

Myth, Modernity, and Moral Authority: The Reconfiguration of Sacred Narratives in Post-Secular Societies

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Abstract

In today's world, myths have become a key source of moral meaning and social unity. This idea challenges the belief that modernization leads to a decline in sacred stories. This paper examines how myths, once seen as leftovers from pre-modern thinking, are now being reinterpreted, secularized, and brought back into public discussions to support moral authority in diverse societies. Drawing from philosophy, sociology, and comparative religion, the study examines how myths and modern life interact to shape ethics, identity, and political ideas. By analysing examples from popular culture, civic rituals, and digital media, the paper demonstrates that myths still exist in post-secular contexts. This does not mean a return to traditional religion. Instead, it illustrates how the sacred assumes new symbolic, cultural, and communicative forms. Ultimately, this study claims that myths remain key moral tools that connect higher values with modern rational thought in conversations about shared values.

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1. Introduction

A. Background: The Presumed Conflict Between Modernity and Myth

For much of the twentieth century, people saw a basic conflict between modernity and myth. Modernity, which focuses on science, government, and market logic, seemed to promise to replace older, mythic ways of understanding with objective rules, evidence, and practical reasoning. This view presents myth as pre-rational stories that give worldviews, rituals, and moral certainties for traditional communities. In contrast, modernity emphasizes methods, critique, and universal norms. However, the conflict is not absolute or one-sided. Many social theorists have shown that modernity depends on narrative structures, symbolic vocabularies, and moral scripts — what could also be called myths — that support progress, citizenship, and scientific authority. Therefore, the assumed conflict serves more as shorthand for analysis than a complete description. It points out tensions between different sources of authority but also hides continuities, disguises the mythic elements in secular institutions, and underestimates the lasting influence of narratives that remain even as their content and roles change. Understanding this context allows us to move beyond a simple binary view and explore how myth and modernity interact, overlap, and reshape each other in real social settings.

B. The “Myth of the Death of Myth” — Enlightenment Rationalism and Secularization

The phrase “the death of myth” reflects a common belief from the Enlightenment. Many people thought that increased knowledge, control through technology, and critical thinking would replace supernatural explanations and set aside traditional sacred stories. This idea, expressed by philosophers and social scientists, suggested a clear shift from superstition to reason, from ritual to regulation, and from inherited beliefs to reasoned arguments. However, calling this idea a “myth” reveals an important contradiction. The belief that myth would disappear often behaved like a story with deeper meaning, carrying moral messages and hopes for progress and self-improvement. Furthermore, studies of religious practices, political language, and cultural life show that sacred narratives rarely fade away. Instead, they take on new forms, shift into secular language, or return in different ways as civil religion, national origin stories, ideological symbols, or consumer fantasies. In summary, the Enlightenment promise of total

disenchantment was both a strong ideological narrative and an incomplete understanding. Secularization changes how sacred communication occurs, but it does not ensure the end of mythic meaning.

C. The Post-Secular Turns in Contemporary Societies

The idea of a post-secular turn shows a growing awareness in various fields and public discussions. This awareness highlights how religion, spirituality, and sacred stories are coming back in ways that challenge earlier views on secularization. The post-secular does not just indicate a return to older religious beliefs. It describes a diverse environment where religious and secular individuals coexist, compete, and reshape discussions about morality. Factors like global migration, the influence of media, and an increase in identity claims have made religious voices more visible and politically important. At the same time, new spiritual practices, mixed rituals, and online storytelling have changed how sacred ideas are shared. The post-secular shows that the separation between private and public, which many secular theories assumed, no longer holds. Religious language now appears in courts, parliaments, and social movements. Secular organizations are using sacred terms, such as sacred human rights and sacred national histories. Regular people are also creating new myths to help navigate life in the context of globalization and climate change. This shift encourages us to examine the complex ways moral authority is claimed, understood, and challenged in both religious and secular settings.

