

MSC 2020**International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.
COMMUNICATION»****THE PHENOMENON OF MASS CULTURE AS AREA OF
TRANSMITTING CULTURAL CODES**

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Abstract

The research focuses on the features of sacred codes' transmission by mass culture technologies. The work uses phenomenological and psychoanalytic methods, the postmodern methods of consumer society and mass culture analysis, a comparative analysis of animated films reflecting the mass culture models of the USA and the USSR. The study has shown that such cultural text elements as the appearance and behavior of a cartoon character are a channel for transmitting certain sacred codes determined by the specifics of the sociocultural context. The historical political and sociocultural contexts determine the specifics of coding in a particular animated cartoon. In both cases, traditional cultural forms turn out to be irrelevant, and the sociocultural environment is continuously filled with new meanings, connotations, some of which are quite commonplace. Under the conditions of constant influence on mass perceptions, the main task of culture is to develop a person's ability to evaluate the transmitted cultural images and attitudes as objectively as possible, to maintain those values and attitudes that are adequate in a given society at a given period of time. The inclusion of sacred codes in the semantic space of mass culture speaks of the universal matrix structure of the archetype, which manifests itself in individual and specific forms of the sacred code.

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1. Introduction

Our era is characterized by an ever-increasing role of the information environment, which provokes the emergence of a large number of sociocultural and existential problems. The philosophical awareness of the sacred foundations of human existence and its integrity is updated. For a full-fledged and versatile study of the dynamics of sociocultural processes, in our opinion, it is necessary to analyze the mechanisms of functioning and the specifics of sacred codes in the sphere of collective representations, taking into account their mythological nature.

In addition, when studying mass culture, it is necessary to take into account the specific historical and national contexts in which it was formed. Evidently, general cultural development makes ethnic groups related and smooths out differences. However, the historical events that happen in each ethnic group are deposited in its collective memory and create the basic constructions that reign over it, recreating a special order of existence and ways of understanding reality.

2. Problem Statement

European humanitarian knowledge often implies that the category of the sacred disappears under the influence of the process of secularization of sociocultural existence. This tendency determines the relevance of the study of the sacred as a present-day sociocultural phenomenon. However, there is no doubt that nowadays, collective representations, as it was before, have the deepest mythological nature; they are filled with sacred images and meanings, creating ideal models of behavior, relationships, and systems.

Thus, the sacred codes represented in mass culture influence the formation and transformation of human value and cultural attitudes through artistic hypertrophied, satirical image; they convey the most significant general cultural meanings, as well as symbolic images that are significant for the culture of a particular ethnic group.

3. Research Questions

3.1. What are the features of the sacred code as a universal semantic system?

3.2. Is mass culture a transmitter of sacred codes?

3.3. Do different models of mass culture have national specifics?

3.4. What are the differences between visual and behavioral sacred codes in the mass culture of the USA and the USSR?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the features of the transmission of sacred codes through mass culture technologies.

5. Research Methods

The research relies on a number of specific methods, such as phenomenological and psychoanalytic methods based on the concept of Jung (1991), conceptual features of Baudrillard's (2006) method of analyzing consumer society and mass culture, as well as a group of general scientific methods: analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis.

6. Findings

Various objects, phenomena, processes, attitudes, and actions possess sacred qualities which can be united by the term "sacred code". Targeting the sphere of the unconscious, the technologies of mass culture always use symbols as simple intuitively perceived markers. In this case, the symbol should be perceived within the framework of sociocultural, historical, and economic contexts. Thus, we come to the necessity of the concept of the "sacred code" as a complex, stable symbolic construction serving as one of the tools for identification and self-identification.

Despite striving for a perfect "I", the archetype and the sacred code, as its manifestation, are, first of all, a complex foundation, or the basis, of those universally significant matrices, without which the collective life of people is impossible. Sacred codes condition the emergence of thoughts, ideas of a person within the framework of a given collective need due to the fact that they are a matrix of collective experience; they direct typical collective forms for individual representations. The set of sacred codes is a "matrix of numinosity", in which sociocultural reality is the product of their interaction, of special relationships with the sacred periphery.

