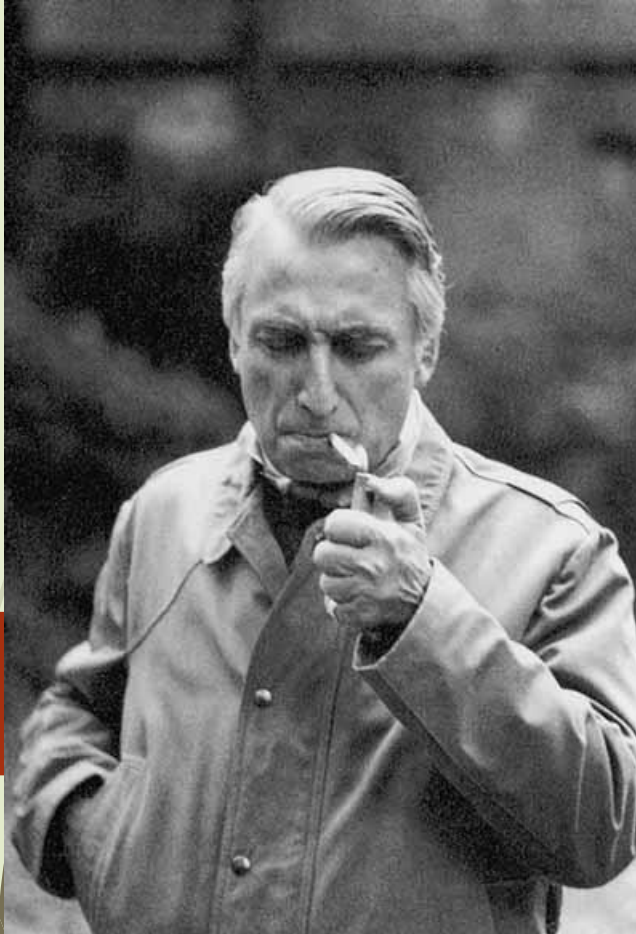


Roland Barthes (1915-1980)



myth is a system of communication;

myth is a message;

myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no 'substantial' ones. Everything, then, can be a myth;

myth hides nothing: its function is to distort or to deform;

myth has an imperative, it is **I** whom it has come to seek;

myth is turned towards me, **I** am subjected to its intentional force;

the very principle of myth: it naturalizes the concept and transforms history into nature.

CAUTION

AN ARCHETYPE!



A concept as an image



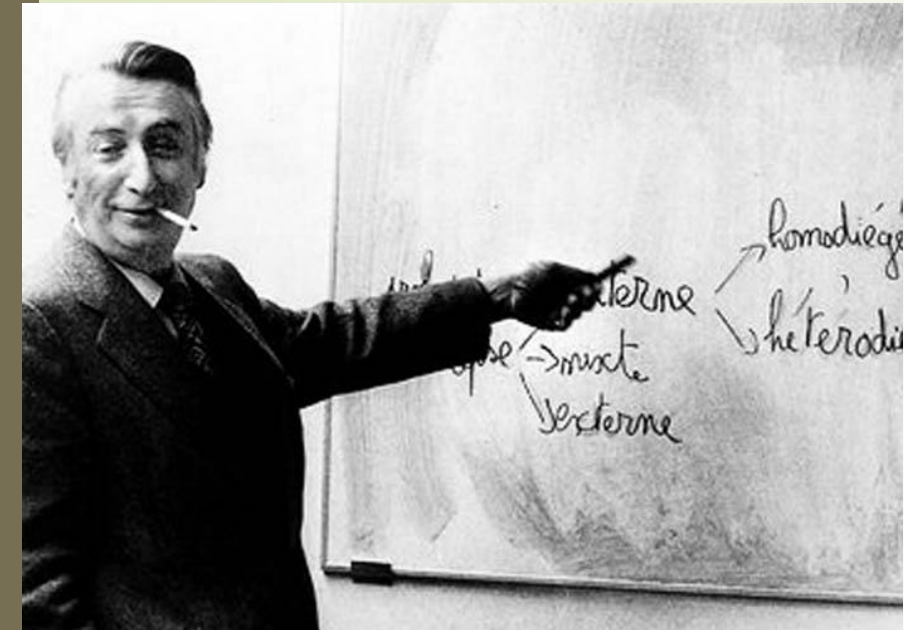
pt as an image



A concept as an image



Three different types of reading by focusing on the one, or the other, or both at the same time