D. Research Problem: How Are Sacred Narratives Being Reconfigured in Modern Contexts?

This paper's main research question explores how sacred narratives, such as stories, symbols, rituals, and key plots that once supported community moral orders, are changing in societies influenced by modern institutions, media, and diverse public opinions. This change happens in several ways: through translation, which involves rephrasing religious themes in everyday language; through hybridization, where religious and civic rites blend; and through displacement, where secular ideas take on sacred forms. The issue is both practical and theoretical. Practically, we need to pinpoint the social settings and mechanisms—like political speech, popular media, educational programs, environmental movements, and online communities—where these changes occur. Theoretically, we need to explain how these changes influence the sources and legitimacy of moral authority. We want to know if this authority becomes more dispersed or more focused and how competing narratives affect identity and actions. To tackle this problem, we must look at who tells the stories, how these narratives spread, and how audiences understand and use them. We also need to consider power dynamics; changes are seldom neutral, and myths can either promote civic unity or serve as tools for exclusion and dominance.

E. Objectives and Scope of the Paper

First, the paper aims to clarify what is meant by “myth,” “moral authority,” “reconfiguration,” and “post-secularity.” It will establish a vocabulary that differentiates symbolic forms from institutional authority while highlighting their connection. Second, it seeks to outline how sacred narratives are transformed in today's world—through translation into secular language, hybrid rituals, mediated storytelling in popular culture and social media, and the elevation of secular values like nationhood and human rights. Comparative case studies will illustrate each method. Third, this study plans to consider the moral and political results of these changes, examining whether reimagined myths create stable plural publics by offering shared moral resources or whether they heighten conflict by legitimizing exclusionary identities. The paper takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining conceptual analysis with discourse analysis and detailed reading of cultural texts and public rituals. Geographically, it focuses mainly on post-secular societies from the late twentieth to early twenty-first centuries but includes examples from various regions to show cultural differences. The study acknowledges its limitations; it is selective rather than all-inclusive, prioritizing depth of interpretation over broad quantitative conclusions.

2. Conceptual Framework

A. Definition and Evolution Of “Myth” In Classical and Modern Thought

The idea of “myth” has always been diverse. In classical societies, myths served as essential stories that explained origins, justified social roles, and expressed worldviews. These stories were shared through lore, rituals, and collective memory, connecting people to larger social groups. However, with the rise of philosophical critique in ancient Greece, a tension developed between myth and reason. While myths remained crucial for community bonding, philosophers and later scientists began to prioritize logical argument as the main way to find truth. Over time, modernity brought about even more changes. Enlightenment thinkers often dismissed myths as errors or moral

stories, treating sacred tales as subjects for historical study or psychological remnants. Romantic and comparative scholars later emphasized myths as expressions of collective imagination and deeper meaning. In the twentieth century, theorists such as structuralists, psychoanalysts, and cultural anthropologists redefined myths as basic structures of meaning, mental frameworks, or expressions of hidden desires. Today, myths are understood in many ways. They can be seen as outdated beliefs, national founding stories, metaphorical tools in politics, or as living narratives in popular culture. Recognizing this evolution helps us see myths as adaptable symbols whose power and roles change depending on social settings, media technologies, and interpretive groups.

B. Myth and Moral Authority: From Divine Command to Symbolic Ethics

Historically, myths offered a clear path to moral authority. Stories of gods, ancestors, and the cosmos gave directives that felt binding because they were rooted in sacred time and rituals. As a result, moral norms were grounded in a presumed higher order and supported by tradition. In modern times, however, the basis of authority changes. Divine commands give way to law, reason, and discussions about human rights. Still, mythic structures remain relevant. They show up in symbolic forms that provide moral weight without directly referring to a god. Myths can be seen as civil religion, national origin stories, or ethical models that give dignity, purpose, and direction to group actions. In these cases, moral authority comes from emotional connections, shared stories of hardship and recovery, or official celebrations instead of revealed law. This change marks a shift from theological foundations to symbolic ethics. Mythic stories and symbols serve as tools for moral thinking, allowing communities to express values, build solidarity, and justify claims. However, this symbolic backing of moral authority has a mixed impact. It can create inclusive frameworks for community life but can also heighten exclusion when myths are used to support hierarchies or silence dissent. Understanding this shift is crucial for grasping the role sacred narratives continue to play in diverse, secular societies.

C. Theoretical Foundations: Jürgen Habermas And the Post-Secular Public Sphere

Jürgen Habermas provides a way to understand how religious language and institutions interact with secular discussions in the public sphere. While he is known for supporting the ideas of secular, rational conversation, Habermas recognizes that religion still plays a significant role today. He argues that religious citizens can and should put their moral claims into secular terms during public discussions. He also points out that state institutions cannot completely erase the moral guidance that religion offers.

