Russian Journal of CULTURAL STUDIES & COMMUNICATION

Vol. 1, No 4, 2022

MGIMO
UNIVERSITY

RUSSIAN JOURNAL OF CULTURAL STUDIES AND COMMUNICATION

Volume 1, number 4

2022

Russian Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication

Peer-Reviewed Journal

https://www.cultures.mgimo.ru/

Table of Contents • 1(4) • 2022

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Russian Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication. 2022. 1(4). P. 4–20
DOI 10.24833/RJCSC-2022-1-4-4-20 Research Article

Mission Possible: Blogging Russian Orthodox Priests[1]

E.A. Ostrovskaya

Saint Petersburg State University

Abstract. The present paper dwells on the modern phenomenon of the clergy going online and exploring new audiences. The empirical study conducted by the author concerned the activities of popular Russian-speaking Orthodox bloggers whose heightening media presence is aimed at digital missionary work and catechism. The research was organized in accordance with the theoretical framework of the concept of communicative figurations that was coined by Andreas Hepp. This constructivist approach implies that mediatization blurs the borders between previously disentangled actors and encourages the growth of their interactions and, thus, a tighter social reality. To embody a communi-cative figurations-oriented study, the author lays down methodological foundations that are able to express the nature of personal practices and the reflections on them. For this purpose, the methods used consisted of case studies, expert and field interviews, and online text analysis. The findings can be set out in the following manner. Online media activity and social networking allow greater transparency and a wider audience. Despite stereotype and politicized doxa, the online demand for a specific niche of purely catechetic Orthodox priest blogging has existed for a decade and a half. Over the years, media practices of missionary work, catechism, and preaching have been formed, mainly on such social networks as VK.com, LiveJournal and Instagram, and on YouTube channels. This dynamic has been growing: priest blogs have acquired the audiences of tens of thousands of subscribers. This is because priests use contemporary language when addressing the public for the purpose of missionary work and catechism. They attract an audience of the Russian-speaking network of actors that is diverse in age, gender, and country of residence. Seeing and aiming beyond the conservative confines of an offline parish and church, blogging priests have the opportunity to create their own audience – to reach out to a particular generation, choose the style and content of a sermon or testimony of faith. In turn, the audiences choose priest bloggers according to their interests and the preferred methods of religious participation. Orthodox blogger priests strive to consolidate their efforts, to promote various forms of testimony of faith in the digital space. The central direct consequence of the mediatization of catechism and missionary practices is the promotion of a new image of the priest and a new version of priest–layman interaction, both contributing to a new church construct.

Keywords: digital Orthodoxy, social networks, priest blogs, communicative figuration, Orthodox blogging, digital missionary work, Orthodox media practices

[1] English translation from the Russian text: Ostrovskaya E.A. 2021. Missiia vypolnima: pravoslavnye batiushki-blogery. *Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture.* 5(1). P. 44–59. https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2021-1-17-44-59

Digital Orthodoxy is a dynamically developing online niche for engaging priests and lay people, Orthodox media discourses, forums, and priests' blogs on social networks. Until recently, this phenomenon was on the periphery of researchers' attention, and now sociologists and religious studies scholars are becoming increasingly interested in it. The years 2015–2020 saw the publication of studies on the dynamics of Orthodox media digitization (Luchenko, 2015), mediatized Orthodoxy of traditionalist media (Grishaeva, Shumkova, 2018), attitudes to the internet and Orthodox blogging (Suslov, 2016), the use the internet in the parish environment (Grishaeva, Busygin, 2020), the image of the Orthodoxy in secular media, and mediatization of pastoral care in the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) (Bogdanova, 2020). This new subject of research is characterized by its digital form and constant dynamic change. Its innovative form directly correlates with the rapid mediatization of modern Russian society, with the routinization and banalization of new media technologies, the blurring of boundaries between online and offline everyday life. In the realities of the 2020s, it will hardly occur to anyone to dub Orthodox media practices some autonomous virtuality. Moreover, as far as we can see from the current research, Orthodox media practices are a routine constituent of various venues on the Russian internet.

The rapid mediatization of Orthodoxy makes it impossible to travel the traditional route of reifying research results and conceptual models. Digital Orthodoxy is in a state of constant flux. Its media practices become more variegated, its technological infrastructure is developing, and the attitude to the internet and media technologies inside the Orthodox environment is changing, too. For instance, back in 2014–2016, researchers noted "digital anxiety" and unease over the internet among Orthodox clergy (Suslov, 2016).[2] However, 2020 publications with increasing frequency record a generally positive attitude on the part of Orthodox believers to the internet as a medium that offers direct access to priests; these publications also feature topics of online pastoral care and images of Orthodox priests in mass media (Morozov, 2016; Bogdanova, 2020). Journalists in both secular and Orthodox media write more and more about blogging Orthodox priests and their online activities.[3] The routinization of Orthodox media practices has come a long way from the late 1990s to 2020s – from digitizing specialized ecclesiastical and para-ecclesiastical media to creating Orthodox web portals and sites, to the first blogs of priests appearing on LiveJournal and YouTube, and finally to the variegated activities of Orthodox priests and lay people on popular social networks.

[2] M. Suslov proposed the "digital anxiety" concept as an analytical description of the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church priests who blog on LiveJournal to the internet and new media technologies (Suslov, 2016).

[3] Glinkin A. 2018. "A Blog is a Very Convenient Tool for Preaching": Why Priests Have Gone on YouTube. *Afisha Daily.* Available at: https://daily.afisha.ru/infopom/9074-blog-eto-ochen-udobnyy-instrument- dlya-propovedi-zachem-svyaschenniki-prishli-na-youtube/ (accessed: 20.12.2020); Segeda A. 2020. TOP-10 Best Priests' Blogs on YouTube. Pravoslavie.fm. Available at: https://pravoslavie.fm/glavnoe/top- 10-luchshih-svyashhennikov-blogerov-youtube/ (accessed: 23.12.2020).

Blogs on social networks are of particular interest for a sociological study of Orthodox media and the mediatization dynamics of modern Orthodoxy. As far as we can judge from the works of sociologists and anthropologists from outside Russia, it is religious blogs on social media that construct religious influencers, identities, and community boundaries today. Orthodox blogging (its key subjects, digital formats, infrastructure, actors, and repertoires) still remains a little-studied cross-section of the Russian-speaking digital Orthodoxy. What do blogging Orthodox priests bring on the internet? What tasks do they set themselves? What do they see their mission to be?

The present article will expound the results of an empirical study of a communication network of Orthodox Russian-speaking bloggers whose media practices are construed as digital missionary outreach and catechizing. My research proceeds from the hypothesis that the strategies of using the internet and media technologies emerge within the context of long-term digital practices of Orthodox priests who started personal blogs as a religious media practice of a testimony of faith. The key research issues were the forms of media communication in priests' blogs, their infrastructure and thematic framing.

Research methodology and methods. In selecting my methodology, I was guided by the fact that media practices of Russian-speaking blogging priests remain poorly studied. Consequently, such a study requires a methodological framework that would allow the researcher to elucidate connections between actors, media, and topics of Orthodox blogging. The communicative figuration concept proposed by Andreas Hepp (Ostrovskaya, 2020) has acquitted itself well as just such a methodology. This concept is becoming increasingly popular among scholars of religion as it allows them to analyse the digital practices of a particular religion in the context of wider mediatization of today's societies.

Hepp's starting point is the sum total of provisions of the socio-constructive approach (Hepp, 2020). Mediatization is understood here as a historically and culturally determined meta-process of social changes in all areas of social life, including religion. This process has three waves: mechanization, electrification, and digitization. At the digitization wave, mediatization penetrates so deeply into the sociocultural environment that it creates previously non-existent combinations of actors, media technologies, and media practices (Hepp, 2020: 5–6, 8, 11). Hepp proposed the concept of communicative figurations for conceptualizing the stage of society's "deep mediatization."

According to Hepp, communicative figurations are patterns of processes of communicative interweaving that exist across various media. It is in communicative figurations that people construct symbolically significant sociocultural worlds. Each such figuration has four constituents: communicative forms, media ensembles, a constellation of actors, and a thematic framing. The term "communicative forms" refers to practices typical of a society's specific sub-system (politics, economy, religion, etc.). A constellation of actors is a network of individuals connected by specific communicative practices. Such a constellation may be formed either by individual actors or by groups or organizations. Each figuration has only one constellation of actors that

perceives itself as part of it. Media ensembles are certain sets of media used by actors to mediate their communication and to form the environment used as a medium for the given communicative figuration. A thematic framing sets a landmark for a meaningful interaction between actors and at the same time is the point of figuration (Hepp, Hasebrink, 2014: 260–262).

The algorithm for empirical research into communicative figurations was developed by Hepp in cooperation with Uwe Hasebrink (Hasebrink, Hepp, 2016). In the multiplicity of media brought by the wave of deep mediatization, they propose singling out those that mediate an individual's practices – individual media repertoires. The media practices of figuration are correlated with a media ensemble. It might turn out to be scantier than individual media repertoires as regards the assortment of media engaged in it. Conducting interviews is the relevant method at this stage of research. Key questions here concern the pragmatics of using specific media in the figuration practices on subjects that are relevant for that particular figuration (Hasebrink, Hepp, 2016: 7–15).

Hepp and Hasebrink's methodology appears to me to be highly productive in two aspects. First, it contains an algorithm for researchers to access a given figuration: a sequence of steps for establishing connections between individual actors with a focus on individual media repertoires and the specifics of their use. Second, Hepp and Hasebrink proposed a methodology for determining the boundaries of a figuration. Hepp and Hasebrink believe that targeted empirical research requires adjusting to scale the boundaries of a figuration. These boundaries can be either scaled down to a group or a digital collective, or scaled up to the limit, i.e., to the media practices of a social field or system (Hepp, Hasebrink, 2018: 23–24). In the context of my research, the possibility of accessing the field via the study of the individual repertoires of blogging priests allows me to identify those communicative networks that are not rigidly tied to the practices and boundaries of local Orthodox parishes.

The empirical part of the research was conducted between February 2019 and December 2020. The principal research methods used were online textual analysis, case studies, and field, expert, and biographical interviews. The first stage of the research was information collection: analysis of publications about popular priests' blogs on Orthodox media, and subscriptions to personal accounts of Orthodox bloggers in order to monitor the thematic repertoire and main practices of blogs on social networks such as VK.com and Instagram, and on YouTube. This stage also involved collecting 23 field interviews with members of St. Petersburg Orthodox youth clubs at various churches in St. Petersburg. The second stage involved conducting expert interviews with priests connected professionally with the missionary departments of the St. Petersburg and Minsk dioceses (15 interviews). Experts were asked about their attitudes to the internet and new media, the media practices of the dioceses on social networks, and their assessment of online activities of blogging priests. The findings obtained at both stages were used to create a target sampling for specific case studies. Blogger target sampling was produced via respondent-driven sample selection (Heckathorn,

2007; Volz, Heckathorn, 2008). The following criteria were used: the blogger's age (the generation born in the 1970s–1980s); their relevant offline occupation as an ordained priest; regular blogging over the past four to five years; and the blog being thematically geared towards missionary outreach. The third stage involved conducting ten interviews with blogging priests.

My research was geared towards studying the media practices of Orthodox priests for whom blogging is not part of their professional activities, i.e., the activities they have officially been charged with. I took four blogs as representative cases to be considered for the purposes of the present article. Three of them are blogs of Russian-speaking Orthodox priests who embarked on their own media activities long before the Russian Orthodox Church made a decision on Orthodox blogging.[4] They use various media (YouTube, personal websites, LiveJournal). Their authors employed different media practices for addressing and engaging with digital audiences. Additionally, these three blogs were mentioned as good examples of the genre in interviews with other blogging priests and in expert interviews. The fourth case is somewhat different: it is an Orthodox priest's blog on Instagram with a non-trivial way of offering his testimony of faith and engaging with the digital audience.

An Orthodox digital blog's constellation of actors and media. Expert and blogger interviews invariably named three Russian-language blogs as the most popular, with the highest numbers of subscribers: "Batushka Will Reply" by Fr. Alexander Kukhta on YouTube; "Existence Between" by Fr. Sergius Lepin on LiveJournal; and Fr. Konstantin Parkhomenko's page on the Azbuka Very (The ABC of Faith) website. The fourth blog, "The Running Priest," was named in most field interviews with members of St. Petersburg Orthodox youth clubs. Additionally, the #батюшкаонлайн (#batushkaonline) hashtag links it to a public page made up of priests' blogs that are popular on Instagram. The author of each of these blogs was asked about opinion of the internet and new media technologies, the Orthodox media he uses, and his individual media repertoire.

The respondents offered highly positive assessments of the internet as a new space for the testimony of faith, a space that allows them to go beyond the confines of their parish or specific church and carry their preaching to tens of thousands of people subscribed to the blogger's channel or who regularly visit his site:

I have an article titled "Why Does an Orthodox Priest Need His Own Website?" I write that this is a chance for us to multiply thousandfold the words I address to people. I have been delivering sermons for many years to 20–30 parishioners, few people come to church on weekdays. The numbers obviously increase on religious holidays, to 100 or even 500. But I celebrate liturgy and deliver sermons on weekdays. And the

[4] Vlogs of Priests of the Russian Orthodox Church: Recommendations and Advice. 2018. *Moscow Patriarchate. Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media.* Available at: https://sinfo-mp.ru/-videoblogi-svyashhennikov-russkoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi-rekomendatsii-i-sovetyi.html (accessed: 25.12.2020).

internet has given me such an opportunity: first as audio recordings, then I began to upload videos of my sermons, and thousands of people watch them. And I know that even my poorly expressed word (I do not think of myself as an outstanding preacher) has provided support for people, healed them, led them out of some dead-end situations in their lives, saved from committing suicide, from despair and depression. I have given it much thought – why do I need a website? We know that Christians have always used whatever technological capabilities have been available to them. When Christ preached to people, he sailed off a bit from the coast of the Sea of Galilee in a boat because water carries sound far. And people assembled on the shore, and Christ spoke from the sea, a short distance off the coast, and his voice, amplified by water, carried to hundreds and thousands of people. St. Paul the Apostle invented an amazing epistolary genre. He began writing letters to various Christians. There had been private letters back then, but Paul's were what we call "open letters" today. He would make a note at the end: "read it and give others to read." John Chrysostom introduced an interesting practice. Tachygrapher boys followed him, writing things down. Then they would extend their shorthand notes, he would correct them, and final copies would be made and sold. That's why so many of his texts came to be passed down to us. The internet offers us incredible opportunities in this particular regard (Fr. Konstantin Parkhomenko).

The interview also stressed that new media technologies allow bloggers to choose their target audience, to address it in a particular communication style. The LiveJournal space that seems to have lost its erstwhile popularity still attracts those who prefer a friendly dialogue by way of written communication. Fr. Sergius Lepin's "Existence Between" blog is a stark example. Over 17 years, the blog has gained a stable audience that is constantly growing through the links to LiveJournal the author places in his accounts on other social media. It is crucially important to note that the blog's subscribers regularly take steps towards establishing offline communication with the priest. Many of them come to Father Sergius's church to see him and talk to him in person. They also join him on pilgrimages. In the interview, Fr. Sergius stressed that the media environment of the internet and social networks allow the lay person to choose to meet different priests, and between different forms of testimony of faith:

For 17 years, I've always had a little over 3000 subscribers. The influx stopped once LiveJournal was no longer one of the most popular social networks. Now I have a massive influx of subscribers on other social networks, for instance, on Facebook, where I started cross-posting. I have over 4500 subscribers there now, and another 1000 are awaiting confirmation. For now, I remain optimistic about this being a worthwhile endeavour. And it's not even a matter of the number of readers! Priests, like medications, should be different. There are people who cannot stand the type of priest I represent. And then there are those, on the contrary, who like my style. There are different priests and different audiences. My audience is often made up of people who have doubts, who are free both literally and figuratively, who have their own idea of what proper writing style is, people who care least of all about some Old Church Slavic words in

a text, about traditional devices in exegesis, people who are not very afraid of new things. But there was never any specific goal to preach to a particular group of readers. I did what I wanted to and what I liked: I chose things I wanted to write about, and I chose the literary devices I was familiar with and thought to be proper and possible. A priest should be himself. Virtual presence is friendly presence first and foremost, not official and formal presence under some instruction and duty. This is not a parish activity where I must celebrate liturgy in a certain way, deliver a sermon on a certain subject, talk to certain people even if I am not in the mood today and have an attack of misanthropy. Online, I can choose people who might be interested in me and whom I am interested in. When delivering a sermon, I must be universal because there are people there who have knowledge and those who don't, people who are educated and people who are not, right-wing people and left-wing people. In church, you must come to them with an invocation that is proper and instructive for everyone. And on LiveJournal, I could use words without having to think whether or not my reader knows what "transcendental apperception" is. When you write about things you want to write about in the way you want to write about them, then your online friends are those who like what you write, who find it acceptable. If a person is not interested in apperception, they will not visit your page again, instead, they will visit the page of someone who will tell them cardinal direction they should face when bowing to the ground and before which icon of the Mother of God they should light candles for a particular purpose. The rule is simple: write about the things you are interested in, and there will be people who are interested in that, too, or those who will write a hundred comments telling you why they don't care about this even one little bit. You know, it's like with doctors' clinical practice: there are situations when it does not matter whether you are an ophthalmologist or a cardiologist, you are first and foremost a doctor. But then there are situations when your specialization is paramount. It is the same with priests: in 99% of their practice there are "simply" priests. But as academics, theologians, columnists, and bloggers, they can afford to have a specialization and target a specific audience (Fr. Sergius Lepin).

