

PERAET 2021**International Scientific Conference «PERISHABLE AND ETERNAL: Mythologies and Social Technologies of Digital Civilization-2021»****DIGITAL MYTHOLOGY: A NEW DIRECTION IN THE STUDY OF SOCIAL MYTHS**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the issue of the digital turn influence on the research of social myths and the study of the processes of their transformation into digital form. The digital turn is characterized by the use of digital technologies and social media in the design of myths and their study by digital humanities. Digital mythology is formed in the context of digital rotation as a scientific direction and a developing system of social digital myths reproduced in virtual space. Digital myths are created by the efforts of individuals who represent themselves in online communities, by the masses of Internet users who converge images of mass culture and myths, using digital technologies, distributing them to social media. New media allows any Internet user to become a mythologist, the creator of mythological narratives that serve as constructs of everyday reality. The condition for creating digital myths is the visualization of mythicities and meanings of mass culture, in which news, cultural or political messages are laced. Internet users package digital myths into information messages distributed across the network, broadcasting with them their emotional assessment of reality and their view of the world. Digital myths are embodied in selfbranding, the phenomenon of post-truth and fakes, Internet memes, computer games, etc. Digital mythology has become an integral part of the digital world.

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1. Introduction

Modern scientific and technological society continues turning to social myths to explain reality as well as it did in previous historical periods. The use of the most complex information technologies and digital technology, the implementation of a significant part of social life in the virtual space and the digitalization of everyday reality allows us to talk about modern society as a digital one. The digital society is rebuilding communication processes into a networked format that aims to create sustainable social connections through digital technologies. The myth helps strengthen and substantiate these ties, and also connects the individual with reality, undergoing total digitalization. Digitalization of human existence inevitably leads to the emergence of digital consciousness which myth is a part transforming into digital form. Today, the study and understanding of the digital society mythology is taking place in the paradigm of a digital turn which has affected all spheres of humanitarian research.

2. Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the phenomenon of social myth in the context of the digital turn. The modern researcher of social mythology Ivanov (2018) considers it as an "axiologically loaded phenomenon" and distinguishes two levels "archaic", containing "stable archetypal images, mythologems, rituals developed collectively", and "instrumental" ("conjectural"), which "appears as "mythology of ideas" and contains results of rational purposeful activity of individual myth-makers" (p. 6). The digitalization of the social myth allows us to talk about digital mythology as a phenomenon characterized by the digital way of production and existence of the modern myth in the media environment. Valovic (2000) spoke about the possibility of the emergence of digital mythologies at the very beginning of the 21st century. In examining the main social and political consequences of the spread of the Internet, he came to the conclusion about the existence of digital myths, describing the hidden complexities of human interaction with virtual reality (Valovic, 2000). However, the term digital mythology is still very rarely used in academic discourse and implies the influence of the Internet and social media on the formation of the worldview foundations of modern man (Solovej, 2017, p. 123)

According to researchers Losada and Lipscomb (2019), the digital revolution has led to the fact that the consumption of vast amounts of information directly affects the myth, causing it to mutate into new forms. Movies, TV series, comic books or video games produced in the genre of science fiction, fantasy or about artificial intelligence are exposed to social or individual consumption in unprecedented amounts. The invasion of digital media into the everyday life of individuals has caused great tension in society, and digital technology itself is being mythologized, as myth remains the most appropriate tool for knowing the world (Losada & Lipscomb, 2019). New ways of the individual's digital existence such as digital memory, trolling and digital death, digital rituals and cybernetic animism, online mourning, and more (Kasavina, 2020) are conceptualized precisely through myths that describe electronic reality. In this regard, the problem of studying the transformation of social mythology into digital mythology, which takes place in the context of the digital turn, is posed.

3. Research Questions

Conducting research on digital mythology involves the following questions:

- 1) How are digital myths produced in online communities and what is the specificity of mythmaking in the digital age?
- 2) What is the role of visualization of mythological images in digital mythology, and to what extent does it contribute to the dissemination and perception of digital myths?
- 3) What contemporary social phenomena does digital mythology manifest itself in?