This perspective explains how sacred narratives can still matter in public life when they are translated into arguments that make sense in diverse political discussions. Habermas's approach focuses on clear communication, legitimacy in discussions, and mutual understanding. It also emphasizes the need to pay attention to power imbalances that determine which religious stories get heard and how they are presented. For this paper, Habermas provides tools to examine the conditions under which mythical claims enter policy debates, how they are changed into secular moral language, and what democratic risks or advantages come when sacred narratives become part of collective reasoning instead of remaining unquestioned sources of authority

D. Theoretical Foundations: Mircea Eliade On the Sacred and Profane

Mircea Eliade explores the sacred and the profane. He illustrates how certain times, places, and stories feel distinct from everyday life. These moments include heterophonies, sacred canters, and myths. They provide examples for human actions and help us understand our role in the universe. Eliade's work clarifies why myths matter. They help us reshape meaning, organize time, and connect communities to significant canters in the cosmos. His distinction between the sacred and the profane suggests that even with modern changes, the fundamental experience of myth can remain, even if the beliefs behind them shift. Secular rituals, commemorations similar to pilgrimages, and ecological sacralization's can act as modern heterophanes. However, Eliade's emphasis on lasting structures might ignore the effects of history and power dynamics. Therefore, we should examine his ideas alongside critical approaches that investigate who control sacred stories and their social functions. In this study, Eliade shows that sacred experiences are ongoing. He encourages us to consider how modern media and institutions reinterpret heterophonies with new symbolic languages.

E. Theoretical Foundations: Paul Ricoeur’s Narrative Identity and Hermeneutics of Myth

Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutic theory sees myth as essential for both personal and group identity. Myths create stories that arrange events into clear narratives. This structure affects how individuals and groups perceive themselves over time. Ricoeur’s study of time and narrative reveals how plotting and interpretation shape identity by connecting idem (sameness) with ipse (selfhood). This process allows communities to establish moral expectations based on shared stories while remaining open to new interpretations. His hermeneutics emphasize interpretation, metaphor, and the ethical elements of narrative. Stories encourage responsibility, foster empathy, and change moral views. Using Ricoeur’s method, this paper examines how reconfiguration serves as an interpretive process. Myths are not simply passed down; they are re-exploited, re-metaphorized, and reinterpreted for new historical contexts. This view emphasizes agency, revealing who interprets narratives and how. It also looks at how audiences accept or reject new stories and considers the ethical implications of narrativization. This approach provides a way to assess whether modern adaptations of sacred stories promote valuable ethical insights or reinforce harmful moral systems.

3. Myth in the Age of Modernity

A. Enlightenment Critique and the Marginalization of Myth

The Enlightenment examined myths using reason, historical analysis, and empirical research. This helped people rethink traditional stories about origins, authority, and supernatural causes. As a result, many sacred narratives shifted from guiding principles for community life to mistaken, interesting, or symbolic tales. In this intellectual climate, myths were often seen as superstitions and pushed into private life. Public life started to focus on ideas grounded in rational law, civic institutions, and organized education. This shift away from myth wasn’t just about language. It significantly affected institutions. The rise of print culture, the scientific method, professional scholarship, bureaucratic management, and legal authority changed how people explained things and where moral guidance came from. Increasingly, these came from clear causes and established norms rather than from ritualistic worldviews. Even as Enlightenment thinkers questioned many traditional beliefs, their critiques were complex and varied. Those who rejected myths often embraced narratives of progress and liberation, which also carried a mythic quality. At the same time, other intellectual movements wanted to reclaim myths as forms of symbolic expression. This was clear in early comparative philology and the historical methods of Vico and Herder. Overall, this did not simply lead to the disappearance of myth; it changed its social roles and meanings. Some sacred stories were dropped, while others transformed into secular symbols that continued to shape identity, morality, and collective imagination in new ways.