1. If I focus on an empty signifier, I let the concept fill the form of the myth without ambiguity, and I find myself before a simple system, where the signification becomes literal again: the Negro who salutes is an example of French imperialism, he is a symbol for it. This type of focusing is, for instance, that of the producer of myths, of the journalist who starts with a concept and seeks a form for it;

2. If I focus on a full signifier, in which I clearly distinguish the meaning and the form, and consequently the distortion which the one imposes on the other, I undo the signification of the myth, and I receive the latter as an imposture: the saluting Negro becomes the alibi of French imperialism. This type of focusing is that of the mythologist: he deciphers the myth, he understands a distortion;

3. Finally, if I focus on the mythical signifier as on an inextricable whole made of meaning and form, I receive an ambiguous signification: I respond to the constituting mechanism of myth, to its own dynamics, I become a reader of myths. The first two types of focusing are static, analytical; they destroy the myth, either by making its intention obvious, or by unmasking it: the former is cynical, the latter demystifying. The third type of focusing is dynamic, it consumes the myth according to the very ends.



The Battle of Hastings October 14, 1066: the death of the last Anglo-Saxon kingdom and the birth of the French literature





Battle at Roncesvalles August 15 778:

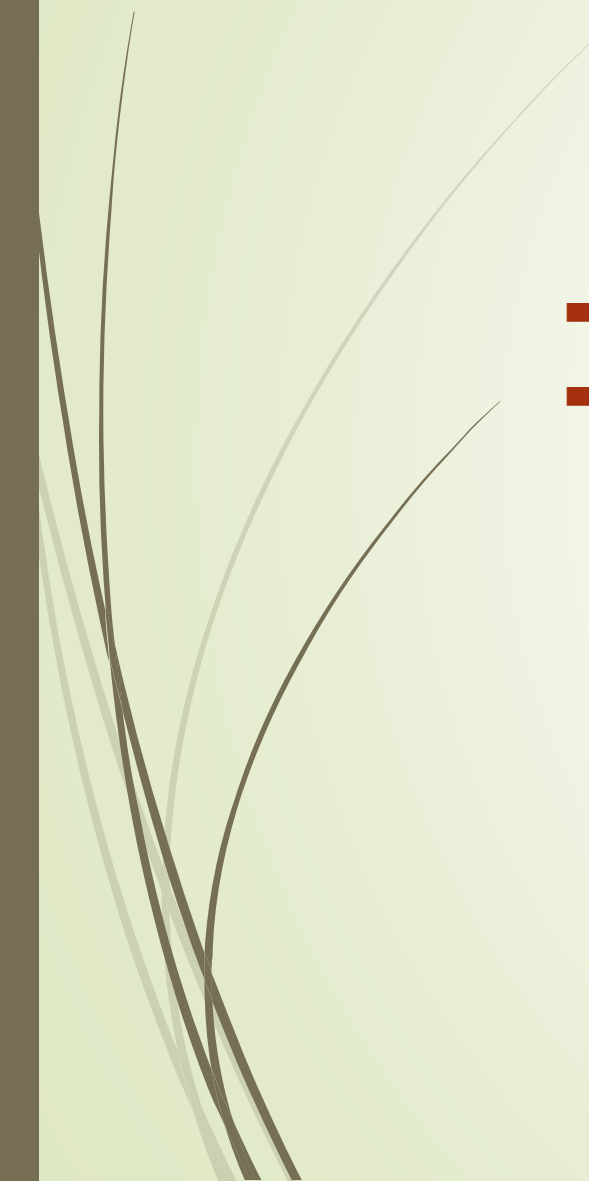
We remember what we want or what we think that we remember

- ▶ The French poetic version: after victorious campaign against the Muslims in Spain the French army's rearguard has been treacherously attacked by the Saracens;
- ▶ The Basques' (Vascones) version: Roland was an ordinary looter who on the way back from an unsuccessful military campaign had robbed the peaceful peasants who were living in a harmony with the mountains;
- ▶ Is really history written by the winners?
- ▶ Human memory does not remember the particularities or details transforming thus a historical character into an archetype.