Every interview clearly manifested reflections on target audiences and feedback from subscribers. The respondents stressed that their subscribers are guided in their choice by their preferences for particular media, styles, and contents of a certain blog:

The problem is that, mentally, we are stuck in the world of Internet 2.0, where social networks and horizontal connections rule the roost. That's true. But recently, the system has begun to grow more complex, the complicated algorithms of social networks and the constant bombardment of users with information have been added to the familiar ways things are. People now seek out people they like and trust, rather than a particular social network. But you cannot take a felt-tip pen and paint a picture using only one colour, just like you cannot cure any illness with a single medication. And priests should also be different. For instance, I am not a fan of what the priest NB does. Nothing but pink ponies and unicorns! But I understand there are groups of people who need just that kind of language. There is no universal approach that absolutely

everyone will like and that would meet every need (…) I was born in 1992, I am 28. Who is my audience? I have YouTube statistics, and it turns out that school children make up 0.1% of my viewers, while 50 % *are the same age as me.* I fit in with that generation, I grow, and my viewers grow, too. Many of them have some problems with the Church. But I understand that I cannot resolve these problems remotely. So, what I do is I sow seeds of thought that may sprout under the influence of other circumstances and will prompt folk to search for answers. In that way, YouTube is an ideal missionary thing. (Fr. Alexander Kukhta)

An analysis of answers given by bloggers on YouTube allows us to describe their audience: 60% are women, 40% are men; 85% live in cities. And subscribers are generally aged between 25 and 60 years old.

In every interview, blogging priests said that YouTube, VK.com, and LiveJournal were the most popular venues for people interested in the Orthodoxy. Subscribers like YouTube channels best because they prefer videos, while users of LiveJournal prefer long texts and the option of stating their opinion in the comments section and of engaging in months-long discussions. Instagram was seen as a network "mostly for women," since its prevalent communicative form is photos, brief captions, or tiny texts.

The author of "The Running Priest" blog had a radically different opinion of Instagram. Judging from his own experience, he characterized it as a reliable intermediary in establishing a direct contact with the young audience. Additionally, he stressed that Instagram makes it possible to quickly find like-minded people and establish connections in the Orthodox media environment:

Social networks are a reality of our life. I've long thought about whether I need it or not. Social networks help me find people; they may also help in self-fulfilment. Early on, I opened accounts on VK.com and Facebook. But I don't do anything there, I am not interested in being there. And then I launched an Instagram account because I wanted self-fulfilment, I wanted to protect myself and find like-minded people. In just six months, I had 4000 subscribers. Thanks to Instagram, an employee of the Orthodox TV channel Spas found me. I have been trying to start a running club here at the cathedral, at the diocese. People would listen to me and say nothing. And here a girl writes to me on Instagram inviting me to come on the Spas TV channel, to appear on the Morning on Spas programme. And I explained there why I run. By that time, I had already gone to Moscow with the #бегущийсвященник (#runningpriest) hashtag. So, it was thanks to Instagram that I got invited to Spas. And then I went back to St. Petersburg from Moscow and was invited to the Department for Relations with Sports Organizations at the St. Petersburg Diocese. I had previously phoned them, introduced myself and told them I jog. They wanted to meet me and asked whether I wanted to start a running club. Now I have an official paper that I am a chaplain at the running club at the St. Petersburg archdiocese. The club is called "Orthodox Marathoner," and literally a month or a month and a half ago, everything was finally settled. Currently, we have three priests there, a deacon, and five lay persons. So, we have about eight people there. That's all thanks to Instagram: I invite everyone, I tell people that we meet

every day at 6pm at the Central Park of Culture and Leisure for a nightly run. We have a locker room and a shower, everything is set up in such a way so that no one gets cold. We meet for cross-country runs (The Running Priest).

Thematic framing and media practices: missionary activities and catechizing. Most expert interviews stressed that rank-and-file believers (and priests, too) draw little distinction between missionary outreach and catechizing. Moreover, "frequently, even priests equate" these two independent types of religious practice. However, according to the interview, if lay believers are involved in relevant educational bodies at churches (clubs, Sunday schools and meetings, catechizer courses, etc.), they relatively quickly understand the essence of catechizing. Things are far more complicated with missionary activities, since there is no clear and single model of offering testimony of faith in different milieus of modern city dwellers. This subject is highly relevant for organizing online missionary activities of the Russian Orthodox Church's bishoprics. I will quote from an interview with the head of the missionary department for working with young people at the St. Petersburg diocese. In the interview, the expert gives a definition of Orthodox missionary activities, and reflects on the specifics of media environments, the need to develop new forms for everyday engagement in the missionary thematic framing, the language of preaching, and non-trivial media practices:

I have been engaged in missionary activities for the last 18 years. Missionary outreach is primarily a testimony about God, about the Glad Tidings of the Gospel, about the Church given outside a church to a person outside the Church. In the 1990s, my audience consisted of Old Believers, Jehovah's Witnesses, scientologists, and Krishnaites. I held discussions in such environments. With time, I began to intrude into closed atheistic communities. Proceeding from the premise that the mission, i.e., offering the testimony of God and the Gospels, is a commandment, the internet is a field where the Church should offer the testimony of God, the Gospels, Christ. We need to use the language of new media, such as social networks, web portals, apps, networks, websites, in order to address people, to call on them to engage in parish activities. Modern society is highly saturated with information, it is permeated with media. The Church here is lagging behind, as if running after a train that is moving away. Russian-speaking Orthodox bloggers, even the most popular ones, have several tens of thousands of subscribers. This is a very small percentage, a very small missionary field. My colleagues and I are now preparing a vlog, looking for a certain style and the right educational format. We are planning to start a channel on YouTube, since it is popular with young people. We have already created missionary groups on VK.com because this is the most popular social network in Russia. We understand that VK.com is losing its audience, but the network is popular outside of St. Petersburg and Moscow, in other Russian cities. Therefore, we should be engaged in missionary activities there, and so we have our missionary Vk.com groups of the Stavros Youth Missionary Centre there, for instance. Facebook largely has an English-speaking audience. Additionally, there is more intense personal communication there. Let me give an example. I was sent to the Philippines for half a year as a missionary in 2019. Upon my return, I saw

that I had a thousand Filipino subscribers, and we continue to communicate after my missionary stay there. Today, the Church is essentially facing the problem of creating a language for communicating with netizens. My colleagues and I are trying to find ways to address large network audiences. Yes, sometimes these ways are unusual. I am looking for ways to address atheistic communities. These are atheist groups on VK, for instance. Additionally, we created an original method of reaching audiences of millions: sermons on the social radio on the *Zello app* (Fr. Nikolay Svyatchenko).

A detailed description of innovative missionary media communication can be found in an interview with an employee of the Missionary Department of the St. Petersburg diocese. She is actively engaged in implementing a project of developing a format for media practices of mass online missionary outreach. In her interview, she noted that Orthodox missionary outreach is addressed primarily to non-believers or non-Christians, and this is a complex, highly variegated, and multitudinous milieu of modern mega-cities. Addressing such a milieu requires revising existing media formats, revamping the design and contents of outdated Orthodox sites, creating a network of missionary sites and web portals with the option of direct online communication and engagement between all those who are on a spiritual quest. The respondent particularly emphasized that her current experience of working at the missionary department reveals an acute need for developing new forms of everyday engagement within the missionary thematic framing. Clearly, there is a long-overdue need for updating the language of preaching, revising existing media formats, and creating new non-trivial media practices: *The Orthodox Church is represented on the internet thousands of times less than the Catholic or Protestant denominations. This is what the figures collected in academic research on Christian missions on the internet show. The Orthodox Church needs missionary sites. Regular Orthodox sites start with symbols: crosses, onion domes. Many people are in an existential crisis, they are looking for the meaning of life, some woe has befallen them, or they are at a cross-roads in their lives, they are pondering the questions of existence. If we look at internet query statistics for searches about "the meaning of life," we see that the numbers are quite high. But what search engines offer are standard, non-interactive Orthodox sites with their typical symbols, or some esoteric sites. We are creating a specialized resource whose contents will not push people away, that will contain answers to the questions: what is death, suffering, happiness, etc.? It will have missionaries on duty who will be able to immediately talk to a person who addresses them. We as missionaries are not particularly interested in Orthodox channels, because they already have an Orthodox audience. We need secular channels for our missionary activities. One such initiative is addressing a wide audience via Zello, a mobile app. It's an app designed in the United States, with many channels and 150 million users throughout the world. When you download it, it transforms your smartphone or iPhone into a walkie-talkie, a social walkie-talkie: you press a button and ask a question. There are many different channels. We launched a series of broadcasts at the Religion and Politics channel, which that has 135,000 subscribers. This channel offers round-the-clock communication on every piece of news and different religions, and every religion has its*

representative. With the approval of the channel's owner, we hold debates and interviews with Orthodox priests. Our broadcasts spark lively interest among the audience. In our missionary groups on VK.com, we advertise these broadcasts and upload those that have been held. We clearly understand that a missionary resource needs to be geared both towards people who are looking for answers, and towards people who do not yet realise that they are searching for answers. As with a street mission, we address everyone. To address large audiences, we need to channel our energy online. Blogging is a very important area in our mission because every person needs their priest.

In and of itself, launching a YouTube channel or starting a personal account on social networks does not mean entering the "missionary space of the internet." Every priest who has resolved to implement the religious practices of missionary activities, catechizing, and preaching in a media format has to independently search for the language and forms of offering an online testimony of faith. The author of the popular "Batushka Will Reply" blog stated that when he started the blog in 2015, he was not clear on the form and language of his chosen media practice. He chose missionary outreach as the main subject of his online work and wanted to address his peers, to speak a language his contemporaries would understand. After many years of work, he now has a YouTube vlog with 42,000 subscribers. He developed his own signature style of media communication on the testimony of faith presented as subject-driven videos:

When I studied at the Minsk *Theological* Seminary, I was hanging out with a groups that called itself the "Youth Missionary Brotherhood." And we were really engaged in social missionary work: we went to orphanages, hosted groups, organized huge festivals. At graduation, I was all charged-up to engage in some active work, and not just merely serve as a parish priest. And that was the result of my upbringing in the brotherhood. I was appointed to a parish outside Minsk. And I realized that for a person of my generation, finding self-fulfilment in that particular environment was fairly hard to achieve. Additionally, I am formally a church official, I work at the Synodal Missionary Department of the Belarusian Orthodox Church. I can say that it is a problem for us: in the popular ecclesiastical mind, "missionary outreach" and "catechizing" are mixed up. People, including priests, do not draw lines, while we try to draw them and to win back our territory. Catechizing means working with those who are already members of the church, who are baptized, with people who already belong with us. Missionary outreach means working with stereotypes and clichés. I thought carefully about it and found YouTube. At first, I did not understand what to talk about and how to do it, and I searched for a long time. Many of my first videos are hidden, they need to be reworked. Back then, I was trying to respond to different precedents, it was not always justified. The process of making a video consumes many resources, including time. You need to write a script for a video. This is hard, translating ecclesiastical subjects into simple human language is hard. Additionally, you need to take into account critics from your own milieu, too. Then, shooting and editing. Between 20 and 40 hours of work total. I try out videos on focus groups, depending on the subject, I show them to my programmer friends. Absolutely any subject can be treated from a missionary

angle. Now, for instance, I am writing a script for a video about abortions. I have long been milling the subject of a video about why we pray for the authorities. I don't have a content plan for the next year or anything like that. A missionary has to break a cliché or the traditional stereotype of a priest driving a Mercedes, to show that the Christian world is deeper, more complex, more interesting, to bring a person to the church. The purpose of my blog is to bring people to the church (Fr. Alexander Kukhta).

An analysis of the interviews with blogging priests leads to the conclusion that a long-term experience of communication about missionary outreach, catechizing, and preaching involves a constant search for new media forms. These new forms should be sensitive to the rapid development of the Russian-speaking internet's media environment, to the deepening mediatization of everyday life of modern society. I believe it is important here to quote from an interview with Fr. Konstantin Parkhomenko, a St. Petersburg priest widely known in the Orthodox milieu and beyond who creates content creator at the popular Orthodox web portal Azbuka Very (The ABC of Faith). For 16 years, he has been carrying out the media practice of offering the testimony of faith. During this time, he has travelled a long way from creating and maintaining his own interactive site to developing a new vlog on YouTube with 99,200 subscribers and tens of millions of views. In his interview, Fr. Konstantin stressed that transforming forms and formats of media practices frequently correlates with changes in new technologies, their infrastructure, and users' demand for them. Striving to address wide audiences of all ages, levels of education, interests, and overall competence entails innovations, flexibility, and creativity in inventing new forms of communication via the media:

Back in 1996, when I was a student, I hosted an Orthodox programme on a Protestant radio channel, there was no Orthodox radio back then. Since 2000, I've been hosting a programme on our Orthodox radio. I've been on the radio for many years. I teach, give lectures, hold classes. Our Orthodox content attracts shamefully few people, and this is upsetting. For some reason, people have no interest in it. Stand-up comedy garners half a million views. This is interesting for people, while Orthodox content is not. Additionally, Orthodox people are not trained to be interested, people are in some sort of a hibernation. In 2004–2005, I started my own site on Azbuka Very – this is a huge resource, and I have a site there. It has many sections: books, articles, photo albums, travel, pilgrimages, explanations of liturgies, photos with comments. Kirill Tantsyrev launched this resource, with his own money (…) I read in 2010 that by 2020, as much as 90% of all content will be in the form of videos. And I thought back then that making videos could be the way to go. And going into 2013, I began uploading videos from liturgies. Every day, I would comment on the Gospel online. Every day, we read the Gospel in church. Every day, we read a small excerpt. That way, we managed to read, the entire Gospel over the course of a year. This is called the Pericope. These videos are uploaded to the "calendar" section on Azbyka Very. People could open the calendar and read about the saints and listen to my conversation for that day, where I treat the reading for the day. It prompted huge interest among people, and I saw that it was in great demand. Thousands of people started writing that it was very important

for them. And I started vlogging. First it was about the Gospels, then it occurred to me to upload the sermons I deliver in church. Priests often call me to ask how to do it. They want to start a blog or an online mission, but they think they need a team and a lot of funding. I shoot everything myself during liturgy. There is a small pause during the liturgy, I go, set up a tripod, and turn on the camera. Then I go into the altar and finish the liturgy. The camera records me on its own, and then I edit the recording the way I want. I explain to priests that I do everything myself, I don't need any assistants, and only the most basic camera. The biggest problem is we don't have any money for this work. Only donations – for instance, people bought a camera for me (Fr. Konstantin Parkhomenko).

Expert interviews and interviews with blogging priests invariably reflect on a wall of alienation between "old school" priests and the younger generation, secular people. Priests of the generations born in the 1940s–1950s frown upon media practices of the testimony of faith and are sceptical about the new generation of priests that is willing to reach out to the audience directly. Against this criticism and against the resistance of the internal milieu, priests born in the 1980s–1990s are searching for new ways of engaging in missionary outreach and preaching, ways that could bring people to faith and to church. "The Running Priest" blog is a vivid illustration of an innovative practice of offering the testimony of faith. A biographical interview with the blog's author alexey_marafonec on Instagram reflects on the difficult path that opens for a priest who wants his mission to be in sync with today's texture of everyday reality. Such priests encounter a double problem: an outdated language and practice of religious communication in its offline format and the need to implement their innovations in a media format:

I am a practitioner, not a theorist. I want to show a different priest. I've been at the church, at the altar, since I was six, I've seen many things. I grew up in the Odessa Region in Ukraine. was born in the Czech Republic into the family of a military man. I've been here, at the Andreevsky Cathedral, for 12 years now: I started out as a chorister, I was a driver, a storeroom clerk, a sexton, a deacon. I graduated from the Odessa Seminary. I've gone through every role, starting from a regular lay person and a chorister. I was trained as a music teacher, a piano teacher. My running is a strong point of building up trust, calming unbelievers, those who are against the church people. They look at me and say that maybe things aren't that bad. There is much like that now: there are people and then there are priests. I am a priest myself, and this kind of outlook is beginning to disappear with me. But I remember the way it was before, the gap between clergy and regular people. I've been running for about ten years, and I've been running marathons for about eight years. After an ultra-marathon, it occurred to me to take the handle "running priest." I did face a wall of opposition to my running. I was prohibited from doing it. But I see the way regular people react to it. I am a priest, and I run. Those who run are with me already. This is the process of running – we meet to run, to train. This is my missionary work, the degree to which I or some of the guys set an example for people. Everyone who is going to come knows that I am a priest. A fervent atheist

is not going to join us. A larger half of subscribers to my Instagram account are people who have no connection to the church, many people are foreigners from all around the world, a lot of runners. The soul detaches itself from the body when you run a long distance (The Running Priest).