Table 1: Enlightenment Critique and the Transformation of Myth

Dimension	Enlightenment Impact	Resulting Shift
View of Myth	Seen as superstition or pre-rational belief	Marginalized from public life
Basis of Knowledge	Reason, empiricism, historical analysis	Authority shifted to science and law
Social Institutions	Rise of print, bureaucracy, education	Moral guidance relocated to formal institutions
Public vs. Private	Myth moved to private or symbolic domains	Reduced communal ritual function
Counter currents	Vico, Herder, comparative philology	Myth revalued as symbolic expression
Long-term Outcome	Critique did not erase myth	Myths transformed into secular narratives

Interpretive note: Enlightenment “progress” narratives often functioned as modern myths, reshaping rather than eliminating mythic thinking.

B. Secular Modernity’s Implicit Myths (Progress, Nation, Rationality)

Although secular modernity seems to replace the authority of revealed cosmologies, it also creates and supports its own hidden myths. These narrative frameworks help legitimize institutions, inspire collective efforts, and shape moral expectations. The most significant of these myths are the myth of progress, the myth of the nation, and the myth of unchecked rationality. The progress narrative presents history as a journey of improvement in knowledge, health, and human freedom. It adds moral urgency and clear direction to policy and education while hiding the uncertainties and the people left behind by modernization. The nation acts as an imagined, almost sacred

community. Founding myths, rituals, and commemorations in this context foster belonging and create moral duties that people feel as strongly as religious devotion, even if they seem secular. The ideal of rationality, which includes science, bureaucracy, and calculating methods, serves as a hopeful myth. It promises control over nature and social life and supports belief in technocratic governance and market-driven solutions. These secular myths are performative. They shape expectations, legitimize authority, and provide symbolic value for competing political projects. Because they are woven into education, media, and commemorative practices, they carry moral weight similar to traditional sacred narratives, even while claiming a non-religious or universal basis.

C. The Persistence of Narrative Structures in Modern Ideologies

Modern ideologies, even those claiming to be scientific or neutral, rely heavily on narrative structures. They create stories about origins, crises, and goals that give facts meaning and inspire collective action. From the historical tales of Marxism to the liberal focus on freedom and rights, from the healing narratives of ethno-nationalism to the business-minded stories of neoliberalism, political beliefs use heroes, villains, key events, and promised futures. This turns abstract ideas into engaging images for the public. This reliance uncovers deeper cognitive and cultural patterns. People understand their social worlds through narrative frameworks. These frameworks show clear cause-and-effect relationships, aid memory, and provide moral meanings that plain abstract arguments often lack. Modern media and political communication help by presenting ideologies as simple stories, hero journeys, and strong symbols. As a result, ideologies maintain mythic frameworks while changing their content to fit scientific language, statistical arguments, or management techniques. This storytelling helps ideologies gain followers, normalize system structures, and create public rituals. However, it also makes them vulnerable to opposing narratives that can change who is seen as a hero or villain, reshaping the balance of moral authority.

D. The Transformation of Moral Discourse: From Revelation to Reason

The shift in moral discussions from revelation to reason does not mean moral authority has disappeared; it instead shows where that authority is now found. In the past, people defended moral principles by referring to sacred texts, divine will, or the support of religious leaders. Today, modern audiences seek justifications based on arguments, fairness, human dignity, and legal processes. These forms of legitimacy aim for universality through shared understanding, clear outcomes, and institutional safeguards, rather than depending on something beyond the ordinary. This change has brought terms like natural law, contractual obligation, human rights, and public reason into the conversation. These terms express ethical principles in ways that connect with different audiences and encourage action through discussions or legal frameworks. However, focusing on procedures and discussions does not eliminate emotional and symbolic needs. As a result, secular moral discussions often create substitutes that are seen as sacred, such as rights viewed as sacred goods, patriotic ceremonies, or respect for the environment. These substitutes help reconnect values in meaningful ways. The emphasis on reason also sparks debates about fundamental beliefs. In diverse societies, presenting moral claims in secular language opens opportunities for mutual justification and creates spaces where conflicting narratives seek public support. The outcomes of these conflicts affect whether moral authority spreads more widely and is negotiated or remains limited to technical or majority institutions. Ultimately, we face a complex situation: moral discussions now rely on logical procedures and standards of argument while still drawing on narratives and symbols to foster commitment. This shift from revelation to reason involves translating and reshaping ideas rather than completely replacing them.