The "concurrence" of a person with this matrix causes an unprecedented, unique emotional upsurge, or numinous experience. The introduction of a sense of numinosity into the semantic space of culture contributes to the successful functioning of the social system. The totality of these experiences constitutes the phenomenon of the sacred code, which is expressed through a system of religious attitudes, forms and religious experiences allowing an individual to reflect on collective experience.

This experience consists of personally significant events that are not perceived by a person, do not belong to him, it is also collective and meaningful. One of the most important sacred categories of God arises within the framework of collective experience and expresses the unconscious desire of a person to become a perfect "I"; this desire manifests itself in the complex of individual and collective attitudes. Archetypal images demonstrate how a person arranges priorities within the unconscious through the sacred code while ascending to the perfect "I".

Nowadays, culture tends to exploit the sacred code and to influence the unconscious by introducing these codes into the final product. The development of information and communication technologies allowed an individual to expand opportunities in comprehending social and cultural reality, and created new conditions for the transmission of culture. At the moment, it is necessary to speak about the phenomenon of mass culture as the main form of culture's existence. It should be understood as a set of unique, in comparison with the previous cultural paradigms, methods of studying social reality by an individual. The way of socialization is manifested in the construction of an industrially formed "mass society". In this context, Baudrillard (2006) speaks of "cultural retraining": "to renew every month and

every year your cultural arsenal” (p. 134), i.e., every individual included in the mass culture environment is forced to constantly “renew” personal attitudes in accordance with those dictated by mass culture, so as not to be excluded from social reality. The adaptive and communication functions of mass culture (Natale et al., 2019) remain unchanged; however, the replacement of social and cultural reality causes deformation processes of a person’s worldview and stress. The main function of mass culture is its ability to adapt a person to existence in society, to perform value orientation through marked use. This level of culture reflects the aesthetic differentiation of needs in such a way that the consumption of benefits contributes to the consolidation of these relationships. Nowadays, there are many technologies influencing the collective consciousness, the major one is the use of communication technologies that allow straightforward strategies of power to be replaced by hidden ones, “management” to be replaced by “temptation” (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 317). Under the influence of mass culture stereotypes, the value and cultural attitudes of the individual are formed. These attitudes are a kind of typical collective representations. Such features as insufficiency and inferiority of reflexive processes, basic pragmatism, unconscious appeal to the archetypal matrix, actualization of the sphere of the collective unconscious manifested in the texts of mass culture speak of its mythological nature and conditionality. The sociocultural conditionality of mass culture texts (Wilken, 2019) is manifested in the desire to follow specific models of thinking and recreate them with an exact copy; that is why the unity of the “mass” is inseparable from the phenomenon of the “collective unconscious”.

At present, the functions and features of mythology are found in mass culture; therefore, it can be interpreted as “modern mythology”. The peculiarity of the myth is that it is perceived as a real event. At the same time, the information transmitted to an individual through mass communication technologies looks more convincing and real in comparison with everyday events. Jung (1991) noted that the “undirected thinking” of the masses is always turned towards mythological attitudes, it presents a series of images and reactions focused on “the possibility of some wider, higher meaning beyond our momentary ability of perception and a hint of such a meaning” (p. 278). Mythological images and forms are general symbols “inherent in any mythology” (Tobias, 2017, p. 1171), expressing the hidden meaning of phenomena and rooted in collective ideas, a priori perceived as dogmas.

Analyzing dreams, Jung (1996) discovered separate plots, referring to the matrix of archetypes, defining typical collective forms for individual representations. The psychological superstructure of the masses is weakening, and as a result, the layer of the unconscious is actualized, which is the same for all people. Jung (1996), in turn, introduces the concept of “collective unconscious” to define the “mass”, which is a “psychic substrate” (p. 90), determining the manifestation of archetypal phenomena in mass culture in particular. Mass culture through sacred images appeals to the “collective unconscious”, which is the foundation for the formation of a generally significant cultural experience. The culture transmitted through the mass media (Frith & Özkul, 2019) demonstrates the manifestations of archetypes and archetypally determined sociocultural attitudes, given the fact that the mass is not immanent to human existence. The role of sacred codes in the works of mass culture is to translate the unconsciously conditioned attitudes of the human psyche in comfortable forms into social reality. The mass culture technologies, turned into the sphere of the unconscious, always use symbols as simple, intuitively perceived markers (Xin, 2020). The archetype is a kind of “genotype”, the initial matrix of the collective spirit, which sets the direction of thinking; it also determines the vector for the formation

of certain collective attitudes. The sacred code, in turn, is a “phenotype”, a way of realizing the attitudes set by the archetype. Sacrality has a dual structure: on the one hand, it determines human behavior; on the other hand, it “dresses” in a sociocultural, historical context.