In their interviews, bloggers clearly state that there is great demand for various media practices of missionary outreach, catechizing, and sermon. The media ensemble of the communicative figuration of Orthodox missionary outreach features not only social networks such as VK.com, Facebook, Instagram, new Orthodox sites and secular mobile apps. Priests' blogs on LiveJournal remain relevant. The respondents explain this by saying that the audience needs "their own priest," as well as through the multiplicity of media practices of the testimony of faith. For instance, Fr. Sergius Lepin's "Existence Between" LiveJournal blog is invariably mentioned in all interviews without exception. The respondents believe its advantages lie in the fact that the priest uses text to address his audience, in his highly detailed and careful consideration of the Scripture, in its tradition of Christian theological and philosophical discourses. The textual media practice of the testimony of faith in this blog attracts lay people, secular people, and clergy alike. Theological discussions on this blog go on for years, the most complicated matters of the doctrine are addressed. When discussing the distinguishing features of the modern testimony of faith, Fr. Sergius Lepin makes special mention of virtual space being a reality of everyday routine and life, and it is high time we abandoned the outdated definition of virtual reality as something unreal. Media practices of the testimony of faith are important not only for people outside the church or for lay people, they are equally addressed to priests:

Blogging for me is a way of writing texts. Some people wrote diaries that were meant either for their children, or for some audience in a time far away (…) At some point, I began to move away from purely academic scholarship towards scholarship-intensive column writing. At first, I wrote for LiveJournal with a view to publishing what I posted there. But the writing turned out to be impossible to finish. This is a way of writing a book, maybe. I don't know whether it will happen. LiveJournal is a book you want to keep editing. But it turned out to be impossible to finish, to transform into a finished product. Anyway, not a single one of my books will be leafed through by as many people as have "leafed" through my LiveJournal. I have many hashtags on LiveJournal. The most popular are about the Gospels, interpreting and understanding them. This is obvious because I am primarily a priest, a preacher, a missionary. I write a lot, for instance, about musicians, but sooner or later everything shifts to the "subject of God," everything is about religion. Can a leopard change his spots? The same is true about a preacher: whatever he is writing about, it comes across like a sermon, even if not a sermon in the traditional sense of the word. I've also been on the "Batushka Online" project, and why not? A person lives in some village, hankers for communication, and it's good if that person finds a priest online. The idea itself is fine, I saw the possibility of giving the floor to priests that hanker for communication, for clever questions. You can celebrate liturgies for 20 years in some village parish and

hear no questions save for what to do with a candle stub from a funeral or what icon to buy to cure a headache. This is reality: you can be a priest for years and never hear a question about Christ, the Trinity, or Salvation (…) You will always hear about apples, Easter breads, eggs, but not always or everywhere about that. This life can dumb you down "professionally." And then there are lay people who cannot find a priest to have a serious conversation with about Christ: they only meet those priests with whom you can only talk about communion bread and bows (…) This resource also offers many tips for young priests: you can learn some tips, get some answers from your colleagues. You're not limited by space – that's great for lay people, too. This is why this project is needed by priests who want to give answers, and by regular readers (…) I am against contrasting the virtual and the real worlds. The problem lies in treating the virtual as something inauthentic, unreal. Things are far more complex! It seems to me that virtuality is a type of the mental and the intelligible, and if this is so, then this is a realm of spiritual warfare and of the attainment of virtue. The term "virtuality" can be derived not only from the Latin virtualis (possible, imaginary), but also from virtus – virtue. (Fr. Sergius Lepin).

Conclusion

The results of our study open up a radically new angle for looking at digital Orthodoxy. The media practices of blogging priests do not fit into the established models of academic presentations of digital Orthodoxy as "fearful of the internet," or as using media for certain politically motivated purposes outside the scope of faith. The interviews showed that missionary work, catechizing, and preaching are the leading thematic framings of media practices in priests' blogs on VK.com, Facebook, Instagram, and LiveJournal.

Most large blogs with tens of thousands of subscribers have existed for over 15 years as a stable communicative practice of a Russian-speaking constellation of actors varying in age, gender, and country. The Orthodox clergy from the generations born in the 1970s–1990s clearly reflect on the dynamics of mediatization processes in today's society and on the need to revise the media created at the early stage of Orthodoxy entering the missionary field of the internet. It is equally obvious for blogging priests that there is a need to expand the repertoire of media practices, to correlate new forms of offline missionary work with new formats of media faith practices. It is noteworthy that long-term media practices of missionary work and catechizing have emerged thanks to the personal initiative of individual priests. As for the thematic constituents of religious practices, these can be divided into missionary and catechizing for the blogs considered. Only few blogs combine both types of a priest's religious practice. They are representative of the variety of forms of the new language of preaching, missionary work, and catechizing – media communication in the forms of vlogs, education in the basics of serving the faith, comments on Biblical texts, and digital biographical history. One direct consequence of mediatization is promoting a new im-

age of the priest offline and a new version of the engagement between the priest and the lay person. Blogging priests are not constrained by the conservative framework of their offline parishes, and they can shape their own audience, address a specific generation, choose the style and content of their sermon or testimony of faith. The audience, in turn, chooses a blogging priest that fits with their interests and desired forms of religious participation. Blogging Orthodox priests strive to consolidate their efforts, to promote different forms of offering various forms of testimony of faith online.

About the Author:

Elena A. Ostrovskaya — Doctor of Sociology, Professor of the Department of Theory and History of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University. 7/9 Universitetskaya Emb., Saint Petersburg, 199034, Russia.
Email: e.ostrovskaya@spbu.ru

Conflicts of interest.
The author declares the absence of any conflicts of interest.

References:

Bogdanova O. 2020. Mediatizatsiia pastyrstva v Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi: predposylki formiro-vaniia saitov s voprosami sviashchenniku [Mediatization of Pastoral Care in the Russian Orthodox Church: Preconditions of the Emergence of Websites with Questions to the Priest in the Context of the Mediatization of Religion]. *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom [State Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide].* 38(2). P. 207–234. https://doi.org/10.22394/2073-7203-2020-38-2-207- 234. (In Russian)

Suslov M. (ed.) 2016. *Digital Orthodoxy in the Post-Soviet World: The Russian Orthodox Church and Web 2.0.* Ibidem-Verlag. 321 p.

Grishaeva E., Shumkova V. 2018. Traditsionalistskie pravoslavnye media: struktura diskursa i osobennosti funktsionirovaniia [Traditionalist Orthodox Christian Media: Discourse Structure and Peculiarities of the Functioning]. *The Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic & Social Changes.* 2. P. 291–308. https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2018.2.17. (In Russian)

Grishaeva E.I., Busygin A.G. 2020. Internet v pravoslavnom prikhode: osobennosti vzaimodeistviia pravoslavnykh pol'zovatelei s internet-tekhnologiiami [The Internet in the Orthodox Parish: Peculiarities of Interaction between Orthodox Users and Internet Technologies]. *Nauchnyi rezul'tat Sotsiologiia i upravlenie [Research Result. Sociology and Management].* 6(1). P. 3–15. https://doi.org/10.18413/2408-9338-2020-6-1-0-1. (In Russian)

Hasebrink U., Hepp, A. 2016. How to Research Cross-Media Practices? Investigating Media Repertoires and Media Ensembles. *Communicative Figurations. Working Paper.* 15. 19 p.

Heckathorn D.D. 2007. Extensions of Respondent-Driven Sampling: Analyzing Continuous Variables and Controlling for Differential Recruitment. *Sociological Methodology.* 37(1). P. 151–208. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9531.2007.00188.x.

Hepp A. 2020. *Deep Mediatization.* Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 248 p.

Hepp A. 2020. Issledovanie kommunikativnykh figuratsii mediatizirovannykh mirov v usloviiakh "total'noi mediatsii" [The Communicative Figurations of Mediatized Worlds: Mediatization Research in Times of the 'Mediation of Everything']. *State Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide.* 38(2). P. 98–123. https://doi.org/10.22394/2073-7203-2020-38-2-98-123. (In Russian)

Hepp A., Hasebrink U. 2014. Human Interaction and Communicative Figurations. The Transformation of Mediatized Cultures and Societies. In Lundby K. (ed.) *Mediatization of Communication. Handbooks of Communication Science. 21.* Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. P. 260–262. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110272215.249.

Hepp A., Hasebrink U. 2018. Researching Transforming Communications in Times of Deep Mediatization: A Figurational Approach. *Communicative Figurations.* Cham: Springer International Publishing. P. 15–48. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65584-0_2.

Luchenko K. 2015. Orthodox Online Media on Runet: History of Development and Current State of Af-fairs. *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media.* 14. P. 123–132.

Morozov E.M. 2016. Obraz sviashchennika v sredstvakh massovoi informatsii [Clergy Public Image in Mass Media]. *The Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic & Social Changes.* 6. P. 184–193. https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2016.6.10. (In Russian)

Ostrovskaya E.A. 2020. Mediapraktiki russkoiazychnykh ortodoksal'nykh evreev: zhenskie gruppy i ravvinskie blogi v Facebook i Instagram [Media Practices of Russian Speaking Orthodox Jewry: Womean's Groups and Rabbis' Blogs on Facebook and Instagram]. *State Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide.* 38(2). P. 263-292. https://doi.org/10.22394/2073-7203-2020-38-2-263-292. (In Russian)

Volz E., Heckathorn D.D. 2008. Probability Based Estimation Theory for Respondent Driven Sampling. J*ournal of Official Statistics.* 24(1). P. 79–97.

Russian Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication. 2022. 1(4). P. 21–35
DOI 10.24833/RJCSC-2022-1-4-21-35

Research Article

Antinomic Understanding of the Secular in Georges Florovsky's Works[1]

Vasily A. Shchipkov

MGIMO University

Abstract. The present article analyses the approach of Georges Florovsky to the problem of the *secular (worldly, earthly, immanent)*. Georges Florovsky gave the secular tendencies in the Christian world a negative assessment as they led to cultural crises. He proposed to seek their origin in the antinomic (God–human, both earthly and heavenly) nature of the Christian church. He deduced that the origins of secular culture stemmed forth from the medieval attempts to break this antinomy, to create Heaven on Earth. This could be seen in the Byzantine Empire (the subordination of the Church to the Emperor), in the Latin world (the assignment of secular power to the Pope), in the European post-Reformation thought (through the blurring of the distinction between theology and de-Christianized philosophy), and later in the Russian religious philosophy (attempts to formulate the idea of Christian state). Drawing on the concept of the divine-human antinomy of the Church, Georges Florovsky insisted that the Church should neither try to blur the line between the religious and the secular, nor attempt to influence secular politics, but should instead proceed from the fact that culture is intrinsically religious and substantially theologized. In fact, he objected to the ecclesiasticization of politics and offered to proceed from the assumption that Christianity (religion) is universal by default. Florovsky used a dual, dialectical approach in which secular discourse is seen as a religious discourse that aspires to secular power and consequently ceases to be religious, creating a kind of secular culture that threatens Christianity itself. In order to overcome this secular culture, Christianity is called upon to abstain from direct political influence on it. While avoiding limitations of the religious–secular du-alism of the Enlightenment and allowing the Church thought to prevent aggravating relations with secular politics, this approach fails to properly distinguish between the causes and the effects of secular discourse. The conclusion identifies ways of furthering Florovsky's approach and thought.

Keywords: Florovsky, secular, antinomy, Church, religion, Christianity

[1] English translation from the Russian text: Shchipkov V. A. 2022. Antinomichnoe ponimanie sekuliarnogo v trudakh G. Florovskogo. *Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture.* 6(2). P. 71–85. https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2022-2-22-71-85

Current discussions of the nature and limits of secularization and the prospects of a "post-secular" approach to analysing religious processes in today's world make it particularly relevant to turn to previous discussions of the secular that had been actively conducted in the second half of the 20th century.[2] The topic was also prominent among Russian religious philosophers of the time (with very few exceptions, Russian émigrés) since the time of Vladimir Soloviev, and it echoed through the works of Frank, Bulgakov, Vladimir Lossky, Shmeman, Berdyaev, etc. Fr. Georges Florovsky offered a particularly substantive treatment of "secularization." His thought had developed in the general vein of Russian religious philosophy. However, what set him apart from his predecessors was his frequent use of the terms "secular"/"secularization" (and "profane"/"profaning" as their synonyms), which had cropped up only very rarely and non-systemically before that. This was largely due to the "secularization theory" being developed in western sociology in the 1960s. That is, the notion of secularization as such became a widespread academic phenomenon (Florovsky lived in the United States at the time and, therefore, dwelled, if one might say so, in the western intellectual space). It makes it all the more interesting to understand Florovsky's interpretation and use of this term within his own religious and philosophical approach.

Georges Florovsky (1893–1979) lived a full life as a scholar, philosopher, priest, teacher, and public figure (he is particularly known for his active involvement with the World Council of Churches). His life spans the larger part of the dramatic 20th century. Florovsky spent his childhood and youth in imperial Russia (in Odessa). A few years after the Revolution, he emigrated to Europe (living in Sophia, Prague, and Paris), where he spent the inter-bellum years of the 1920s–1930s and the wartime period of the 1940s. After the war, he moved to the United States and lived and worked there until his death.

Florovsky's active involvement in public life garnered him renown both among Russian émigrés and in western intellectual circles. Late in life, Florovsky became a focus of intense academic interest. His legacy is the subject of many fundamental studies. Andrew Blane authored the first biography of Florovsky as a scholar and a public figure (Blane, 1995), while G. Williams offered an analysis of his neopatristic approach (both had known Florovsky personally). Their books were published in New York in 1993 (Williams, 1995). Pavel Gavrilyuk interpreted Florovsky's legacy as part and continuation of Russian religious philosophy ("renaissance"), casting him not as a fighter against the "modernism of the fathers of the renaissance" (Vladimir Soloviev, Sergei Bulgakov, Pavel Florensky, Nikolay Berdyaev), but as a follower of

[2] An analysis of the current state of the discussion of the secular and the post-secular goes beyond the scope of the present article. Publications on the matter number in hundreds (see the works of Y.Y. Sinelina, A.I. Kyrlezhev, D.A. Uzlaner, A.V. Appolonov, A. Belokobylsky, V. Levitsky, and I.G. Kargin in Russia, to name but a few, and also the works of Hermann Lübbe, Jürgen Habermas, José Casanova, Charles Taylor, Peter Berger, John Caputo, Kristina Stöckl and many others). As a specific example, see *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity* (2018), which contains papers by authors from all over the world.

them (Gavrilyuk, 2017: 475–498). Additionally, an important collective monograph entitled *Georges Vasilievich Florovsky* and authored by experts on Russian religious philosophy was published (V.S. Glagolev, P.L. Gavrilyuk, S.S. Khoruzhii, A.P. Kozyrev, M.V. Silantieva, M.A. Maslin, et al.) (Georges Vasilievich Florovsky, 2015). Not counting individual reviews of Florovsky's works written and published by Russian émigré philosophers (including V.V. Zenkovsky, Nikolay Lossky, Nikolay Berdyaev, and Myrrha Lot-Borodine), the first full-fledged studies of Florovsky's works were penned by English-speaking authors, many of whom had known Florovsky personally (Andrew Blane, Marc Raeff, F. Thomson, G. Williams, and Lewis Shaw). It was only after the arrival of *perestroika* that the philosopher's legacy began to be actively studied by Russian academics (archpriest I. Sviridov, N.K. Gavryushin, A.V. Sobolev, A.V. Posadsky and S.V. Posadsky, and many others) (Chernyaev, 2010: 5–12). The scholar Matthew Baker compiled the most complete bibliography on Florovsky's life and works, containing over 600 publications in Russian and many European languages (adapted into Russian and supplemented in 2015) (Baker, 2015). Another important author to mention is Alexis Klimoff, an American Slavist who emigrated from the USSR in 1944 and is known for his correspondence with Florovsky (Klimoff, Yermishin, 2016), and for his analysis of Florovsky's argument with Fr. Sergei Bulgakov on Sophiology (Klimoff, 2003).

Before embarking on an analysis of Florovsky's use of the concepts of "secular" and "secularization," we need to outline the range of our sources. This task faces us with two problems.

First, during his long and fruitful career, Florovsky wrote a large number of works. Alexis Klimoff believes that only part of them was included in the 14-volume American edition of the philosopher's works (Florovsky, 1972–1989), while many of his articles and speeches are still scattered through various journals and limited-edition collections that are virtually inaccessible (Klimoff, 2020: 117). Currently, there is no verified complete collection of Florovsky's works that contains all his texts in their original and authorized versions.

Second, until the mid-1930s, Florovsky mostly wrote in Russian, while after emigrating, and particularly during his "American" period, he largely wrote in English (Senokosov, 1995: 368). Accordingly, the absence of such a collection has hampered attempts to determine the original language of a particular work, and to determine which translations are original and accurate. The situation is complicated by the quality of the most voluminous edition of Florovsky's works, the 14-volume American edition, varying hugely from volume to volume. While the first volumes were checked and corrected by Florovsky himself,[3] subsequent volumes were published posthumously, thereby gradually turning into a montage of Florovsky's works with arbitrary titles

[3] There are testimonies of Florovsky being dissatisfied with some titles editors suggested for his articles. This shows that Florovsky paid a great deal of attention to interpretations of his views and to the accuracy of their presentation.

and deviations from their original composition, and accompanied by texts of other authors (the quality of the edition gradually deteriorates from volume 7 to volume 14) (Klimoff, 2020).