4. The Post-Secular Reconfiguration of the Sacred

A. The Return of Religion in Public Life

Over the last several decades religion has reasserted its visibility in public life not as a monolithic revival of premodern belief but as a plural and contested presence that reshapes civic discourse, electoral politics, and cultural sensibilities; demographic shifts, transnational migration, the politicization of identity, and the perceived moral vacuums created by rapid social change have all contributed to religious actors and idioms taking center stage in debates about education, law, welfare, and national belonging. This return is uneven and mediated: in some contexts, it appears as organized political mobilization by confessional parties or movements, in others as the louder presence of religious voices in civil society, media, and public ceremonies, and in still others as the infusion of spiritual vocabularies into commercial and therapeutic domains. Importantly, the renewed visibility of religion does not simply recreate old forms of clerical authority; rather, it produces new institutional arrangements and rhetorical

strategies through which religious claims are translated into public-policy arguments, humanitarian initiatives, or cultural narratives. The result is a complex public ecology in which ecclesial and secular institutions negotiate authority, where religious framings must compete within plural forums, and where religion's resurgence becomes a driver of both contestation and creative negotiation in the formation of shared moral vocabularies.

B. Myth as a Communicative and Moral Bridge Between Believers and Non-Believers

Myth functions as an especially potent bridge in mixed publics because its symbolic grammar—parables, archetypes, origin stories, and ritual motifs—can be reframed in multiple idioms and thereby offer a common referential ground that transcends doctrinal boundaries; when sacred narratives are translated into civic metaphors, ethical exemplars, or civic liturgies they provide accessible moral frameworks that non-believers can adopt insofar as those narratives are decoupled from metaphysical claims and recast as sources of communal meaning. This communicative bridging operates through processes of translation and metaphorization: religious stories are stripped of exclusive theological authority and reshaped as cultural capital—stories of suffering and redemption become templates for social justice, founding myths get recounted as civic covenants, and exemplary saints or prophets are recuperated as secular role models. Because myths operate at the level of affect, memory, and imagination, they help articulate values and obligations in ways that purely procedural discourses often cannot, thereby enabling cooperative action across belief-divides. Yet this bridging is not neutral: who translates and which myths are chosen carry political valence, and the very capacity of myth to unify also makes it a site where exclusionary interpretations can be naturalized; as a communicative medium, myth can mediate understanding and solidarity, but it can also harden boundaries when mobilized selectively. Alright, let's just say the internet took mythmaking, threw it in a blender, and hit "turbo." Suddenly, literally anyone with a half-baked idea and a Wi-Fi connection can pitch into the collective imagination. Memes? They're like the hieroglyphics of our age—tiny, punchy, jam-packed with moral vibes or inside jokes, and they spread faster than your aunt forwarding cat videos. They make it dead simple to show which "side" you're on, or to dunk on someone else's take.

And fandoms? Oh boy, they're doing myth-building on steroids. People are cranking out fanfic, weirdly elaborate art, even rituals—sometimes I think there are more Hogwarts houses in people's heads than on the page. It's like fan communities are running their own parallel universes, remixing everything and making up new lore as they go, all in this giant group project that never really ends. Social movements have caught on too. If you want people to care, you need a story: heroes, villains, tragic martyrs, those moments that just go viral and suddenly everyone's in the streets (or, at least, retweeting furiously). Algorithms—those sneaky little gremlins—decide which stories explode and which ones vanish without a trace. Some myths get huge; others barely get a shot. The wild part? Nobody's really in charge. Fans, big media companies, random Twitter users—they're all mashing up stories, remixing, fighting over what things "mean." It's messy. One day, something's gospel; the next day, everyone's miming it to death or flipping the script.

C. Hybrid Forms of Sacred Expression: Civic Rituals, Ecological Spirituality, And Human Rights Discourse

Contemporary reconfigurations of the sacred frequently take hybrid forms that blur religious and secular registers: civic rituals such as national commemorations, inaugural ceremonies, and public memorials borrow liturgical structures—sacred time, communal gathering, symbolic gestures—that sacralise collective memory and instantiate civic virtues; ecological spirituality reframes environmental concern in quasi-religious terms, invoking notions of stewardship, sacred earth, and sacramental respect for nonhuman life that resonate with both religious sentiments and secular ethics; and human-rights discourse increasingly acquires a sacral tone, with rights spoken of in terms that approach inviolability and moral sanctity, producing an ethical lexicon that both legitimizes political claims and functions as a moral grammar for international solidarity. These hybrids perform important social work: they embed normative commitments in embodied practices, provide ceremonial moments that crystallize communal identity, and offer new vocabularies for moral imagination that appeal across confessional lines. At the same time, hybridity raises normative and political questions about institutionalization, authority, and boundary-drawing—about who defines the sacred content of civic rituals, whose spiritualities inform ecological sacralization, and how the quasi-sacred status of rights might suppress legitimate contestation. Understanding these hybrid forms therefore requires attending to their ritual mechanics, discursive strategies, and power effects as much as to their expressive content.