The Time is a Great Simplifier



The imperialists' myths

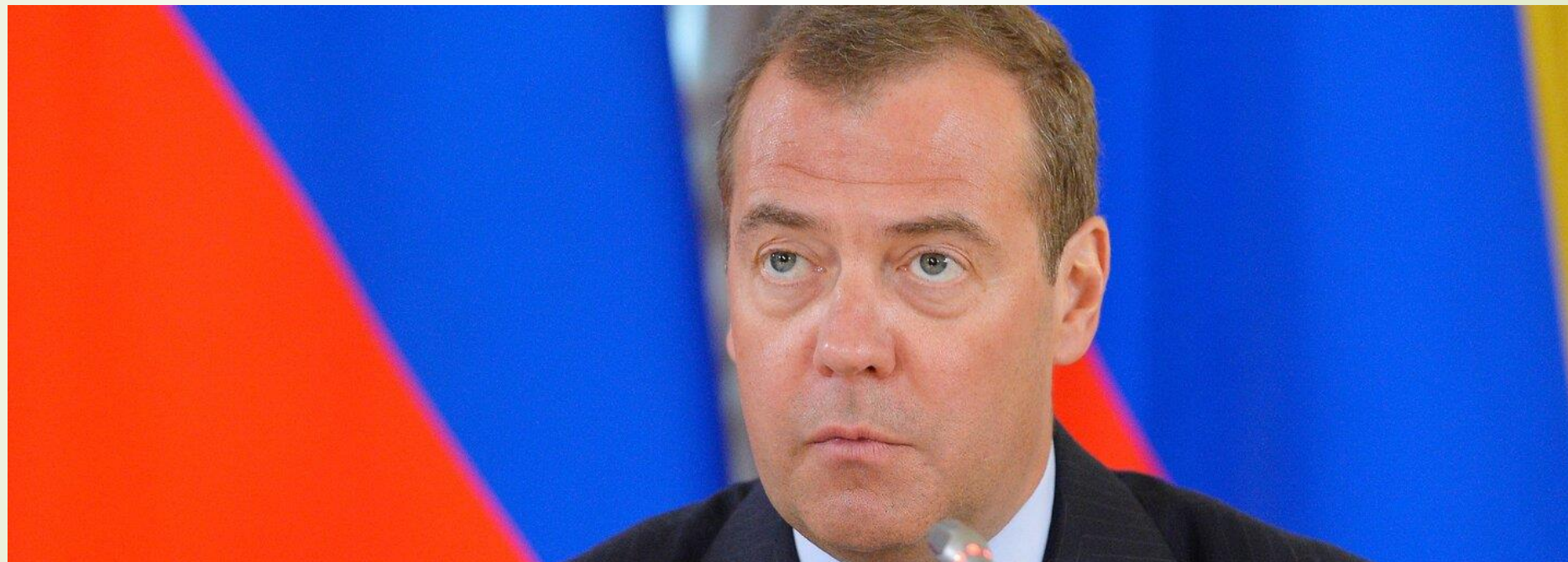
- ▶ The Great Call/Sacred Mission/White Man's Burden;
 - ▶ pretends to be all-inclusive, universal for the whole humanity
- 