As a result, in some cases, we cannot be entirely certain about the original language of an article published in English or another European language. Moreover, we cannot even be certain that the article was originally written in Russian and whether it had been approved by Florovsky himself. We proceed from the premise that all the works published in Florovsky's lifetime (in any language), as well as the texts in the first four volumes of the 14-volume American edition edited by Richard Haugh were approved and, therefore, authorized by Florovsky himself.[4]

Bibliographical lists of Florovsky's works assist in working with his texts. The first and most well-known such list was compiled by the American Slavist Andrew Blane in 1993 (it was adapted into Russian in 1995 by Y.P. Senokosov) (Senokosov, 1995: 368–409). Later, Matthew Baker added a few works to the list (Baker 2015). The most complete and accurate list of Florovsky's works, including new posthumous editions, translations, and collections was compiled by A.V. Chernyaev in 2015 using and updating Blane's data (Cherniaev et al., 2015: 437–458).

It is important to keep in mind that Flovorsky's philosophical and theological views did undergo a certain evolution: his "Eurasian" period gave way to a "European" (Parisian) period, when he became disappointed in the prospects of Eurasianism. It was at this time that he undertook a fundamental study of Byzantine patristic thought in order to shape a traditionalist alternative to the modernist direction in religious philosophy. Finally, in his "American" period, Florovsky was immersed in work on public and theological problems, and became actively involved in developing international ecumenical dialogue. Florovsky focused on the problematics of the secular in the later stages of his career, when the term "secularism" itself began to spread throughout western academic writing. Nevertheless, Florovsky's views did not develop in a "revolutionary" way. Rather, they evolved gradually and in stages: in his "Eurasian" period, he was concerned with searching for alternatives to the secular western culture, which, in turn, influenced his interest in studying Byzantine theology and his further writing in general. At the same time, a "traditionalist" Orthodox religiosity played an integrating role in the development of his worldview.[5]

In the first half of his career, when Florovsky wrote in Russian (the monograph *The Ways of Russian Theology,* studies of Eastern Church Fathers, philosophical and theological articles published in various collections), he almost never used the concept

[4] Alexis Klimoff described Florovsky's close attention to translations of his works published during his lifetime. He cited a conflict between Florovsky and the publisher of the 14-volume American edition of his works: Florovsky was so unhappy with the publisher's unauthorized renaming of some of his articles written in English he considered suing him (Klimoff, 2020: 120).

[5] See a recent book by the French theologian Jean-Claude Larchet about Archpriest Georges Florovsky (Larchet, 2022).

of "the secular." Still, reconstructing his attitude towards secular problematics in the second half of his life, when he wrote mostly in English and used the word with greater frequency, is virtually impossible without turning to his earlier texts.

Florovsky viewed secular tendencies in culture as a historiosophic and ecclesiological problem. In this 1955 article "Faith and Culture," he offered a negative assessment of secularism, noting that 20th-century Europe had become a centre of "militant secularism" (Florovsky, 1974: 28). He linked these developments with a crisis the Christian world had been plunged into, both in the East and in the West. He suggested that the causes of this crisis should be sought in the history of the Christian Church's development. In his opinion, before Christian culture appeared, religion was not separate from politics and public life were not separate, they had a common nature and operated as a single whole. That was the case in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, where religious life and theology were parts of the socio-political system. Florovsky believed the same applied to the history of Ancient Israel, where "God's Law" and religious commandments operated in all areas of life and did not distinguish between "spiritual" and "secular" aspects. "Israel" itself, with all its political, economic, and religious features, was an integral "Church," a God-established society. Florovsky claimed the same of the European Middle Ages, where the same (religious) rules extended to all areas of life (Florovsky, 1974: 29–44).

Florovsky concluded that, from a religious point of view, culture has an integral nature, it does not involve a division into "the secular" and "the religious." He opposed dividing life into autonomous areas governed by their own internal rules – he opposed serving "two masters" (Florovsky, 1974: 29).

Florovsky saw the roots of the secular European mindset in the unique "antinomic" nature of the Christian Church (Florovsky, 1974: 28). In his opinion, the Church that exists both in heaven and on earth, theologically has an intangible dual nature that is both secular and spiritual. In time, this resulted in the concepts of two paths to salvation (monastic and secular), two types of authority (spiritual and secular), and two ideals of the Church system: monastic (a comprehensive transformation of the human being's inner world), and the ideal of building a Christian state, an empire (developing its outward appearance: legal, political, economic, and cultural, i.e., a society based on Christian foundations). Ultimately, Florovsky believed that, historically, two ways of arriving at a convergence between the Church and the world had emerged – one that attempted to subordinate the Church to the world, and another that attempted to subordinate the world to the Church. And he believed both ways to be "ineffective" (Florovsky, 1974: 28).

Florovsky, therefore, traced the origins of secular culture both to the Byzantine and Catholic church systems.

Florovsky saw Byzantium as a fusion of the Church and the state. There was no division into the secular and religious. Society was "internally" monolithic, it was a "universal Christian Society" (that has features of both the church and the state). But even Byzantium exhibited a struggle between secular and ecclesiastical, religious and

political trends. At the same time, even that society had "bodies" that performed different functions and differed from one another: "spiritual" and "secular"; "ecclesiastical" and "political."[6] The principles of the Byzantine church system were laid down back under Theodosius the Great (the last ruler of the Empire undivided into West and East), who made the affirmation and establishment of Christian faith and resolution of dogmatic issues a matter of state and attempted to unite by force the secular and the religious, the spiritual and the profane. Florovsky subjected this approach to a rigorous criticism, calling it "suspicious and ambiguous," claiming that the spiritual and profane aspects of life ("two forces") cannot be united and these attempts were precisely the source of the state's (the "kingdom's") pernicious effect on the Church and ultimately resulted in the collapse of Byzantium.[7] Similarly, Florovsky transitioned from an infatuation with the ideas of Soloviev and of the "renaissance" of the Silver Age's religious philosophy to criticizing them in his first years in emigration: on the one hand, he spoke of his contemporary culture having a shortage of "integral knowledge," and of "a religious synthesis" – that is, he claimed that culture of the time had come up short in terms of extending the religious approach to all areas of life; on the other hand, he was opposed to such a synthesis being based in Sophiology, claiming that it was incapable of Christianizing Hellenism (to offer a religious, Orthodox interpretation of contemporary European philosophy based in classical antiquity), unable to achieve a synthesis through some philosophical and mystical instruments separate from the Church (Gavrilyuk, 2017: 55–212), including pantheistic means (Posadsky, Posadsky, 2004: 265). Florovsky was inspired by Soloviev's ideas of unitotality, yet could not accept his non-Christian mysticism, and it prompted Florovsky to start formulating the "neopatristic" model of cognition (even if it did not assume a finished shape in his own works, it did push philosophical thought in that direction).

Florovsky used the same outline to describe the history of western Christianity: he saw the western Roman Empire, too, as an internally monolithic "political and ecclesiastical institution"[8] (both before and after the arrival of Christianity), and he linked the beginning of its cultural decline with attempts to artificially overcome the internal antinomy of the Church. Only the Catholic Church itself fell to the temptation of secular power instead of being ruled by the power of state. This drive within the Catholic Church led to a "religious and historical immanentism," to Christianity becoming "profaned," to a transformation of the faith into "gnosis," and to dogmas becoming formal and abstract legal norms, and sacraments turning into "naturalistic magic" and means of maintaining discipline (Florovsky, 1923). Nevertheless, Florovsky pointed to the Reformation as the principal cause of European secularization in the age of Modernity, as the Reformation opposed Catholic scholasticism and philosophy, even

[6] Florovsky G.A. "The Empire and the Desert." *Eastern Fathers. An Addendum.* Archpriest Georges Florovsky: From Unpublished Lectures on Patristics. URL: https://azbyka.ru/otechmk/Georgij_Florovskij/vostochnye-ottsy/4

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

though it was later forced to go back to a philosophy that had already been stripped of "Christian initiative": Aristotle made a comeback to now-Protestant societies; Leibniz and Wolff appeared; and pagan philosophical Hellenism, mysticism, and abolition of historicism were revived. Ultimately, in Florovsky's opinion, these developments resulted in German idealism becoming detached from Christianity (Florovsky, 1930).

Florovsky believed that secularization in Russia started with Peter the Great and was a state project. Citing the historian Yevgeny Golubinsky, Florovsky supported his claim that secularization in Russia became "a heresy of state and everyday life," a heresy that had been transferred from the West. Florovsky saw the principal contents of the government *reforms* of Peter the Great to lie in secularization, not westernization ("The innovations of the Petrine reform did not consist in westernization, it consisted in secularization") (Florovsky, 2009: 113). Florovsky saw German idealist philosophy as an important source of secular ideas in Russia in the 19th century (Florovsky, 2009: 192).

Florovsky adhered to the approach formulated by John Chrysostom: the Church is to advance a society based on the Christian principles of equality and fairness, a society practicing coenobitic life "as a monastery of sorts," without private property, where God owns and administers everything while people are his "servants." Historically, this idea has never been fulfilled, and, in Florovsky's opinion, it cannot be, since the Church (unlike the state) is limited in its instruments: it can only persuade and preach, but it cannot force and must not rely on secular centres of authority and power. Florovsky, therefore, understood the Church and the ecclesiastic system not as a special social institution, but as an ethical system based on three principles: the equality of all people; care primarily for the penitent, those in need, and the humiliated, not of the prosperous (a social problem is treated as a moral one); and preserving and transmitting the memory of the Church being "rather a spiritual home, than an authoritarian institution" (Florovsky, 1950–1951).

Florovsky criticized Byzantium, the Catholic world, and new European philosophy, as well as Russian religious philosophy from the Slavophiles to the followers of Soloviev (the very fact that Florovsky saw them as phenomena of the same order is noteworthy) for moving away from such an understanding of the Church. He criticized Soloviev for preferring the "human" to the "divine," for seeing the point of religion primarily in being a means of building a special society and state ("a free theocracy"). Florovsky accused Dostoevsky of the same, connecting the writer with the claim that the state should become a church "throughout the world." He levelled the same charge against Slavophiles who had sought ways of building a perfect Russian society based on Christian principles. Florovsky ranked Russian religious philosophy's ideas of building a Christian state alongside Catholic caesaropapism and clericalism, on the same level as freemasons, utopian socialists, and religions messianism ("Polish and Russian"), accusing them of searching for an "earthly kingdom," attempting to overcome the "yawning" gap between the heavenly and the earthly (the religious and the secular) through the use of "Gnostic dialectics," and using the "holy" for handling

earthly tasks (Florovsky, 1923: 169–170). On the whole, Florovsky criticized historical attempts to *churchify* politics and state, viewing the political as something incompatible with the religious (Christianity), as a threat that destroys the Church from within.[9]

At the same time, Florovsky also criticized the attempts of "Russian ecclesiastical liberalism" to conform the Church to the world, to force it to accept a secular culture. He called these directions of thought naïve external attempts to provide a religious justification for worldly prosperity and create a "secular religion" of sorts that would have no asceticism (Florovsky, 2009: 492). However, the danger of ecclesiastical liberalism, in Florovsky's opinion, has a far lesser scale and significance than any attempts to create a Christian state, a Christian theocracy – attempts that lead to a "secularization of Christianity" (Florovsky, 1948).

Florovsky never fully clarified the level at which the secular and the religious principles opposed each other before the emergence of the current secular European culture both in the East and in the West of the Christian world. By emphasizing its "inner" nature, the philosopher believed that, at first, there was no struggle between the church and the state, two societies or parties, because they constituted a single society; but there was a struggle of two inner forces and trends. It is not entirely clear what Florovsky meant specifically: whether this struggle had been theological, whether there was a certain higher general proto-theological and proto-political level of discourse; or whether it had been a dualistic struggle between two originally irreconcilable ontological principles.

As an Orthodox thinker, Florovsky throughout his writing career strove to overcome the dualistic gap in European modernity between religion on the one hand and the secular rational mind on the other. This is why Soloviev's ideas so inspired Florovsky in his youth (Gavrilyuk, 2017: 188) even though he refused to use Sophiology (which he consistently criticized) as his foundation. In this regard, he was attracted by the apophatic approach of the early Church Fathers who pondered "churchifying the mind" (Florovsky, 1931: 6). He was also attracted by the ideas of Christianizing Hellenism in the shape of a "neopatristic synthesis," i.e. interpreting the teachings of the Church Fathers from the point of view of their creating a qualitatively new Christian Hellenism. Even though the Russian scholar A.V. Chernyaev criticizes Florovsky precisely on these grounds and even calls this approach weak and unoriginal, he confirms Florovsky's intent to achieve a synthesis of the religious and the secular: Chernyaev views Florovsky's works as an attempt to offer an "Orthodox" reading of the history of philosophy using a "spiritualistic" approach, presenting a "religious and psychological interpretation" that borders on "religious reductionism" (Chernyaev, 2010: 182–185). What matters here is not specific positive or negative assessments, but the very fact that Florovsky and his predecessors strove to overcome the dualism inherent in Euro-

[9] For Florovsky, his criticism of historical attempts to politicize Christianity did not mean a believer's refusal to engage in politics as such. Florovsky's own participation in ecumenical conferences contains elements of a political activity.

pean Modernity. To achieve this, he derived the nature of secular ("profane") discourse from chiliastic religious teachings that, in his opinion, are too taken with the idea of a perfect earthly kingdom and forget the life eternal (Florovsky, 1923: 169–171). He termed such a worldview a religious teaching of a special kind, a "religious and historical immanentism" that believes in the earthly world and is engaged in building an earthly kingdom, a worldview that affirms the "covenant of law" instead of the "covenant of grace." By calling ecclesiastical liberalism a "secular religion," Florovsky essentially traced it back to the same chiliastic source. Subsequently, he concluded that disputes between secular and religious cultures, between belief and non-belief, between theology and secular learning are religious disputes between "rival beliefs" (Florovsky, 1974: 11): a person's attitude to any cultural process is always a "theological decision," and a controversy about culture is a theological controversy (Florovsky, 1974: 15).

On the other hand, he described secularization as a process leading to a negation of religions mind. For instance, he described the "capitalist civilization" of European Modernity as "inwardly secularized," a process that is opposed to "any religion" (Florovsky, 1974: 22). The same applies to his assessments of "immanentism" that leads to a decline of the religious mind as such. Florovsky saw secular trends as the main danger of today, and consequently he devoted a major part of his works to searching for ways to overcome the secular culture.

The thinker contrated secular culture with religious culture, which he understood to mean a "normative setting of personal creativity," i.e. solely as a human being's spiritual state and ethical norms. For Florovsky, religious culture should shirk from any desire to set up a "system," bureaucratic institutions, and particularly a state. Florovsky adhered to Christian individualism: he denied the existence of external objective social laws and public ideals. For Florovsky, the absolute may manifest itself solely in a personality, in a "feat of perfecting one's self" (Florovsky, 1923: 171). A person's public role and activity are part and consequence of their personal spiritual development (the "personal" includes the "social"). He called "belief" a path towards the true world, yet "belief is just a map of the true world, and should not be mistaken for reality" (Florovsky, 1951).

Thus, while criticizing secular culture and contrasting it with Christian culture, Florovsky repeatedly said that true Christianity is alien to any public and state functions and powers, that Christianity is an exclusively individual, private practice: "new Jerusalem" will never become a "caliphate," a "public ideal," God's Kingdom on Earth. Consequently, the Church should not try to influence any state system, any social and political normativity.

Florovsky saw the principal threat for today's Christian world in the "secularization" of culture. Essentially, however, he did not suggest opposing this culture by erecting a certain alternative to it in the shape of a new religious culture. Instead, he proposed bolstering the Church and faith, living and acting as if the secular world did not exist. He did not advocate fighting against it in public space, using any political methods. Rather, he suggested that only the practice of "self-improvement" be used to oppose it (Florovsky, 1951). That is, while discerning implicitly religious features (to

use Edward Bailey's term) in the secularization trends of the European Modernity, seeing it as a religion of an earthly kingdom, he simultaneously perceived these trends as anti-religious. Florovsky eliminates the clear paradox inherent in these views by stating that the earthly and the heavenly are antinomic in nature as a matter of principle. However, some gaps remain in his arguments, and this prompts questions.

First, it remains unclear why secular (profane, immanent) discourse, being a form of chiliastic religion, leads to the decline of any religion: How can a religion exist that is not merely nihilistic, but denies its own existence? This contradiction is partially eliminated if we take into account the fact that Florovsky frequently took "religion" to mean Christianity itself (this is indirectly evidenced by his claim that a synthesis of all beliefs is incapable of creating a true and universal "religion," that it will not produce Christianity, since different beliefs are not equal, and are not equally true (Florovsky, 1923: 160)). In this case, however, Florovsky's claim that secular discourse (which ultimately denies Christianity itself) stems from the antinomic nature of the Church remains incomplete and unfinished. If a third follows from an antinomy, it smacks of dialectics which Florovsky also mistrusted as a secular philosophical method.

Second, Florovsky deduced the antinomy of the religious (Christian) and political principles from the antinomy of the secular and the heavenly in the Church. But he never developed this opposition further. On the one hand, admitting such an antinomy leads to the claim that politics is closely tied to religion, that they form an indivisible whole. On the other hand, this claim means that the political has its own nature and agency: while criticizing the Church's "political" claims, Florovsky never critiqued the existence of the "political," thereby essentially leaving this space untouchable, inaccessible, but boosted its reality as self-sufficient. Also, while noting the inadmissibility of the Church participating in politics, Florovsky never provided an ultimate definition of the political in its connection with the secular.