5. Case Studies

A. Case 1: Mythic Elements in Popular Culture (E.G., Marvel Universe, Mythic Heroes in Global Cinema)

In today's culture, mythic elements are crucial for creating shared meaning. Large media franchises, like superhero universes, epic film series, and streaming shows, explore classic plots, symbolic rituals, and moral examples. These stories feature familiar themes such as cosmic battles, the hero's journey, sacrifice and redemption, and prophetic visions. They use these themes to tackle current issues related to technology, identity, and power. This process transforms individual imagination into a shared understanding within the community. The structure of culture plays an important role. Global studios and streaming services standardize how these mythic forms are created and repeated. As a result, themes become memorable through series, merchandise, fan activities, and events like conventions, premieres, and online watch parties. Fandoms act as community rituals. They interpret, expand, and reinforce the moral boundaries of these myths through fan fiction, cosplay, critique, and political interpretations. These cultural texts are highly visible and emotionally engaging. They often offer moral lessons about responsibility, leadership, trauma, and healing. Audiences use these lessons to address real-life ethical issues. At the same time, commercial interests influence which stories receive attention and how they are presented. This creates tension between personal interpretations and profit-driven storytelling. Furthermore, the global flow of these narratives leads to localization and conflict. Mythic figures can be adapted across cultures to address local concerns, but the dominance of some media producers raises worries about cultural uniformity and the economic factors that determine which mythic stories matter. Essentially, popular culture reenacts and reshapes sacred storytelling roles. It teaches, comforts, and mobilizes while changing who creates, owns, and benefits from the new myths that shape public values.

B. Case 2: Political Mythologies and National Identity (E.G., Myth of Democracy, Freedom, Unity):

Political myths are important tools that states and political movements use to create moral legitimacy and unity. Founding stories, heroic tales, and ritual celebrations help form national identity by providing a tailored history. This history explains a community's origins, justifies its current institutions, and imagines an inspiring future. Constitutions, founding speeches, monuments, school curricula, and public holidays play key roles in expressing and sharing these myths. They turn abstract values into emotional duties and civic responsibilities. The so-called "myth of democracy" often portrays democratic order as the natural and positive end of history or the only acceptable way to govern. This idea gives moral importance to certain institutional setups while ignoring the inequalities, exclusions, or historical events that shaped them. Likewise, the myth of freedom acts as a complicated moral tool. It supports movements for liberation, civil rights, or market openings. However, its persuasive power can also support selective arguments that justify interventions, security measures, or unfair applications of rights. The myth of unity serves a similar role by reassuring diverse groups about a shared future. Yet it can also be misused to silence dissent and promote majority norms, sidelining minority perspectives. Political mythmaking is complex; it involves debate and change. Counter-myths from social movements, dissenting thinkers, and marginalized groups challenge official narratives. This creates revised histories and contested memory politics that alter moral authority. Thus, political myths do more than reflect identity; they actively shape who is seen as a full member of society and the moral reasoning behind that status. They influence policy decisions, patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and the arguments available for public debate.

C. Case 3: Eco-Myths and the Moralization of Environmental Consciousness

Environmental stories are increasingly told in a mythic style as societies face serious threats to the planet. These eco-myths draw from various sources, including indigenous beliefs, romantic views of nature, scientific ideas about the Anthropocene, and activist narratives. They celebrate the connections with the nonhuman world. These stories inspire emotional commitments and create moral responsibilities that extend beyond human interests. Eco-myths often share common themes, such as losing ecological balance, warnings about disasters, and calls for repair and care. They simplify complex scientific ideas into urgent stories that connect with a wide audience. Actions like tree planting, memorials for extinct species, global climate strikes, and annual events like Earth Day bring these stories to life. These shared experiences strengthen moral conviction and foster a collective identity focused on sustainability. However, the moral focus of environmental awareness is more complicated. While eco-myths can unite people, encourage responsibility across generations, and support important policy changes, they can also be misused by market trends like green consumerism and corporate greenwashing. These trends often overlook deeper