The Chosen People

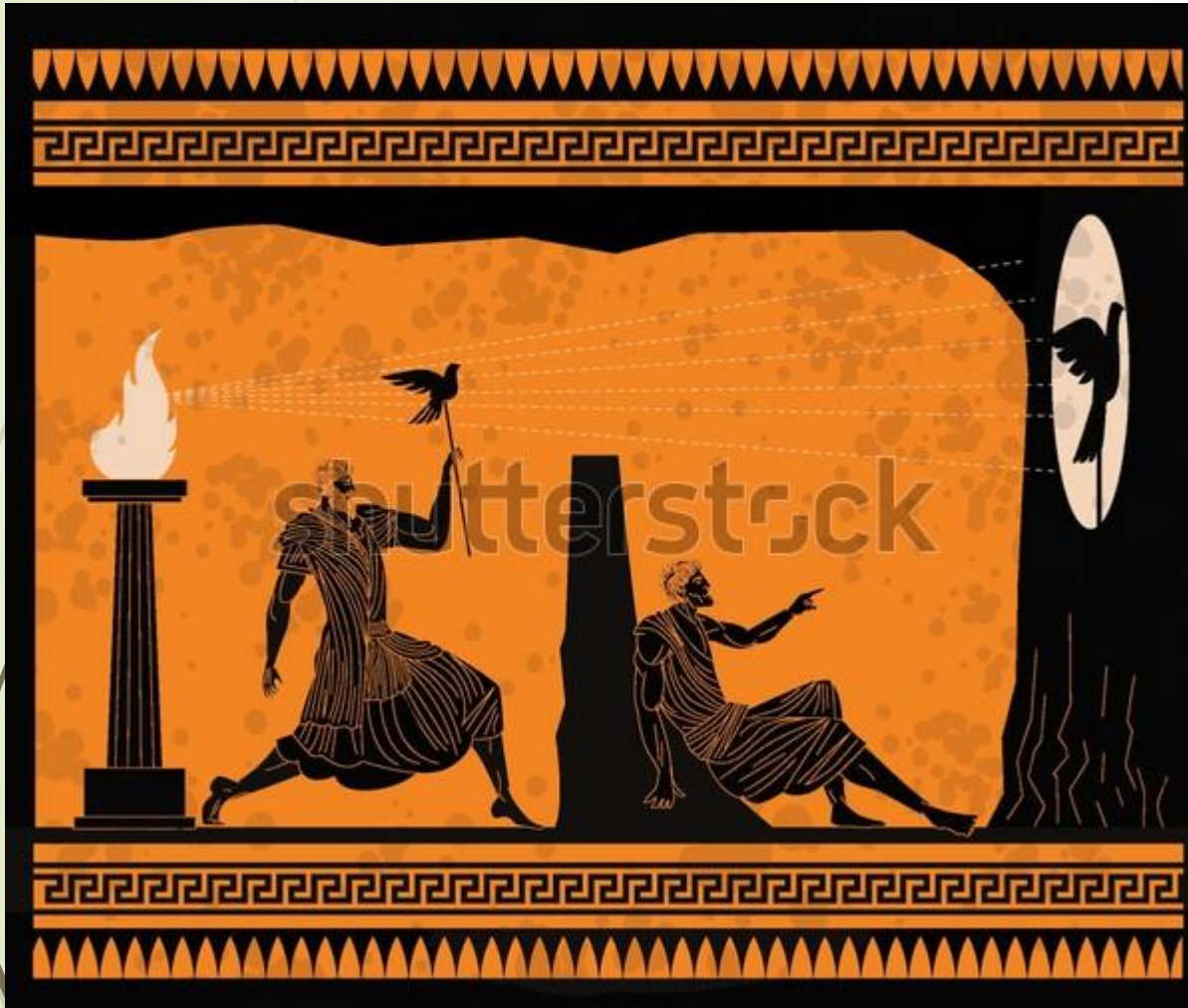


And in course of time I believe that we -- not we, of course, but our children to come -- will all without exception understand that to be a true Russian does indeed mean to aspire finally to reconcile the contradictions of Europe, to find resolution of European yearning in our pan-human and all-uniting Russian soul, to include within our soul by brotherly love all our brethren. At last it may be that Russia pronounces the final Word of the great general harmony, of the final brotherly communion of all nations in accordance with the law of the gospel of Christ!

The task of the fatherland is to "stop the supreme ruler of Hell, whatever name he uses - Satan, Lucifer or Iblis"



Not to be a myth-consumer



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but a myth-destroyer



- ▶ I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is toward individuals. *Jonathan Swift*