This approach inevitably creates methodological contradictions: the programme of churchifying first Hellenism and then culture runs into the fact that it either produces secular discourse out of itself or cannot identify its subject since the nature of secular discourse remains incompletely described. The fact that Florovsky turned to Church Fathers did not eliminate this problem: going back to Orthodox patristics in order to alter the 20th-century (secular) culture inevitably depended on the historical and linguistic features of this culture; it needed an answer to the question of what "religion" and "secular" are.

Finally, there was the unresolved task of defining the causes of the origins and nature of secular culture, which complicated the task of distinguishing its causes and consequences.

Mikhail Maslin offered a very accurate description of the duality of Florovsky's methodological programme that does not diminish its fundamental nature. In his view, Florovsky consistently replaced "philosophy with theology," but ultimately the "philosophical element" in Florovsky's works proved to be stronger than the "theological element" (Maslin, 2015: 378).

The contradictions listed above partially explain why Florovsky's contribution to philosophy still receives varied assessments. Some authors use his approaches to criticize theological modernism (primarily within Russian religious philosophy), while others use it to develop liberal trends in Orthodox theology (for instance, Florovsky's student John Ziziulas, a theologian and a titular bishop of the Patriarchate of Constantinople who is today frequently criticized for how close his views come to Catholic personalist theology (Larchet, 2021)).

Presumably, Florovsky's ideas could further develop in three major directions. First is the recognition of secular discourse as inevitable, planned, and decreed by God, arising from the very nature of the Church as a divine-human organism: this approach would attempt to legitimize secular discourse from a Christian point of view, as Protestant political theology and liberal Catholic movements in the 20th century did. Second is the search for the source of secular discourse in some "third" dimension that overcomes the antinomy: in an additional, Gnostic, Sophian element in God and the universe. Neither of these directions was acceptable for Florovsky, as they would conflict with Orthodoxy rooted in patristics. A third way would require a major reworking of the language of his exposition, going beyond the established language of 20th-century religious philosophy that was seeking to conform to the conventional language of international (western-centric, Protestant/Catholic) academic community. This would create a need for philosophy to be radically re-subordinated to theology while fully incorporating the "secular religion" (secular discourse) into theology. However, Florovsky's philosophy is "diplomatic" rather than "militant": he proposed moving away from secular culture peacefully, without giving grounds for persecution on the part of "militant secularism," and without staking a claim to overturning the social system, much less revising the conventional, "profaned" language of philosophy. Essentially, Florovsky suggested that the Church abandon its participation in political projects, build ecclesiastical life focused solely on parishioners' individual and private religiosity as if the outer secular culture did not exist, and abolish attempts to outwardly *churchify* secular culture, focusing instead on preserving the *churchified* Hellenism as the foundation of the Christian present, while glossing over the fact that this approach as such has significant political content.

Florovsky used patristics ("Christian Hellenism"), legitimized not so much by the Revelation as by the Hellenistic origins of contemporary culture, as his "third" fulcrum point, which allowed him to make certain unequivocal judgments and rise above antinomy and dialectics (Gavrilyuk, 2017: 20–21, 74–77). Accordingly, Florovsky gave Christianity a universal (catholic/ *kafolichesky*) tinge through the use of Hellenism that, in turn, produced and justified the philosophical (or religious and philosophical) method. Deviations from this method towards the "old" classical Hellenism were the source and threat of the secularization of the Church and culture. That, in turn, created dialectic tensions along the axis from by Christianity on the one hand and Hellenism and its antinomic nature on the other (Hellenism here acquires a universal

philosophical status and becomes a euphemism for cognition itself – that is, it has a certain fulcrum in itself that is different from Christianity), and subsequently, these features affect the perception of the secular.

Thus, Fr. Georges Florovsky used the term "secular" as a synonym for "profane," "earthly," "immanent." He saw the source of secular discourse in historical attempts to overcome the insurmountable spiritual/worldly, divine/human antinomy of the Church, and he saw the principal danger for Christianity in the desire to build a "Christian state." In his eyes, many were guilty of such attempts: Byzantium, Catholics, Protestants, and even Russian religious philosophers from Slavophiles to the followers of Vladimir Soloviev, who used Christianity to formulate and construct a chiliastic socio-political utopia ("heaven on earth") in the shape of a "Christian state," a formalized public order where the Church is stripped of its inner antinomy and Christian norms are fused with bureaucratic procedures and political decisions. He consistently traces the sources of secular culture to the medieval practices of integrating the earthly and spiritual natures of the Church: Byzantium did it by subordinating religions issues to political authorities; the western world did it by having the ecclesiastical primate (the Pope) appropriate secular power first and then, after the Reformation, by erasing the boundary between theology and de-Christianized philosophy, which created secular learning. Florovsky saw both ways as leading towards a strengthening of "secular culture," secularizing (profaning) the Church and Christianity. He placed Christian "religious culture" in opposition with "secular culture." Florovsky viewed Christianity ("religious culture") solely as an ethical system, a personal faith, a private practice regulated by the ecclesiastical tradition, but stripped of any political claims. Therefore, for Florovsky, the Church should not directly influence the state system or social and public norms, and it particularly should not attempt to create a Christian state. Citing the God-man antinomy of the Church, he insisted that the Church should not erase the boundary between the religions and the secular (the profane), nor should it attempt to influence worldly culture and politics, because from the Christian point of view, any culture (including philosophy and politics) is already a religious phenomenon and has a theological dimension (in Florovsky's thinking, the religions element in culture did not claim to combat the secularity of Modernity, and was treated as a general premise typical for Russian religious philosophy overall). Essentially, he called for accepting the universal nature of Christianity (religion) by default and for abolishing attempts to *churchify* politics. In other words, he proposed not engaging in conflict with politics and secular ontology. Florovsky attempts to avoid both providing a Christian justification for "secularization" (as Protestant theology did sometimes) and explaining the secular through Gnostic elements (which was not entirely alien to some Russian religious thinkers). Essentially, Florovsky used a dualistic antinomic approach wherein the secular discourse is a religious discourse that yearns for secular power and consequently ceases to be religious and creates a secular culture that threatens Christianity itself. In order to overcome this secular culture, Christianity should abandon attempts to exercise direct political influence on it. This approach was largely buttressed by his "Christian Hellenism" concept, where

the problem of secularizing culture was presented as a result of a struggle between two modalities, two Hellenistic antinomies (Christian and that of classical antiquity), while Hellenism itself in this picture became a veiled euphemism for secular philosophy amid the outward *churchifying* of philosophy.

This approach prevented Florovsky from clearly discerning the causes and consequences of secular discourse, from giving clear answers to the questions of how the original "religious sources" of the secular may lead to the denial of religion itself, of what exactly "religion" and "politics" are and how "Christianity" differs from "religion" (such a thought can be seen in Florovsky), and, finally, of what the original source of secular discourse is. In *churchifying* philosophy via a "neopatristic synthesis," Florovsky added patristic Christianity to the antinomic and partially dialectical interpretations of secular thought without undertaking any serious attempts to revise the very concept of a secular present. It allowed for a non-conflicting and expansive introduction of an interest in the patristic legacy into the western thought, but it also, from the very outset, restricted the interpretative possibilities of this line of thinking.

About the Author:

Vasily A. Shchipkov – PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor in the Department of International Journalism, MGIMO University, 76, Prospect Vernadskogo, Moscow, Russia, 119454, Russia.
Email: shchipkov_v_a@mgimo.ru

Conflicts of interest.
The author declares the absence of any conflicts of interest.

References:

Baker M. 2013. Addenda to the Primary Bibliography of Georges Florovsky. *Teologikon*. 2. P. 249–252.

Baker M. 2015. Izbrannaia bibliografiia rabot o zhizni i tvorchestve G.V. Florovskogo [Selected bibliography of works on the life and work of G.V. Florovsky]. *Georgii Vasil'evich Florovskii [Georges Vasilievich Florovsky]*. Moscow: ROSSPEN. P. 459-505. (In Russian).

Blane A. (ed.) 1993. A Sketch of the Life of Georges Florovsky. *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman*. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press. P. 11-217.

Blane A. 1995. Zhizneopisanie ottsa Georgiia [Biography of Father George]. *Georgii Florovskii: sviashchennosluzhitel', bogoslov, filosof [George Florovsky: clergyman, theologian, philosopher]*. Moscow: Progress. P. 7-240. (In Russian).

Cherniaev A.V., Baissvenger M., Ermishin O.T. et al. 2015. *Georgii Vasil'evich Florovskii [George Vasilievich Florovsky]*. Moscow: ROSSPEN. 517 p. (In Russian).

Chernyaev A.V. 2010. G.V. *Florovskii kak filosof i istorik russkoi mysli [G.V. Florovsky as a philosopher and historian of Russian thought]*. Moscow: Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 199 p. (In Russian).

Florovsky G.V. 1923. Dva Zaveta [Two Testaments]. *Rossiia i latinstvo [Russia and Catholicism]*. Berlin. P. 152-176. (In Russian).

Florovsky G.V. 1930. Spor o nemetskom idealizme [Controversy Over German Idealism]. *Put' [The Way]*. 25. P. 51-80. (In Russian).

Florovsky G.V. 1931. *Vostochnye Ottsy IV veka: Iz chtenii v Pravoslavnom bogoslovskom institute v Parizhe [The Eastern Fathers of the IV Century. From Readings at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris]*. Paris. 239 p. (In Russian).

Florovsky G.V. 1948. The Church: Her Nature and Task. *The universal Church in God's design: an ecumenical study.* London: SCM Press. P. 42-58.

Florovsky G.V. 1950-1951. The Social Problem in the Eastern Orthodox Church. *The Journal of Religious Thought*. 8(1). P. 41-51.

Florovsky G.V. 1951. As the Truth is in Jesus (Ephesians 4: 21) (The Lost Scriptural Mind). *The Christian Century*. 68(51). P. 1457-1459.

Florovsky G.V. 1972-1989. *Collected Works: in 14 vol.* Vaduz: Buchervertriebsanstalt.

Florovsky G.V. 1974. Faith and Culture. *Christianity and Culture.* Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company. P. 9-30.

Florovsky G.V. 2009. *Puti russkogo bogosloviia [The Ways of Russian theology]*. Moscow: Institut russkoi tsivilizatsii. 848 p. (In Russian).

Gavriliuk P. 2017. *Georgii Florovskii i religiozno-filosofskii renessans [George Florovsky and the Religious and Philosophical Renaissance]*. Kiev: Dukh I L1TERA. 536 p. (In Russian).

Gavrilyuk P.L. 2013. *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 320 p.

Senokosov Y. P. (ed.) 1995. *Georgii Florovskii: sviashchennosluzhitel', bogoslov, filosof [George Florovsky: clergyman, theologian, philosopher]*. Moscow: Progress. 416 p. (In Russian).

Klimov A. E. 2003. G.V. Florovskii i S.N. Bulgakov: Istoriia vzaimootnoshenii v svete sporov o sofiologii [G.V. Florovskii i S.N. Bulgakov: The History of Relationships in the Light of the Sophiological Controversy]. *S.N. Bulgakov. Religiozno-filosofskii put' [S.N. Bulgakov. Religious and philosophical path]*. Moscow: Russkii put'. P. 86-114. (In Russian).

Klimov A. E. 2020. Chetyrnadtsatitomnoe sobranie sochinenii protoiereia Georgiia Florovskogo: kriti¬cheskie zamechaniia [Fourteen-volume collected works of Father George Florovsky: critical remarks]. *Voprosy bogosloviia*. 1. P. 115-133. (In Russian). https://doi.org/10.31802/2658- 7491-2020-1-3-115-133

Klimov A.E., Ermishin O.T. 2016. Pis'ma G.V. Florovskogo A.E. Klimovu (1966-1975) [Letters from G.V. Florovsky to A.E. Klimov (1966-1975)]. *Ezhegodnik Doma russkogo zarubezh'ia imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna [Yearbook of the House of Russian Diaspora named after Alexander Solzhenitsyn]*. 6. P. 581-608. (In Russian).

Larchet J.-C. 2021. *Litso i priroda. Pravoslavnaia kritika personalistskikh teorii Khristosa Iannarasa i Ioanna Ziziulasa [Face and nature. Orthodox criticism of the personalist theories of Christos Yannaras and John Zizioulas]*. Moscow: Palomnik. 288 p. (In Russian).

Larchet J.-C. 2022. *"Posleduia sviatym ottsam…": Zhizn' i trudy protoiereia Georgiia Florovskogo. ["Following the Holy Fathers...": The Life and Works of Archpriest Georgy Florovsky]*. Moscow: Palomnik. 188 p. (In Russian).

Larchet, J.-C. 2019. *"En suivant les Peres...": la vie et l'œuvre du Pere Georges Florovsky.* Geneve: Editions des Syrtes. 496 p.

Maslin M.A. 2015. Istoriko-filosofskoe nasledie G.V. Florovskogo i ego znachenie dlia dukhovnoi kul'tury Rossii [Historical and philosophical heritage of G.V. Florovsky and its significance for the spiritual culture of Russia]. *Georgii Vasil'evich Florovskii [Georges Vasilievich Florovsky]*. Moscow: ROSSPEN. P. 358-380. (In Russian).

Posadsky A.V., Posadsky S.V. 2004. *Istoriko-kul'turnyi put' Rossii v kontekste filosofii G. V. Florovskogo [The historical and cultural path of Russia in the context of the philosophy of G. V. Florovsky]*. Saint Petersburg: Izd-vo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta. 379 p. (In Russian).

Beaumont J. (ed.) 2018. *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity.* New York: Routledge. 470 p. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315307831

Williams J. 1995. Nepatristicheskii sintez Georgiia Florovskogo [Non-patristic synthesis of George Florovsky]. *Georgii Florovskii: sviashchennosluzhitel', bogoslov, filosof [George Florovsky: clergyman, theologian, philosopher].* Moscow: Progress. P. 307-366. (In Russian).

Williams G. 1993. The NeoPatristic Synthesis of Georges Florovsky. In Blane A. (ed.) *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman.* Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press. P. 287–436.

Russian Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication. 2022. 1(4). P. 36–48 Research Article
DOI 10.24833/RJCSC-2022-1-4-36-48

Sociocultural Analysis of Millennials in Russia[1]

E.V. Zaburdaeva

MGIMO University

Abstract. The present article provides a sociocultural analysis of parameters of the millennials, the generation which will become the main workforce in Russia in the next ten years. This is what gives the paper its relevance. The paper focuses on the market and micro-interactionist influence of basic traits of millennials. The issue of how to behave towards millennials is faced both at the sociological and managerial levels. It is said that the large number of conflicts between millennials and older generations leads to systematic disruption and turbulence, as it does not allow young employees to integrate into corporate cultures and increase labour efficiency, which simultaneously affects older employees, management and corporative performance. Another aspect of the core issue raised by the author is educating the youth. Understanding the set of core values of millennials, their strategies and behavioural tactics in the workplace is also a prerequisite for teachers and instructors to successfully train students of this generation in universities. Like many recent studies, this research considers the distinctive features that can be used to characterize millennials. They, being digital natives, shift to more rapid, discrete and depersonalized forms of communication. Focused on managing their personal image and identity, millennials prefer to play socially desirable roles and tend to reframe their own failures into external misfortunes. This brings about the issue of meeting set goals, and nowadays the youth tends to plan less and thrives on regular feedback that they expect to be positive. These features are most likely to breed intergenerational misunderstanding. However, millennials tend to be more flexible and tolerant than other generations, which is useful for settling controversies and speaks to the overall success of interaction and effort on the part of this generation. The author, addressing the challenges of communication with the modern youth, offers recommendations based on her own pedagogical experience of interaction with millennials. These are: provide basic guidelines, time plans, and assessment benchmarks. Managerial staff should also dedicate more effort to mentorship and peer-level communication.

Keywords: generations, generational theory, millennials, human resources, higher education, adaptation, mentoring, communications, values, information field, labour market

[1] English translation from the Russian text: Zaburdaeva E.V. 2020. Analiz sotsiokul'turnykh osobennostei pokoleniia millenialov v rossii. *Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture.* 4(4). P. 122–134. https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2020-4-16-122-134

Universities began to enrol millennials in their BA programmes in 2002, and will enrol the last students from this generation in 2022. Today, people born in 1997 are entering the job market, that is, the market will be taking in millennials for a long period still. Currently, corporate strategies intended to integrate university graduates into the corporate environment boil down to radically changing the attitudes of young employees to work and forcing them to accept previously established corporate culture and labour discipline rules. So far, this strategy is working, but in seven years, millennials will dominate the market and, consequently, will start to dictate, among other things, their own rules for working conditions. Those companies that are already transforming their corporate cultures and personnel training programmes in order to make them a good fit for the new generation will gain the upper hand. Millennials are a generation so different from those that came before them that their worldview, means of consuming and disseminating information, ideas of the work-life balance, and the distinguishing features of their communications will seriously affect the mechanism of finding new talent and, ultimately, how companies formulate their business strategies, mission, visions, objectives, and goals.