issues and reduce ethical principles to simple products. Additionally, conflicts can arise between the universal messages in some eco-myths and the specific beliefs of local and indigenous communities. These communities have long shared alternative, sustainable myths based on their worldviews. Disputes over who tells environmental stories often reflect broader struggles over moral authority and policy direction. In practice, eco-myths exist where feelings, rituals, science, and law intersect. They raise moral questions about nature's rights, our responsibilities to care for it, and climate justice. They also highlight issues of appropriation, commodification, and the political commitment needed for ecological change.

6. Discussion

A. The Moral Function of Myth in Pluralistic Societies

In pluralistic societies, myth plays an important moral role by offering shared meanings that connect different groups into functional moral communities without needing uniform beliefs. Myths condense complex values into memorable stories, such as origin tales, examples, martyr narratives, and ritual scripts. These stories circulate through schools, media, commemorations, and everyday conversations. They help shape judgment, encourage cooperation, and maintain collective memory. Myths influence not just thought but also feelings and imagination. They turn abstract ethical principles into clear moral guidelines people can apply in real life. This helps the public align expectations about trustworthiness, who deserves protection, and the meaning of sacrifice, even when discussions are fragmented or disputed. At the same time, myths define boundaries. By emphasizing certain memories, heroes, or founding moments, they mark membership and support specific institutions. This makes them powerful tools for social unity. However, they can also become sources of conflict when marginalized groups present counter-myths. In pluralistic settings, myths serve as both glue for connection and battlegrounds for debate. They provide resources for civic solidarity and moral direction. These must be carefully examined, negotiated, and updated to promote an inclusive public life instead of reinforcing exclusionary systems.

B. Myth as a Site of Negotiation Between Faith, Reason, And Imagination

Myth plays an important role in negotiations. It appears in various forms, including devotional, rhetorical, and heuristic. This range allows faith-based claims to transform into secular arguments and gain a depth that reason alone often lacks. Translating these claims requires careful interpretation. It involves rethinking parables as civic metaphors, converting sacred models into ethical examples, and changing theological language into arguments that different audiences can understand. This creates a space for discussion where religious beliefs, conversation norms, and imaginative ideas can come together. Imagination is crucial in this process. Myths present creative scenarios that help people address moral dilemmas, connect emotionally through stories, and envision alternative futures. They provide moral insights that bridge gaps in understanding between different viewpoints. However, this negotiation is sensitive. Simplistic or shallow translations can rob stories of their ethical meaning, while direct appeals to authority overlook the need for public justification. The best outcomes arise when mythic imagination and reason support each other. In this setup, myths offer moral visuals and engaging narratives, while reason demands justifications that everyone can grasp. This way, ethical commitments become both emotionally impactful and rooted in accountability.

C. Post-Secular Ethics: Collective Meaning Beyond Institutional Religion

Post-secular ethics aims to create a shared moral language that combines ideas from religious traditions, secular philosophies, and community practices. It finds common meanings outside of formal religion. These blended ethical ideas show up in discussions about human rights, which are important, in stories about the environment that respect the earth, and in community rituals that include elements to promote unity. This approach creates moral frameworks that many people accept, even if they don't follow a specific faith. The post-secular does not simply restore religious authority. It spreads moral influence among various groups, including NGOs, social movements, artists, scientists, and courts. Each participant helps shape public morality through storytelling, rituals, and policies. This varied moral landscape allows for ethical initiatives that address shared human challenges and responsibilities. However, it also raises concerns about accountability, the risk of moral confusion when symbolic claims overshadow careful discussion, and the danger of prioritizing secular values over dissenting views. In practice, post-secular ethics supports translation, thoughtful pluralism, and frameworks that encourage ongoing debate. It also seeks to create common moral languages that inspire collective action on complex global issues.