4. Purpose of the Study

Digital technologies and media create and replicate social myths, acting as equal actors in their reproduction, on a par with the masses and individuals involved in the process of mythologizing reality. In the processes of mythmaking, pleasers are actively included, who are the creators and consumers of information products created with the help of digital technologies. Myth stimulates pleasers to actively engage in the process of production of goods and services consumed by themselves. The digital technologies used are mythologized, as this popularizes and facilitates their use. They also become the instrument through which contemporary mythologies are formed and the medium of their dissemination, reflecting the involvement of media in the language, practice, and organizational logic of networked communities (Plotichkina, 2020). Mythological narratives circulate in online communities, aimed at constructing collective identity, heroizing, and making sense of everyday reality. Mythic constructs act as the building material that shapes the community.

Participants of online communities, creating different content, become creators of digital myths, drawing from the digital environment sets of archetypal stories that allow them to make sense of the world and construct their own mythologized reality. This reality is created and exists in the space of social media, which broadcast a mythonarrative about the online space as a natural place of encounter and interaction between users. Being heterogeneous (sociotechnical) in composition, social media are a field for collecting data about online communities (Marres & Weltevrede, 2013) and sites of myth construction involving various forms of discursive work. Thus, the aim of this study is to demonstrate that the digital turn involves not only a change in the practices of social myth research, but also a transformation of the ways in which they are reproduced.

5. Research Methods

The term "digital turn" emerges as the final in a series of methodological metaphors of the "turn" (ontological, linguistic, iconic, theological, performative, narrative, spatial, etc.) characterizing the development of philosophical thought since the early 20th century and is caused by the appearance of Digital Humanities - a digital humanities science aimed at studying digital society in all its manifestations. Digital Humanities combines the methods and practices of the humanities, social sciences, and computational sciences, and uses the possibilities of digital information and communication technologies to study contemporary social processes. The development of digital technologies generates

new objects of humanitarian research (texts in social networks and blogs, videos, Internet memes, digital photos, video games, etc.), the study of which requires computer processing and the application of informational, media epistemological, media archeological approaches, interface semiotics, and communication theory. Digital software applications produced by the IT industry and social media not only define the set of tools available to the user to create a new reality, but also change the way we comprehend reality and express and perceive thought. The workings of the human mind are coupled with the digital mind, which "in the form of Big Data, Big Five personality traits, cyber-DNA and other technologies determine our actions" (Savchuk & Ocheretyanyj, 2021, p. 5). The digital turn not only opens new perspectives in the study of social myth through the use of technical means in its analysis, but also contributes to its transformation into a digital form.

6. Findings

In social media, the logic of myth-making is being transformed by the emergence of new mythotechnologies and mythmakers. It is increasingly becoming global in nature, determining the way humans interact with reality. One can observe how social media message influences stock markets, directs the behavior of computer players, and changes the practices of using digital gadgets. Online content, shaped by the instrumental-communicative skills of private bloggers, is able to shape the mainstream media agenda through its content of mythic elements. The digital content market is a constantly growing funnel of consumer interest, which implies a permanent application of innovative solutions, generating new rounds of quantitative and qualitative changes. Each single step in the production of new cultural agents can have a global impact on the development of the digital civilization. The enormity and rapidity of civilizational shifts produced by a single innovative solution or Internet message (perhaps even a fake one) is often perceived in a mythological context. The enormity of the changes produced does not always lend itself to rational explanation and forces society to resort to mythology to make sense of what is happening. Ancient and essential mythological images are most in demand today on the Internet and in the media environment, becoming part of the modern digital culture. Archetypes and other mythological constructions act as attractors of user-generated content aimed at describing the world around us. User-generated archetypal constructions reflect the simulacra of modern mass culture, attracted to "interpret reality with the tools of digital reality" (Shkaev, 2018, p. 128). Convergence of simulacres of digital culture and archetypal images is a substratum of mythological reality of the modern world.