Russian companies traditionally prioritize business strategies. The newly emerged demand for corporate culture and philosophy in the country has been accompanied by a trend towards clearly articulating its concepts and values. Unfortunately, in many cases they were articulated nominally and were not subsequently used in business processes as guidelines for action (Kapelyushnikov, Lukyanova, 2010: 7). Since values are not an empty word for millennials, they will give their companies an insight into the values mechanism and its functioning and demonstrate to their senior colleagues the interrelation between a company's values, mission, vision, and business strategy, and how to make these values increase the company's revenues (Smolskaya, 2017: 4). Executives need to come up with mechanisms for engaging young employees in disseminating corporate philosophy among the personnel and outside stakeholders, and quickly.

My 15 years as a faculty member at the MGIMO School of International Journalism and a business coach at MGIMO *School* of *Business* have given me a unique opportunity to see and analyse an entire generation – the so-called "millennials." First, let's describe MGIMO's incoming students. In 2020, in particular, "admission score remained high: 96.2 points for state-funded students and 85.2 for fee-paying students. Some Schools (International Law, International Relations) had an average admission score of 97–98 for state-funded students and 92–93 for fee-paying students.

Over half of the new class enrolled in MGIMO (52%) finished school with highest distinction, a gold medal, and they account for 75% of state-funded students. Over one quarter of the new incoming MGIMO class (26%) earned 100 points in at least one subject at the Unified State Examination or Educational Olympiads (365 people

total). Some 63% of state-funded students earned a perfect score in at least one subject: out the 205 students in this category, 179 earned top marks in one subject, 24 in two subjects, and two in three subjects."[2]

We may therefore conclude that MGIMO attracts ambitious, hard-working, diverse young people. Subsequently, relying on my own experience and on research conducted recently by various organizations, I will analyse the problems faculty and employers have with millennials.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

It is generally important to note that there is no single universally accepted periodization of generations. There are different approaches to determining the boundaries of different generational groups. Breakdown into generation clusters depends, among other things, on a particular country. Karl Mannheim was the first non-Russian scholar to outline this problem back in 1928 in his article "The Problems of the Generations" (Mannheim, 1998). Mannheim used several factors to identify generations: social location, cultural unity of a period for individual members of a given generation, and their involvement in the same historical events (Ibragimova, 2014).

Norman B. Ryder was another researcher who focused on the topic of generations. He used the concept of a "cohort" as a factor in studying social transformations. He understood a generational cohort as "the aggregate of individuals (…) who experienced the same event within the same time interval" and possessing "a distinctive composition and character reflecting the circumstances of its unique origination and history" (Ryder, 1965: 845). Another researcher, Morris Massey, studied behavioural features of people born after World War II and concluded that the behaviour of a generation is conditioned by its overall value system (Massey, 2005).

In their book Generations, William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991) proposed a systemic approach to studying generations. Every generational analysis specialist is familiar with this work and uses the Strauss–Howe generational theory in their research in some way. Strauss and Howe studied the cyclical nature of generational changes using the United States as their case study. In addition to Generations, they also wrote The Fourth Turning (1997) and Millennials Rising (2000). They were the ones who introduced the very concept of "millennials" or "the Millennial Generation" (Howe, Strauss, 2007).

Western scholars use different generational periodization and apply the term "millennials" to different generations. In the United Kingdom, for instance, millennials are born between the early 1980s and the early 1990s; in the United States, between 1982 and 2000; and in China, between 1981 and 1996.

[2] Torkunov A.V. Sums Up Results of MGIMO's Enrolment Campaign at TASS. *MGIMO University.* Available at: https://mgimo.ru/about/news/main/admissions-campaign-2020-tass/ (accessed: 03.11.2020).

Since this article focuses on Russia, I propose using the periodization suggested by E. Shamis, who researched Russian millennials specifically. In this understanding, millennials are considered people born between 1985 and 2005 (Shamis, Nikonov, 2017: 13). To assess the overall picture, we need to note that we have three generations on the job market today: baby boomers (1945–1965), Gen Xers (1965–1985), and millennials (1985–2005). The generation coming after millennials is Gen Z, or zoomers (2005–2025).

What are the distinguishing features of millennials in general, and of millennials in Russia in particular? Generation X, the parents of millennials, were essentially left to their own devices when growing up; their parents were trying to survive in the 1990s amid complete uncertainty, when one social system was being broken down and replaced with a different one. Gen Xers were independent (left to their own devices); as teens, they massively rebelled against their parents (there was a large number of marginal youth sub-cultures); they had many harmful habits and psychological complexes of children who had not received enough parental love and care. When they had their own children, they set themselves the task of giving them everything they had not had themselves as children. Young parents promoted "helicopter parenting," or, in other words, overprotection or overparenting (Lythcott-Haims, 2017). And the world began to gradually transform from a world of adults into a child-centric world. These changes affected not only pedagogy, but also social relations, politics, and the economy. Gen Xers were more responsible in family planning than their parents had been. Millennials are by and large planned children. It is also important to note that millennials were born at a time of the sharpest drop in the birth rate. Therefore, these children were cared about more, were spoiled more, and parents listened to their wishes and opinions. Their future was carefully planned, they were sent to the best schools, sports clubs, universities, and ultimately, they found the best jobs. Parents did everything to remove every obstacle from their child's life, there were no prohibitions in their life, they were protected from every conflict, parents quarrelled with teachers over their children's grades, demanded that teachers give their children awards and recognize their talents. Today, when millennials have already entered the job market, their parents continue to handle every problem connected with their employment: they accompany their children to job interviews, call their bosses, and "push for" their promotions (Tulgan, 2017: 18).

The attempts of parents to construct a system of raising their children in which they would communicate with their child on an equal footing at home, make decisions for them, and handle conflicts outside the family resulted in a paradox. Millennials see it as their natural right to communicate with all adults on an equal footing, to not recognize authority based on age or experience, to demand respect for the simple reason that they exist. At the same time, they remain infantile well into adulthood, they have no desire to make independent decisions, and, even more importantly, to accept responsibility for these decisions. Unlike their parents, they have no qualms about continuing to live with their parents even after graduating from university or taking money from them.

The time when millennials were born and grew up was characterized by a rapid increase in uncertainty, by the emergence of new threats that were by their very nature difficult to predict. These included, in particular, economic crises and terrorism. The overparenting factor is linked to parents' fear for the safety and economic wellbeing of their children. Millennials have grown up with security checks on public transportation and in public spaces, so they are used to it; they do not see public surveillance systems as a violation of their rights and approve the use of such technologies (Ivanova, 2016: 10). Unlike Gen Xers, who still believe that they can control the amount of their personal information in public space, millennials harbour no such illusions. They have no issue with the concept of the "transparent world," where every person is watched by various automated systems around the clock.

Since millennials do not go through a clearly outlined teenage rebellion phase, they are less inclined to protest by drinking, smoking, or engaging in other risky types of behaviour. In the United States, millennials, unlike their predecessors, drink, smoke, take drugs, and have sex less, which had an effect on teen pregnancy rates.[3]

Vadim Radaev's study shows that Russian millennials are also inclined to live a healthy lifestyle: they "have their first taste of alcohol at an earlier age, but they drink less and with lesser frequency. By 18–20, the share of millennials drinking alcohol reaches 50–52%, and then drops to 40%. Figures for the previous generations (Xers) at that age were on average 1.5 times higher (64%). Millennials have fewer smokers, although those who do smoke do it at the same rate. By middle age, the share of smokers is nearly 1.5 smaller compared to the share of smokers in the previous generation. The number of people doing sports has increased in the same proportions: 43% of millennials regularly engage in sports at the age of 27, while for Gen Xers the figure is only 25%" (Radaev, 2020: 65).

Additionally, millennials are more pragmatic, practical, and optimistic compared to older generations. Unlike the previous generation, millennials have no problems with team work. On the contrary, they find it harder to work independently. Unfortunately, their habit of being rewarded for every action and their inability to wait and be patient backfires on them when they grow up. They cannot enjoy the process; they need immediate results. For instance, they find it extremely hard to fit the concept of happiness or success as a process stretched in time into their picture of the world. They derive moments not of happiness, but of short-lived satisfaction from the fleeting responses of their online friends to their posts on social media. Likes, shares, and retweets become their goal. For the same reason, they fail to derive positive emotions from a gradual increase of their professional skills and from slowly building a career.

[3] Today's Teens are Better than You, and We Can Prove It. *VOX*. Available at: https://www.vox.eom/a/teens (accessed 02.11.2020).

Consequently, when they ask for a promotion three months into their employment, they do not do it out of an inflated sense of self-worth, as their senior colleagues usually think, but because of the above-described perception of processes and results.[4]

Moreover, their senior colleagues frequently misinterpret the very phenomenon of millennial arrogance, self-assurance, and the need for constant encouragement. This is a consequence of low self-esteem, not inflated self-esteem. When older generations received feedback about their abilities and prospects, it was quite frequently downright negative instead of constructive and sometimes came from their parents, too. The parents of millennials, on the contrary, tried to lavish nothing but praise on their children from an early age, to emphasize their uniqueness and their boundless capabilities for self-fulfilment. As a result, when facing harsh reality and outside assessment, older generations only got stronger and more determined to move forward, prove the outside world wrong, while millennials have trouble facing any kind of criticism, and their self-esteem plunges to catastrophic depths. Their natural defence mechanism is demonstrative behaviour and a refusal to accept what they have just heard. In consequence, they also: 1) find it harder to learn because learning always entails making and correcting mistakes; and 2) have an underdeveloped need for independently analysing their own conduct and its consequences. For millennials, the place of self-analysis is taken by an assessment of their actions and thoughts by their subscribers on social media, and consequently, they frequently make decisions based on how they think their virtual "friends" may respond.

Public opinion polls show that millennials have little interest in public politics, with only 34% of respondents demonstrating an active political stance. Students (18–22-year-olds) are usually the most radical and active group, although 64% of them are not interested in politics at all (Pyrma, 2017: 44). At the same time, this is the more tolerant generation of all. They are non-aggressive and easy-going in their attitudes to other cultures, ways of life, and worldviews. At the same time, they are far less active in religions practices. In particular, the "share of believers in 2011–2016 fell from 56% in the mobilization generation to 32% among millennials. The share of those going to church at least once a month had been in decline from the Thaw generation (15%) to millennials (6%)" (Radaev, 2020: 66).

Major social stratification in Russia also affected millennials' values. Money is virtually the only upward mobility vehicle for young people without connections, particularly in the provinces. Money allows them to have a high quality of life that is actively promoted on every communication channel. The pragmatic young generation dismisses every kind of activity that does not bring money. One could object that volunteering is particularly popular among the young generation today, but it is

[4] Menshikov P.V., Yusupova E.E., Novikova V.S., et al. 2020. *Information and Communication Technologies of the Third Millennium: Student's Book*. Moscow: MGIMO University. P. 241.

important to understand that while this activity does not bring in money, it affords other kinds of benefits: a high public profile, the option of putting their volunteering on their university application. An evaluation of the interest of different generations in environmental issues is telling here. Millennials actively declare their concern and care for nature, yet they are three times less likely to invest any real effort compared, for instance, to baby boomers at their age (Twenge, Campbell, Freeman, 2012).

Education is also seen not as a way to achieve self-fulfilment in the future, but as a tool for a large income in the future and, consequently, as a way to indulge their every whim. At the same time, millennials are not geared towards gradually building a career over many years. They are sincerely frightened of the prospect of being promoted after five years of hard work in the same company.

The notion of prosperity among millennials differs greatly from that of older generations. While their seniors banked on purchasing real estate, cars, gold, and other luxury goods, millennials are primarily ready to invest in travel, eating out in cafés and unconventional (not necessarily expensive) restaurants, and hoarding new impressions. They do not indulge in traditional high-profile consumption. They do not buy things because of a designer label. Therefore, many luxury brands went bankrupt or, in order to survive on the market, had to alter their business to fit with the new requirements of the young generation. Nevertheless, millennials do have their own version of high-profile consumption, but it is connected with the larger chunk of their life happening in the public space of the internet. They do not buy brand-name goods to jack up their own importance. They transform themselves into a brand, and this frequently costs them more than status items would.

Millennials need to project an image of a rich and successful person on the internet while having limited financial means. They also wish to achieve success with the smallest possible effort, and this makes them lie both online and in real life. The internet creates a false sense of impunity, and this sense is carried over into offline communication. They lie about their wealth and success, they lie to avoid being punished for transgressions, they lie to avoid doing things they do not like, and they lie to get a promotion. About 27% of millennials (compared to 15% of Gen Xers and 5% of baby boomers) are ready to appropriate the results of other people's work to move up the career ladder (Schawbel, 2013: 137). The feeling of being unique, the need to build their own (personal and professional) brand to present to people around them easily cancel out moral compunctions. As a result, they lie to their bosses more often.[5]

The subject of termination is unpleasant for anyone, it makes other generations lie, too (56% will try to conceal having been fired). Yet millennials lie with greater frequency (70% will make an effort to prevent information about being sacked from

[5] Millennials are most Likely to Admit that they Lie to their Bosses. *Comparably*. 2017. 15 September. Available at: https://www.comparably.com/blog/lie-to-the-boss/ (accessed: 02.11.2020).

getting around). Usually, millennials reframe the event for themselves and for others in such a way as to present it as some other person's fault, but never their own.[6] Tactically, lying may prove a winning move for them, but strategically, they discover that it is virtually impossible to build a relationship of trust with colleagues and acquaintances they have lied to. Especially given that, in today's business culture, trust is the cornerstone of building a company's corporate identity, of sales, and of relations with staff and stakeholders.

Millennials also treat friendship very differently from older generations. They freely admit themselves that they have weak friendship ties, that they are ready to spend their free time together, talk about topics of mutual interest, play video games (Werbach, Hunter, 2015: 20), go shopping together, etc. But if they have a problem, they cannot turn to their friends for moral or any other kind of support. Social networks have devalued the concept of "friend," and this development is even reflected in having to specify now whether a "friend" refers to a real friend, an online friend, or a subscriber. Older generations of Russians have an ingrained tradition of turning to friends for psychological help if they have a problem, as well as for various kinds of support – it helps them relieve their psychological problems and stress. Unfortunately, this avenue is essentially closed for millennials because they create the desired image of a successful and positive person on social media, and unless they want to destroy that image, they cannot ask their subscribers and online friends for help. In their case, it exacerbates their depression. This is why they need as many formats set for them as possible to spend real-life time with their peers without any kind of information technology, to increase their EQ (emotional intelligence), and to actively develop communication competences (Koroleva, 2014: 648–658).

On the other hand, the formats familiar to them could be useful, too. Millennials have great experience with multiplayer computer games. In their lives, they have spent a total of over a year, or about 9000 hours, or 375 days, gaming.[7] There is no way that this would not affect how they form relationships with the offline world. Moreover, for the generation born and living in a world of uncertainty, instability, and terrorism, video games play a therapeutic role, reducing and preventing stress. While playing, millennials learn teamwork, how to resolve conflicts with other players, how to earn and spend resources. It is particularly important for teachers and instructors to keep in mind that the gaming space would allow them to quite successfully teach students to reach goals and overcome difficulties. The familiar gaming environment makes it easier for students to understand the importance of following rules and not being scared of making mistakes.

---

[6] Sugar R. 2015. Millennials are Twice as Likely as Anyone Else to Lie about Being Fired – and it Says a lot about this Generation. *Business Insider.* 15 June. Available at: http://www.businessinsider.com/millennials-more-likely-to-lie-about-being-fired-2015-6 (accessed: 02.11.2020).

[7] Classic Millennial Video Games that Still Live Strong Today. *Millennial Magazine.* Available at: https://millennialmagazine.com/2018/04/23/dassic-millennial-video-games-that-still-live-strong-today/ (accessed: 02.11.2020).

Millennials are the first generation that can be properly called a generation of digital natives. For them, being able to stay online 24/7 with a high-speed internet connection is not a whim, but a vital necessity. They are the first truly multitasking generation capable of simultaneously existing on different platforms, yet their ability to wait, endure, or expend a lot of resources on achieving results is significantly underdeveloped compared to previous generations. When choosing forms of leisure, they are unwilling to expend major resources; they are satisfied with a passive pastime that does not require additional efforts or action on their part: 63% listen to music of their mobile devices and watch TV shows at home (rather than films in the cinema) (Danilova, 2007: 23).

Technologies and the notorious swipe culture seriously affect their attention span. For instance, Sberbank's study "30 Facts About Today's Youth" says that "their average attention span of focusing on a single subject is eight seconds. Information is consumed in tiny 'bite-sized' portions, while icons, emojis, and pictures frequently replace text."[8] Young people meet each on the internet, look for jobs there, rent or buy an apartment, choose and buy clothes and food, learn, read news, and so on. They are fully reliant on today's technologies and, as a result, their dependence on them is much greater.