D. The Ambivalence of Modern Myths—Empowering or Manipulative?

Modern myths often lack clarity. The storytelling skills that inspire movements for justice, solidarity, and resilience can also mislead the public, support oppression, or hide deep-seated issues. On a positive note, reimagined myths can inspire political thought and help people see themselves as agents of change. They can share healing stories and unite people to support fair policies and protect the environment. However, when powerful institutions control myths—like government propaganda, corporate branding, or dominant cultural rituals—they can normalize inequality, downplay violence, create agreement through emotionally charged narratives, or turn moral values into market choices. Examples include greenwashing and virtue signalling. The outcome depends not only on the myths themselves but also on the power dynamics, institutional limits, and our ability to think critically. When many people create narratives, engage in open debates, and learn effective storytelling, myths often become more freeing. In contrast, monopolies, censorship, and commercialization push myths toward manipulation. A careful study of modern myth should focus on who tells the stories, who benefits from them, and who is left out. It should suggest fair ways to create myths that keep the moral power of imagination while preventing its misuse.

7. Conclusion

A. Summary of Findings

This study shows that sacred stories are still relevant today. However, they have changed through processes I call translation, hybridization, and sacralization of the secular. Translation means changing religious language into everyday terms. Founding myths become constitutional metaphors, and saints turn into civic role models. This helps maintain strong moral claims in different contexts. Hybridization describes how rituals and symbols mix religious structures with secular purposes. For example, memorials work like religious services, and environmental campaigns use sacred language. Sacralization of the secular elevates values that seem non-religious, such as human rights, nationhood, and progress, to a level that demands emotional commitment. These processes take place in various media environments. Industrial popular culture creates modern archetypes and ethical standards. Political institutions shape and challenge national myths. Environmental movements spread eco-myths that promote care for the planet. Digital platforms speed up and share these trends. They enable quick and participatory remixing of mythic content while concentrating symbolic power through algorithm-driven boosts. The findings suggest that myths serve as both cognitive and emotional tools for identity and moral guidance, consistent with hermeneutic and phenomenological views. They are also connected to power dynamics. Myths can promote unity and inspiring actions, but they can also reinforce exclusion when managed or commercialized. Overall, the study concludes that myth remains a crucial way to create moral meaning in post-secular societies. Its impact depends on who creates, shares, and questions these narratives.

B. The Enduring Relevance of Myth in Sustaining Moral and Social Order

Myths persist because they meet important social needs that abstract ideas and technical reasoning can't fulfil. They tell meaningful stories about a community's identity and hopes. Myths offer moral lessons and narratives that guide people in making decisions. They create rituals and symbolic spaces that strengthen commitments beyond merely agreeing on rules. By sharing stories of suffering, sacrifice, and redemption, myths help bring order to chaos. They stabilize expectations and norms across generations. Through rituals, myths intertwine these norms into everyday life, allowing moral habits to grow and last. Even as myths become less about religion, they still play vital roles, as Eliade noted, in marking significant moments or places. Ricoeur pointed out that myths help build collective identities through ongoing stories. However, the same features that create order can also lead to exclusion. Canonical myths support specific memberships and can erase other histories unless they become more inclusive. Thus, myths promote moral and social order not by making everyone agree but by providing shared symbols that different groups can use to coexist. Whether these symbols encourage an inclusive civic life depends on how institutions support dialogue, how stories reach diverse audiences, and how educational efforts promote a critical understanding of these narratives.

C. Future Implications: Toward A Pluralist and Dialogical Understanding of Sacred Narratives in Modern Life

Looking ahead, using a diverse and conversational approach to sacred stories has important academic and practical impacts. Researchers should use different methods to track how myths spread across various media, institutions, and communities. They should also focus on authorship and power dynamics. Policymakers and

community designers should see myth-making as a natural part of public life. They should create inclusive spaces where different stories can be shared, discussed, and negotiated instead of hidden or controlled. In education, developing storytelling skills, such as understanding historical context, being aware of interpretations, and having media literacy, will help the public tell apart manipulation from real moral imagination. Institutions could support events and rituals that include marginalized communities in creating civic myths. Legal and media guidelines should protect against the misuse of myths for propaganda or profit. For example, they can promote transparency in how algorithms highlight content and support various narrative creators. Ethically, a conversational approach means treating sacred narratives as temporary tools for public discussion rather than unquestioned sources of authority. This allows these narratives to inspire and guide while remaining open to mutual justification in different settings. Overall, the future of myth in modern life will thrive when storytelling creativity is shared, institutional debates are strong, and translation practices help stories build solidarity while allowing for disagreement.

8. References

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