her too much to let her die* [14, p. 158].

The narration is over but that is the reader who is supposed to write the conclusion. This strategy is typical of numerous meditative parables that is, actually, one of key parabolic features as "a shortened construction expressing some universal idea, absence of conclusions and definite answers to the questions belongs to the parabolic archetype" [7, p. 12].

Examples of parabolic structure are also revealed in the connection between the title of a parable and its final part which actualizes that title.

"Arrival"

"One doesn't. This is a journey without distance. Stop travelling and you arrive" [14, p. 50].

"Realization"

"What did Enlightenment bring you?"

"Joy".

"And what is Joy?"

"The realization that when everything is lost you have only lost a toy" [14, p. 110].

So, a meditative parable as well as any other parable provides two levels of interpretation – an event level and a philosophical one, or outer and inner (hidden). Having analyzed the first level, a reader can reveal another one, interpret the author's intention and find the answers to important life questions.

Having analyzed the archetypal peculiarities of a traditional parable we come to conclusion that a meditative parable as a genre variety of parable formations possesses the features which enable us to state that the texts in question are parables with the following study of the syntactic, stylistic, pragmatic levels, that correspond for the definition of "meditative" and create the sounding typical of a meditative parable.

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**Бублик Т.Е. Архетипические особенности повествования медитативной притчи**

**Аннотация.** В статье анализируются основные архетипические особенности традиционной притчи, а также их модификации и реализацию в медитативных притчах Энтони де Мелло. Любое параболическое повествование, и медитативное в том числе, основано на сравнении символического смысла. Это значение раскрывается не в прямой, а в иносказательно-образной форме, и в познании читателя эти две плоскости сопоставляются. Притчи, в том числе и медитативные, построены вокруг какой-то определенной идеи или убеждения, важной на духовных и светских уровнях. События в медитативной притчи не обозначены ни хронологически, ни территориально. Вопреки риторике традиционной притчи, императивной и поучительной, риторика медитативной притчи может быть направлена на развлечение. Композиционно медитативная притча состоит из двух частей: первая – аллегорическое повествование со скрытым символическим значением, вторая – идея, раскрывающая смысл этого повествования. Тем не менее, некоторые медитативные притчи характеризуются укороченной конструкцией, выражающей некую универсальную идею, отсутствие выводов и конкретных ответов на вопросы. В целом, медитативная притча, а также любая другая притча предусматривает два уровня интерпретации – на уровень событий и философской идеи, или внешний и внутренний (скрытый).

**Ключевые слова:** *медитативная притча, архетипические черты, параболическое повествование, риторика притчи*