Digital myth emerges through a new visual collective experience, different from the perception of myth, which has material embodiment in the form of images on utensils, clothing, artifacts, recalling the meanings in printed texts, which created certain barriers between the world of myth and reality (Lisenkova & Tul'chinskij, 2017, p. 26). Digital communications erase these barriers, immersing a person in a virtual space, urging the visualization of mythological motives.

A manifestation of the digitalization of individual myth-making processes is the evolution of branding philosophy. A brand is a social myth of the consumer society era, which ensures the incorporation of a company, its goods and services into the everyday life of a person. Today the brand "is not just a social myth, but an individualized myth" (Tul'chinskij, 2009, p. 51) and its content in the digital

society is constantly changing. If at the dawn of personal branding the social status of a person was mythologized, where the emphasis was placed on his achievements and successes in the public sphere of activity, with the spread of social media personal branding technologies appear, drawing attention to the personality of the person, his worldview and rich inner world. Today, personal branding strategies are implemented in the format of self-branding, which emphasizes the demonstration of feelings and emotions, so the attention of the media is gained by any person who openly manifests them.

In this context, the phenomenon of post-truth, defined as an information flow in which the appeal to emotion and personal conviction is a more important factor in shaping public opinion than the appeal to objective facts, seems natural. The post-truth ecosystem consists of fakes, which are informational hoaxes or intentional dissemination of misinformation in social media and traditional media for the purpose of misleading in order to gain financial or political gain (Hunt, 2016). Fakes have been called the myths of our time (Ruzicka et al., 2019), implying not only that they perform their function of constructing and explaining reality, but also the incorporation of mythological elements into the structure of fake messages.

The presence of mythoelements is also found in the digital culture phenomenon of the Internet meme, which should be understood as "a group of digital components that share common characteristics of content, form and/or expressed position, which are created with the awareness of correspondence to each other and have been disseminated, imitated and/or transformed through the Internet by many users" (Shifman, 2013, p. 363). Internet memes appear as an emotional response to news events and are almost always related to an agenda. They save users the effort of formulating their own position by offering a convenient and comprehensible interpretation of the information message, while reinterpreting the stories and images of mass culture and packing myths into a visualized form of a crealized text. The task of the Internet meme is not to broadcast objective information, but to accelerate the transmission of emotionally colored messages by creating a communication effect of involving users in the discussion of topical events (Johann & Bülov, 2019). This communication effect is achieved through the interpretation of the key message, including elements of myth.

Digital mythology finds its embodiment in computer games that visualize mythological motifs and create new myths. Plot lines of computer games are often borrowed from folklore, fantasy, pages of history, classical mythology, and the techniques and methods of their organization are subject to social mythologization. Gaming space is formed by a whole system of mythogenesis, which includes myths about the freedom of players, independence, lack of control from the outside, presenting it as a territory in which all the conditions for the realization of the creative potential of gamers are created (Sidorov, 2020). A computer game is created in the space of a myth, based on mythological elements, and becomes a myth itself, created by producers and the community of players for the purpose of its successful representation in the media environment.

7. Conclusion

Social media and digital technologies, by mediating between humans and the outside world, actively create a new mythology, drawing on the past and transforming the features and boundaries of the future. They create a virtual illusion of social reality, in which real events are relegated to the background,

yielding to the onslaught of mythologized images. The possibilities of new digital communications make it possible to create any mythoreality that is perceived by individuals as objective truth and spreads with enormous speed, including an unlimited number of people in the processes of mythologizing. Under digital conditions, the signs and images of the familiar human world have become part of the new media world, turning reality into a media reality filled with digital myths. Everyday cultural contexts are filled with mythonarratives generated by users who have become mythodependent. Mytho-dependence is one of the most important features of today's fast-changing world, built on vivid emotional images that fill the mass screen culture, which represents the digital myth through news, advertising, movies, Internet memes, computer games, etc.

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