For millennials, their smartphone is primarily a multimedia centre for entertainment and digital communication. Therein lies the principal difference between millennials and other generations, which use smartphones primarily to make phone calls. Millennials actively use messengers, social network apps, and their way of communication is beginning to gradually affect and transform business etiquette: in particular, it is recommended today to precede a phone call with a text message or messenger message to agree on a time for the call. Messengers also allow users to quickly organize a discussion between a group of people, to notify that group of something and check that the message has been received. That is their major advantage over email, and it has already become traditional. Quite possibly, thanks to millennials, email will soon become obsolete, although it is still a very popular communication instrument today (particularly in a business context). In particular, the world sends and receives over 205 billion emails daily.[9] The dependence of millennials on their smartphones affects their consumption of all kinds of digital content. They use desktops less frequently than other generations, they watch traditional television on TV less often, and they rarely listen to music on traditional desktop players or hi-fi systems. For millennials, mobility is the paramount criterion for choosing a particular technology as an information channel (Stillman, 2018: 120–121).

[8] 30 Facts about Today's Youth. *Sberbank*. Available at: http://www.sberbank.ru/common/img/uploaded/files/pdf/youth_presentation.pdf (accessed: 02.11.2020).

[9] Alton L. 2017. Phone Calls, Texts or Email? Here's how Millennials Prefer to Communicate. *Forbes*. 11 May. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/larryalton/2017/05/11/how-do-millennials-prefer-to-communicate/2/#bbc1262a9686 (accessed: 02.11.2020).

Millennials have high requirements for connection speed, round-the-clock availability of online data transfer, image quality, design, user-friendliness and an intuitively understandable interface (Koroleva, 2016: 7). They expect every activity to amaze and entertain them. Edutainment as a fun way of getting educated is something that is very close to millennials' hearts. Young people are always chasing new positive impressions. They cannot abide routine. Although should their dream come true, they will likely be unable to withstand the constant kaleidoscope of vivid experiences for long. Both in education and in consumer experience, the wow-effect should be like spices: without them, food is too bland, but their overabundance will make the dish plainly inedible.

Recommendations for Working with Millennials

Millennials have underdeveloped independent planning competency (particularly strategic planning) and a poor ability to structure information. Today's young people are afraid of having to choose. It is easier for them to give up than to make a mistake. Finding solutions to problems and accepting responsibility for those solutions stresses them out immensely, particularly if they have to handle strategic problems. It is easier and more psychologically comfortable for them to refuse to resolve anything than to feel uncomfortable over a possible mistake. In addition, this generation grew up amid increasing uncertainty and instability, which, in turn, affected their ability to shape long-term plans; therefore, their solutions are mostly tactical. They resolve problems bothering them here and now without worrying about the deferred consequences of their actions.

For millennials, any mistake equals failure, and they will do anything they can to avoid failure. Therefore, it is better to ask them more frequently whether everything is going to plan and whether they need additional help or explanation. They are not very likely to approach others for help out of fear that it might be seen as a failure.

Therefore, faculty and employers should offer their young students/employees a ready-made structure and plan, yet leave enough room for manoeuvre within the system to ensure the degree of freedom the young generation needs. It is very important to separately detail assignments and the factors on which success depends and to find something to praise them for upon completion of every stage.

It is also important to understand that, psychologically, today's young people find it extremely hard to be within a polyvariant space. There must be only one correct answer. If there is no correct answer, they become frustrated because, as we have stressed before, a mistaken choice for them equals complete failure. They will not want to try again. The best policy in the course of adapting them to studying and working is to specifically emphasize that making mistakes is okay, that mistakes are an integral part of any activity.

Millennials need to be provided with leadership and mentorship. They need regular (preferably daily) feedback. Training and coaching them will take a lot of time, so it needs to be planned for in advance.

It is also important to remember that being older or higher up in the corporate hierarchy is not an argument that will necessarily convince millennials to accept on faith the words of a person higher up the ladder. Moreover, they demand communication on an equal footing regardless of their experience and competences in a particular matter and certainly regardless of their social status or age.

We also need to specify what today's young people understand by communicating "on an equal footing." It is not a communication of two adults, it is communication of a child and a "non-child." Previously, communication with an adult on an equal footing was a privilege available to few, a privilege to be earned. Now it is taken for granted, yet young people still cannot give up on freedom from responsibility for their words and actions and on a license to be immature (the Peter Pan syndrome). To eliminate the contrast and gradually switch communication into the "adult–adult" plane, rules need to be established from the outset and followed unfailingly. Reverse mentorship technology works quite well with millennials in this respect. If a millennial is responsible for the quality of an adult's communication and learning, that millennial is quicker to arrive at the understanding that success requires experience and patience.

It is necessary to remember that millennials are convinced they are exceptional. Consequently, they take any criticism very poorly. Unfortunately, schools do not teach us how to offer constructive criticism (criticizing an idea, not a person), therefore any critical remark equals failure and damage to the reputation of a specific person in the group. When millennials are convinced to try offering criticism, conversation rapidly deteriorates into personal insults and rebukes. A mentor's task here is to create a safe space for criticizing each other and resolving emerging conflicts in real time.

Millennials are ready to offer new ideas, and if their professor or employer is ready to listen to them, this will improve their motivation. Even if a professor or employer is not ready to accept young people's ideas, these ideas cannot be ignored. An ideal solution would be to allow students and employees to participate in developing the format of classes or work.

Millennials are more of team players, so their career track should be built with account for this particular strength. It is easy for them to communicate and exchange information via messengers, email, and other technical means of communication, but they are not good at in-person communication. Mostly written communication (involving graphic elements such as smileys and emojis) results in losing the skill of direct interaction. Empathy suffers because reading people's emotions live is not the same as interpreting emojis. Another feature that needs to be accounted for is that millennials are primarily focused on themselves and their own interests. They will not sacrifice their interests if the interests of the team require it. In that regard, it is important to emphasize that personal success depends on collective success.

Millennials believe it very important to maintain the work-life balance. Unlike previous generations, theirs does not have many workaholics. And this also needs to be accounted for. Millennials do not "get" the concept of gradual education and career: their information field is filled with stories of overnight success and lightning-fast ca-

reers. In this case, their expectations may be adjusted and they could be motivated by establishing a transparent system of rewarding them for their efforts within a short-term planning horizon. The young generation still has a rather developed sense of what is fair, and this sense may be used to gear them towards gradual progress to success.

Very soon, the children of millennials, Gen Z, zoomers, or the "Homeland generation," etc., will start enrolling in universities. Their grandparents, Gen Xers, will likely continue working into their very old age because of state-of-the-art technologies, increased life span and improved quality of life. The life-long learning trend is evident now. Consequently, the job market will long be populated by several generations with different, sometimes diametrically opposed, views of many things. And if today the older generation still can afford to ignore this divergence, in a few short years it will be impossible. The most forward-looking companies are already transforming their corporate structures to meet the new demands, altering their strategies and listen to their young employees.

About the Author:

Elena V. Zaburdaeva – PhD in Sociology, Senior Lecturer, Department of Media Policy and Public Relations, MGIMO University. 76 prospect Vernadskogo, Moscow, 119454, Russia. Email: e.zaburdaeva@inno.mgimo.ru

Conflicts of interest.
The author declares the absence of any conflicts of interest.

References:

Danilova E.A. 2007. Tsennostnye orientatsii i idealy molodezhi sovremennoi rossiiskoi provintsii [Value Orientations and Ideals of the Youth in Modern Russian Province]. *Izvestiia vysshikh uchebnykh zavedenii. Povolzhskii region. Obshchestvennye nauki [University Proceedings. Volga Region. Social Sciences].* No. 4. P. 17–23. (In Russian)

Howe N., Strauss W. 2007. The Next 20 Years: How Customer and Workforce Attitudes Will Evolve. *Harvard Business Review.* 85(7–8). P. 41–52.

Ibragimova D.H. 2014. Kogortnyi analiz potrebitel'skikh ozhidanii naseleniia Rossii (1996-2010): teoretiko-metodologicheskie osnovy issledovaniia [Cohort Analysis of Consumer Expectations of the Russian Population (1996–2010): Theoretical and Methodological Backgrounds]. *Ekonomicheskaia sotsiologiia [Economic Sociology].* 15(2). P. 99–118. (In Russian)

Ivanova E.I. 2016. *Pokolenie v zerkale sotsial'no-demograficheskogo analiza [Generation in the Mirror of Socio-Demographic Analysis].* Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities. 281 p. (In Russian)

Kapeliushnikov R.I., Lukyanova A.L. 2010. *Transformatsiia chelovecheskogo kapitala v rossiiskom obshchestve [Transformation of Human Capital in Russian Society].* Moscow: Fond "Liberal'naia missiia". 196 p. (In Russian)

Koroleva A.A. 2014. Sovremennye transformatsii sotsiokul'turnoi identichnosti v Rossii [Modern Transformations of Sociocultural Identity in Russia]. In Sulakshin S.S., Bagdasarian V.E, Leksin V.N. (ed.) *State Ideology and Modern Russia (Materials of the All-Russian Scientific and Public Conference).* Moscow: Nauka i politika. P. 648–658. (In Russian)

Koroleva A.A. 2016. Obrazovatel'naia funktsiia estestvennonauchnykh muzeev v usloviiakh stanovleniia setevogo obshchestva [The Educational Function of Natural Science Museums under the Transition to the Network Society]. *The Moscow Journal of International Communications*. No. 1. (In Russian)

Lythcott-Haims J. 2017. *Otpustite ikh. Kak podgotovit' detei k vzrosloi zhizni [How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success]*. Moscow: Mann, Ivanov i Ferber. 352 p. (In Russian)

Mannheim K. 1998. Problema pokolenii [The Problem of Generations]. *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie [New Literary Review]*. No. 2. P. 7-47. (In Russian)

Massey M. 2005. *What You Are is Where You Were When – Again!* Cambridge: Enterprise Media.

Pyrma R.V. 2017. Vosstanie pokoleniia Z: novye politicheskie radikaly [Rebellion of Generation Z: New Political Radicals]. *Humanities and Social Sciences. Bulletin of the Financial University.* 7(2). P. 43–50.

Radaev V.V. 2020. *Millenialy: Kak meniaetsia rossiiskoe obshchestvo. 2-e izd. [Millennials: How the Russian Society is Changing. Second edition]*. Moscow: HSE University Publishing House. 224 p. https://doi.org/10.17323/978-5-7598-2160-1

Ryder N. 1965. The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change. *American Sociological Review.* 30(6). P. 843–861. https://doi.org/10.2307/2090964

Schawbel D. 2013. *Promote Yourself: The New Rules for Career Success*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 304 p.

Shamis E., Nikonov E. 2017. *Teoriia pokolenii: neobyknovennyi Iks [The Theory of Generations. Extraordinary X]*. Moscow: Universitet Sinergiia. 138 p. (In Russian)

Smolskaya E.P. 2017. Soderzhanie kommunikatsii [Communication Content]. *The Moscow Journal of International Communications*. No. 2. (In Russian)

Stillman D. 2017. *Pokolenie Z na rabote. Kak ego poniat' i naiti s nim obshchii iazyk [Gen Z @ Work: How the Next Generation is Transforming the Workplace]*. Moscow: Mann, Ivanov i Ferber. 272 p. (In Russian)

Tulgan B. 2017. *Ne vsem dostanetsia priz. Kak upravliat' pokoleniem Y [Not Everyone Gets A Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y]*. Moscow: Mann, Ivanov i Ferber. 256 p. (In Russian)

Twenge J.M., Campbell W.K., Freeman E.C. 2012. Generational Differences in Young Adults' Life Goals, Concern for OTHERS, and Civic Orientation, 1966–2009. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.* 102(5). P. 1045–1062. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027408

Werbach K., Hunter D. 2015. Vovlekai i vlastvui. Igrovoe myshlenie na sluzhbe biznesa [For the Win: How Game Thinking Can Revolutionize Your Business]. Moscow: Mann, Ivanov i Ferber. 224 p. (In Russian)

Russian Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication. 2022. 1(4). P. 49–58
DOI 10.24833/RJCSC-2022-1-4-49-58 Research Article

Elements of Anti-World in the Game Universe of The Witcher[1]

M.O. Ovchinnikov*, P.J. Paulus**

* Smolensk Regional Education Development Institute
** Independent researcher

Abstract. The significance of the study of philosophic aspects of building a new game universe in an RPG (role-playing game) stems from the popularity of this type of virtual reality entertainment. The paper gives an analysis of the *anti-world,* a key concept of role-playing gaming, based on *The Witcher video game series.* The game is founded on an original series of works under the same title created by Polish fantasy writer Andrzej Sapkowski. The case under consideration serves as a good example for looking into the patterns of forming the space of the game universe that can be equally regarded as a moment when a cultural landscape of virtual en-tertainment is formed. In this case, RPG can be considered as a socio-cultural practice of the global information society and/or one of the variants of the *performance society.* The methodological basis of the study is comparative analysis, which implies the identification of borrowings in the process of developing a culture of virtual entertainment and requires learning about basic cultural codes and archetypal designs that are specific to RPG. As a result of the research, the specificity of the new imagery form inherent in the game universe of *The Witcher* was revealed. The cultural landscape created in the game includes elements of the medieval *laughter culture* integrated into the unique system of dynamic images and meanings, constantly evolving and functioning in a way analogous with the established cultural and symbolic reality. The effect of the *double symbolic analogy* is determined by the creative nature of the game, in which players, in addition to participating in the gaming process, also contribute to the creation of the game. The introduction of game images into the language and thinking of the players causes the emergence of new forms of dialects, fixing the peculiarities of perception by the group *(sociolect)* and the individual *(idiolect)* of both *primary* and *secondary* reality. These dialects are geographically localized and at the same time multicultural. The article substantiates the conclusion that the instrumentalization of the *performance society* occurs due to the active use of grotesque symbolism, which, due to its archetypal nature, ensures the formation of a new social mythology that enables the *discovery* of Eastern Europe by the rest of the world. Thus, the anti-world of the new universe turns into an integral part of the modern information space.

Keywords: game universes, The Witcher, anti-world, performance society, instrumentalization, archetypal constructions, new mythology

[1] English translation from the Russian text: Ovchinnikov V.M., Paulus P.J. 2021. Elementy antimira v igrovoi vselennoi "Ved'mak". *Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture.* 5(2). P. 52–62. https://doi.org/10.24833/2541- 8831-2021-2-18-52-62

Amid the arrival of a "new universal information medium," cultural practices organized as "the society of the spectacle" become one of the most noticeable manifestations of the carnivalization principle. Among these, virtual entertainment based on alternative history ideas and the "anti-world" concept stand out. This phenomenon fully complies with Mikhail Bakhtin's claim that "the most intense and productive life of culture transpires on the borders of its individual areas and not when and where these areas withdraw into their own specifics" (Bakhtin, 1979: 329–330). Today, many Russian scholars who study literary works and religious phenomena are turning their attention to the "anti-world" category (Litvintseva, 2014; Zhukova, 2009; Zhindeeva, Chetvergova, 2012; Lushnikova, Chemezova, 2016; Kozlov, 2018). Following French postmodernist philosophers, they conceptualize the anti-world as "an area opposed to the world of order and hierarchically fixed relations," to the world "conceived as the 'reversal' of stable semiotic and behavioural norms" (Yurkov, 2001).

A division of the world down the line that opposes the world of the "norm" to the anti-world requires a recognition of the "rights" of the irrational principle, which cannot be deciphered through traditional explanatory procedures. The "anti-world" concept is reflected in an entire complex of effects combined through their leanings towards the irrational principle: carnivalization, a focus on the marginal component of the social fabric and being permanently in touch with the otherworldly, etc. Ruling the human being and society, irrational powers that are acknowledged and invoked send human beings off into the realm of the unexplored (the "alien") that at its extreme is absurd (i.e., devoid of sense) and even contradicts reality.

In turn, the aspect of the "game" concept that is related to matters of worldview attracts today's researchers primarily in connection with Johan Huizinga's idea of the game's culture-shaping role. The postmodernist identification of the game modus within public and individual self-determination treats the game (and the related notion of game space) as a multidimensional phenomenon whose significance will increase as the gap between artistic images and their meanings that fit these images into an integral system of cultural symbols grows wider. The equality of the real and the virtual that is appropriate in a game also sets the direction of philosophical interpretations offered for sociocultural practices connected with gaming activities.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's "language games" theory holds a special place among such interpretations. This theory posits the existence of an endless number (or of a number that tends to infinity) of language game forms that are forms of existence (Wittgenstein, 1994: 90). Today's scholars of Wittgenstein's philosophy turn their attention to this "plurality," emphasizing that such a multiplicity is connected with uncertainty ("determining precisely the meaning a particular sentence is impossible" even within a meta-language system) (Kotelevsky, 2014: 36). Therefore, the new theory of meaning developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein defined new possibilities of interpretation, and the demand for a semiotically correct unambiguity with respect for the plurality of possible interpretations turned the interest of philosophers towards myth.

The video game industry represents a game narration as a special form of text and thereby re-endows the myth with sociocultural significance. By ontologizing the illusion of a "new world" becoming a "new reality," the myth allows participants in a game to feel that they are "an element of the Demiurge's being." Games allow individuals to identify as participants in a global process, as a "puppet" that has absorbed mystical images of primeval beliefs. Johan Huizinga believed that the genesis of a new "social mythology"[2] that partially mythologizes thinking is a specific feature of "homo ludens" (Huizinga, 2011) and postulates the desire and need to dream.

Modern cultural realities actualize the corresponding phenomenon, among other things, through instrumentalizing or directly borrowing basic components of the "carnival" and "laughter" culture. At the same time, globalization of the game space is conducive to revising the perceptions of the "melting pot" theory that has lost its popularity in the last few decades (Chertina, 2000).