In the XX and early XXI centuries, the problem of codification of transcendental areas of existence has acquired a new meaning. Scientific and technological progress, informatization, urbanization, strengthening of the globalization and universalization processes (Uppal et al., 2019) provoke an urgent need for a universal value system, which would be shared by the overwhelming majority of its members and become a kind of “fulcrum” (Slobodian, 2019, p. 250). A large number of different ethnic groups lived on the territory of the Soviet Union. However, “Soviet identity” was guided by civic consciousness and a sense of political duty. It was tied not to the anthropological aspect of self-identification, but rather to the ideological one. The significance of “Soviet identity” was manifested in attempts to form the thinking paradigms of individuals by influencing them with a complex of personal-subjective factors (attitudes of consciousness, spiritual needs, values, and others).

Analyzing the national model of mass culture in the United States, it will be important to clarify that the very national image of a US resident was identified exclusively with a European immigrant or fugitive. A person who immigrated to the United States no longer had the opportunity to exist in a familiar sociocultural environment and tried to adapt to the new one, nevertheless, bringing and transmitting some traditions and attitudes to those around him. It became a decisive factor in establishing the role of immigration as the main driving force of such identity as “an American”. In this context, mass culture becomes a tool that helps a person to integrate into the sociocultural system even in an unstable sociocultural environment. Mass culture, regardless of national origin (Rosenboim, 2019), manifested itself in many different forms. It would be wrong to assert that the conventionality inherent in all types of art is based on the difference between the artistic image and the reality reflected by it. The essence of things and the forms of their manifestation are not obliged to coincide; some researchers even note the “embedding” of mass culture into classical art. Animation actualizes this possible contradiction between a real-life object and an object existing on the screen, since it is represented by films created by time-lapse shooting of successive phases of various images’ movements.

7. Conclusion

Elements of a cultural text, such as the appearance and behavior of a cartoon character, are a channel for transmitting certain sacred codes due to the specifics of the sociocultural context. The specificity of codification here depends primarily on the historical, political, and sociocultural context in which the work was created. The peculiarity of the codification of sacred elements in the American model of mass culture consists in the isolation of a group of so-called “others” from society, on the basis of anthropological, cultural, and language indicators. This necessarily leads to the emergence of the binary opposition of “an American/a foreigner”.

The same binary opposition of “friend/foe” is found in the Soviet model of mass culture; however, it was transmitted from the point of view of ideology, where “a foe” is defined not by origin, language or skin color, but as a representative of the “opposing” social class. Having analyzed the ways and forms of transmission of sacred codes in the American cartoon culture, we can conclude that such a model appears

to the “comfort zone”, and the show appeals to the human mass. The Soviet model, on the contrary, reveals the dominant idea of duty to motherland, state, society, the idea of personal and collective responsibility in cartoon images, and the everyday features of the characters do not form the basis for the plot.

Despite the many differences in the national models of mass culture in the USA and the USSR, similar features are found. In both models, the features of mass culture forms depend on the “kinship” relationship between the mass media and new information technologies and a special uncritical attitude.

In both cases, traditional cultural forms turn out to be irrelevant (Hildebrand, 2019), and the sociocultural space is continuously filled with new meanings, connotations, some of which are commonplace. In the context of constant influence on mass perception (Jamo, 2019), the main task of culture is to develop a person’s ability to evaluate the transmitted cultural images and attitudes as objectively as possible, to preserve those values and attitudes that are adequate in a given society at a given period of time. The inclusion of sacred codes in the semantic space of mass culture, both in the national model of the USA and the USSR, speaks, first of all, of the universal matrix structure of the archetype, which, given the same structure for any individual (Plotnick, 2019), manifests itself in individual and specific forms of sacred code.

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