Today, virtual entertainment in general, and video games in particular, have been granted a large set of visualization tools that they did not have before. A representation of the "imagined" can be found in many of today's game projects that emerge as an innovation in the area of culture (Fine, 1983; Jahn-Sudmann, Stockmann, 2008; Fromme, Unger, 2008). We believe that the "game universe" based on The Witcher, a series of novels by Andrzej Sapkowski, holds a special place among such projects. In our opinion, its popularity stems primarily from its incredibly elaborate and detailed game space, which fully corresponds to the hyperreality concept introduced by Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard, 2000: 243). G.Y. Litvintseva justly notes that Guy Debord, who created "the society of the spectacle" theory, "anticipated" (Litvintseva, 2011: 44) Baudrillard's "simulation theory" by pointing out that "the spectacle is (…) the heart of this real society's unreality" (Debord, 2000: 25).

The process of video game industry products incarnating the "new social mythology" described here should properly be considered as part of a broad range of changes to the sociocultural realm, changes that are united by the tendency towards a rationalized mythologizing of culture. This trend manifests in the use of the strategy of incarnating the anti-world and instrumentalizing the components of the carnival culture. Here, we cannot help but recall Bakhtin's claim that the life of culture becomes particularly stark at the fault lines, at the changes on the boundaries of times that ensure the transformation of a culture's psychological foundations and its material components (Bakhtin, 1979).

Today's "fault lines" entail the shaping of a new cultural landscape, where the myth is once again becoming an inalienable part of social organization. It transforms into a new system of relations and connections, and stimulates the development of various means of visualizing information as part of the "screen culture." A complex of virtual visualized entertainment exploiting the system of stable stereotypes in the mass

[2] Ivanov A.G. 2017. *Social Mythology and its Role in Social Development.* PhD Thesis. Lipetsk.

consciousness tends toward the status of a cultural universal of its time. At the same time, these stereotypes are, in a complex way, connected with the system of archetypal symbols that function, among other things, as a way of ordering the irrational. Once these stereotypes are included in the process of commercializing the carnival instinct, they produce the "society of the spectacle" phenomenon, whose conceptual treatment is connected with the "consumer society" and "global village" theories (Baudrillard, 2006; McLuhan, 2003).

At the turn of the 21st century, the complex of visual arts became a reflection of sorts of the myth-making at the time of information revolution, like monumental propaganda was at its time a manifesto of sorts for the "Roman myth."[3] Elements of folk religion ("paganism") connected with fatalism (and providentialism, its Christianized form) turn out to be building blocks of a "new cultural space" founded in the "information myth." In turn, this "information myth" is founded in multiculturalism, with its clear philosophical connotations. In the video game industry, a mythological alternative to the mythologized Christian civilization that was built on the ideas of transforming the world of life into an oecumene gains its own independent spatial and temporal characteristics. A new virtual game space incarnates the carnival culture code. The effect of being immersed into this brave new reality is achieved through mechanisms modelling a "cultural landscape." Examples of such mechanisms in a game universe are dynamic day/night change, the possibility of getting to know the space around the player in detail, introducing variety into communication by using colloquialisms, slang, and obscene language, etc. The game world strives to shock its players, thereby making them identify primarily as a hero inhabiting this new reality. Alongside the traditional fatalism and providentialism typical for the ancient world, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, this world offers a pagan interpretation of the freedom of will. The latter is reflected not only in the player's actions, but also in the way the world around the player responds to these actions. Game effects are shown on screen as a carnivalesque chaotic process. The "living matter" creating it (interpreted mystically as a triadic unity of substance, energy, and information) is revealed through symbolic constructs "tied" to the cultures of different periods, eras, and territories. It is noteworthy that the many RPG projects help the game universe "neutralize dyadic contradictions" inherent in comic images. This is a variant of the synthesis of "idealism" on the one hand, and a set of "dark images" on the other, shaping a grotesque construct typical of the urban culture of the "communal revolution" era. Let us note parenthetically that "dark images" include the many "breakthroughs" of the unconscious presented symbolically on the screen. Such images are not typical of one specific game series only; they are among the basic elements of the semantics of the visual and the computer entertainment industry. This applies in particular to role-playing games.

[3] Kolobov A.V. 2000. Stages in the "Roman Myth" Development. *History of Ancient Rome Available* at: http://ancientrome.ru/publik/artide.htm?a=1280142572 (accessed 02.05.2019)

The image of a hero in a game universe forms an emotional and intellectual space of an individual character that incarnates the phenomenon of the "carnival person," a personality that is permanently in a state of becoming. A character is essentially an antagonist whose task is to "correctly" synthesize the profane and the sacred realities, i.e., to combine the elements of a "new" sociocultural reality and a set of their own archetypal ideas.

Accordingly, the "sacred world" and the "world of the carnival booth" require that a certain existential given be accepted. Classical forms of cognition and faith are put in the background, while immersion into a new reality moves to the fore. Its "personal synthesis" as a special form of realizing game effects becomes one of the basic principles of interaction between the game universe and the individual.

It is important to keep in mind that game reality, just like the medieval carnival culture (Bakhtin, 1990; Ryumina, 2008; Averintsev, 1992: 8; Karasev, 1996: 17–23), provides a person with access to, and unhindered use of, all kinds of prohibitions and taboos that are blocked by official culture (that is, still basically dominated by the cult of shame). In this context, a game project is the kind of a chronotope that vividly demonstrates the "pseudo-cyclic time" phenomenon.[4] That creates a "laughter paradox": as part of "the society of the spectacle," a person in a game universe is surrounded with a chaotically existing space of "total carnivalization," a sort of an "uninterrupted and ominous carnival," and that person thereby supplements their own perception of reality with a wealth of virtual elements (including anti-world elements). In other words, primary reality is synthesized with a secondary reality.

The development of The Witcher's game universe demonstrates many examples of using anti-world elements of both concentrated laughter culture and carnival culture entwined into the narration,[5] which serves as a referential connection with a broad range of archetypal symbolizations. The main hero of the narration, Geralt of Rivia, called the Witcher, is a "homunculus" of sorts who largely embodies the postulates of transhumanism. The authors of the game project use the principles of Renaissance anthropocentrism based on singling out the exclusive role of each character in the narration: each represents the microcosm phenomenon and comprehensively provides for the genesis of a stable cultural landscape.

Of particular importance is the active milieu principle, which has been used in the video game industry for over 15 years. Piranha Bytes, with its famous Gothic series, was a trailblazer of sorts in this area. We can but acknowledge that the mechanics used by the authors of the game products we are looking at were somewhat perfected. It manifests primarily in the desire to create "forms of communications that are as alive

[4] A game universe has a pseudo-cyclic time rendered through imitation of a society's linear development within the historical process, thereby reproducing real, natural, working, and everyday cycles of life in the game reality and thus "gently" integrating a player into a space that is new for them.

[5] Here, we interpret a game narration in the semiotic way, as a form of text.

as possible" and shape a special "spirit of the age." This spirit ensures the existence and interactions of many heroes with contradictory characters. They find themselves in comic and tragic situations that emphasize the measured course of life in the space where the protagonist dwells. The protagonist, like a puppet, "gains life" through the mind's immersion in the illusion of presence.

Focusing attention on expressive devices intended to elicit an emotional response, we will see that, as regards The Witcher, this illusion manifests (among other things) itself in the (rather active) use of obscene language.[6] The authors of the project likely believe that this language creates the "effect of a living world." Its use here may be seen as a creative discovery of CD Projekt Red (the game's developer) that succeeded at more or less clearly defining the mental and social features of various individuals by unambiguously marking them as members of different social and professional groups.

Alongside the players continuously exploring the "new world" (here, the game's creators used the "journey" concept), the narration features love stories that also have philosophical connotations. The love triangle involving Triss, Geralt, and Yennefer is a particular standout in this regard. These stories touch upon topical issues in interracial and intergender interactions, urbanism and globalism; they make one think of global issues in the existence of today's information civilization. Recently released expansion packs for the game (there are currently two official expansion packs: Blood and Wine and Hearts of Stone) offer a deeper representation of various archetypal meanings that demonstrate the antinomic confrontation between light and dark.

One cannot fail to notice that the project uses the "conspicuous consumption" principle (Veblen, 1984) as the occupation of the "leisure class." This principle is manifest both in players being directly involved in theatre shows and games of hazard, and in the overall complex of small and inconspicuous actions forming the single space of an "illusory existence" that ensures complete immersion in the game universe.

Additionally, players are assigned certain room for creatively interpreting the common game space that reworks many elements of the "cultural landscape." There are no directives here, but there are character development frameworks, which allow every player (both independently and in collaboration) to build various logical chains that structure the series of events and affect the directions in which the overall game plot develops. If we superimpose these "undefined" plot lines over the system of objectivized sociocultural interactions, we will discover that The Witcher's game universe features a somewhat simplified analogue of a multicultural society. Enshrined in the plot and actively generated "passable" characters are actively synthesized in the context established by Andrzej Sapkowski's plot. The "anti-world" project remains their common framework, incarnating the "realm of the unpredictable" – that is, to use Yuri Lotman words, the "dynamic semantic reservoir in any development processes" (Lotman, 2000: 75), guarding and transforms the imaginary space of this universe.

[6] Be it the speech of Zoltan Chivay, Geralt the Witcher (the main character), the Bloody Baron, or words spoken by the many auxiliary characters.

The chaotic nature of events focuses attention on both its inner and outer alternativeness, combined with its grotesque imagery. The richest bestiary, representing the co-existence of dissipative and non-stationary structures that mark cultural development stages, fully demonstrates the effect of irrational elements "dissolving" within a certain cultural symbol: "The grotesque image characterizes a phenomenon in a state of change, of an as-of-yet uncompleted metamorphosis, at the stage of death, birth, and growth, becoming; its other feature is ambivalence that, in some form, contains both extremes of change" (Bakhtin, 1990: 35).

Along with the normative component, the actions of the game's many characters display elements of anti-behaviour as the foundation of the anti-world. We believe that the game project under consideration features this concept in several interpretations:

- As a world of nonsense, a shadow world in a comic and parodic form; its quintessence is the image of a spy (Thaler, or Bernard Ducat) positioned as a philosopher and a jester cognizing existence via its paradoxes (the allegory of the cave where the idolon is combated through its absolutization: the spy teaches cave trolls, the embodiment of the anti-world, obscene language, or the language of that very anti-world).
- As a form of a borderline state touching upon the global problem of co-existence of good and evil (the order/chaos antinomy represented in the motif of a mortal opposing the pagan symbol of the Wild Hunt (Ebbe, 2008; Schmitt, 1999; Grimm, 1882; Grimm, 1883). Here, the main character and his comrades-in-arms appear as microcosms. They embody the image of culture that determines the mechanisms of both social organization and social disorganization).

Compositionally, anti-behaviour seen in the game universe as a key element is linked with the antagonism between Cosmos and Chaos. In Andrzej Sapkowski's descriptions, this line is embodied in the image of Princess Cirilla, who "eternally seeks and finds herself." symbolizing the coming of the Messiah and the start of the Apocalypse. Cirilla's image is mostly dominated by the principle of chaos: darkness, horror, animosity. In the game universe, chaos emerges as a "proto-form of the world," its pre-existing state, and also as a special state of cultural existence. Anti-behaviour in the project is represented in a special style, in the entertainment industry projected on the players themselves.

To sum up, the game project we have looked at uses a comprehensive anti-world interpretation that combines above-described characteristics. This process is largely determined by the chaotization of social phenomena and by the overall carnivalization of the mind amid the emergence of a "new mythology," which results in elevated philosophical adages being combined with details of everyday life, the foregrounding of the shadow side of elevated ideas, and the emphasizing of the antinomy of condemning/glorifying consumption.

A comprehensive analysis of the philosophical aspects involved in developing an RPG and using the case of The Witcher's game universe as a version of anti-world, we arrive at the following conclusions:

1. The active use of the "anti-world" concept is a specific feature of the development of the modern video game industry that manifests itself particularly starkly in the development of the RPG genre, with The Witcher's game universe being its gold standard.

2. The intentional use of chaotization embodied in "dark images" (including a bestiary), uncertain interpretations, and "anti-behaviour" are the elements of the anti-world.

3. Constructed game segments actively use elements of carnival culture and various archetypal symbols that serve to enhance the effect of "immersion in the game universe."

4. This phenomenon reflects "carnivalization of the mind," a process typical for mass culture that creates both a new "sacredness" and a new "laughter," which determines the most recent transformation of "the society of the spectacle."

5. The game industry involves elements of moralizing that does not get in the way of "experiencing the illusory" by leading away from the "illusory experience of reality."

6. The shaping of reality through the imitation of social transformations of the "comprehensive" historical process offered by the game industry affects an individual's sense of self in a situation where individuality is losing its significance in modern culture. Similar to the literature, philosophy, and social and political journalism of a hundred years ago, game projects involve philistines in creative ways of self-expression. Thus, video game industry products serve as a special form of text. They allow the human mind to go beyond purely entertaining mass culture into the realm of constructing a new "social mythology."

7. Game universes demonstrate the now-standard practice of using new visualized ways of encoding information, thereby transforming reality into a universal information medium that integrates new virtual landscapes as "real" lived-in communication spaces.

8. The Witcher's popularity is based on the interpretation of the archetypal images of an anti-world; the author creates this interpretation by unlocking elements of folk religion and classical and non-classical philosophy. The game combines the creative output of the author of the books (Andrzej Sapkowski), the game's developers, and every single player. Its popularity beyond Poland allows us to posit the question of further studying RPGs as a popular segment of information space that reveals Eastern Europe to the world.

About the Authors:

Vladimir M. Ovchinnikov – PhD in History, Associate Professor in the Department of Methods of Teaching Subjects of Basic and Secondary Education, Smolensk Regional Education Development Institute, 20A, ul. Oktyabrskoy Revolutsii, Smolensk, 214000, Russia. Email: benkey1985@yandex.ru

Paul J. Paulus – independent researcher, Russia. Areas of interest: cultural studies and film studies. Email: 89096265833@mail.ru.

Conflicts of interest.
The authors declare the absence of any conflicts of interest.

References:

Averintsev S.S. 1992. Bakhtin, smekh, khristianskaia kul'tura [Bakhtin, Laughter, Christian Culture]. *M.M. Bakhtin kak filosof [M.M. Bakhtin as a Philosopher]*. Moscow: Nauka. P. 7-19. (In Russian).

Bakhtin M.M. 1979. *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva [The Aesthetics of Verbal Art]*. Moscow: Iskusstvo. 424 p. (In Russian).

Bakhtin M.M. 1990. *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekov'ia i Renessansa [Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance]*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura. 543 p. (In Russian).

Baudrillard J. 2000. *Simvolicheskii obmen i smert' [L'echange symbolique et la mort]*. Moscow: Dobrosvet. 387 p. (In Russian).

Baudrillard J. 2006. *Obshchestvo potrebleniia: ego mify i struktury [La societe de consommation: ses mythes, ses structures]*. Moscow: Kul'turnaia revoliutsiia; Respublika. 269 p. (In Russian).

Chertina Z.S. 2000. *Plavil'nyi kotel? Paradigmy etnicheskogo razvitiia SShA [Melting Pot? Paradigms of US Ethnic Development]*. Moscow: Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences Publishing. 164 p. (In Russian).

Debord G. 2000. *Obshchestvo spektaklia [La Societe du Spectacle]*. Moscow: Logos. 184 p. (In Russian).

Ebbe S. 2008. *Asa-Tors hammare: gudar och jattar i tro tradition*. Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Hogberg. 265 p

Fine G.A. 1983. *Shared Fantasy: Role-Played Games as Social Worlds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 283 p.

Fromme, J., Unger A. 2012. *Computer Games and New Media Cultures: A Handbook of Digital Games Studies*. New York: Springer. 710 p.

Grimm J. 1882. *Teutonic Mythology: In 4 Vol. Vol. 1*. London: Bell. 437 p.

Grimm J. 1883. *Teutonic Mythology: In 4 Vol. Vol. 3*. London: Bell. 456 p.

Huizinga J. 2011. *Homo ludens. Chelovek igraiushchii [Homo ludens]*. St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Ivana Limbakha. 409 p. (In Russian).

Jahn-Sudmann A., Stockmann R. 2008. *Computer Games as a Sociocultural Phenomenon: Games Without Frontiers, War Without Tears*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 229 p.

Karasev L.V. 1996. *Filosofiia smekha [The Philosophy of Laughter]*. Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities Publishing. 221 p. (In Russian).

Kotelevsky D.V. 2014. Poniatie “iazykovoi igry” v filosofii L. Vitgenshteina [The concept of "language game" in the philosophy of L. Wittgenstein]. *Epistemy: Sbornik nauchnykh statei [Epistemes: Collection of scientific articles]*. Ekaterinburg: Izdatel'skii dom “Azhur”. P. 35-42. (In Russian).

Kozlov M.N. 2018. Antimir v iazycheskom predstavlenii vostochnykh slavian [Anti-World in the Pagan Representation of the Eastern Slavs]. *Pricernomore*. 26. P. 118–126. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1433517. (In Russian).

Litvintseva G.Y. 2011. Giperreal'nost' v epokhu postmoderna [Hyperreality in the Postmodern Epoch]. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta kul'tury i iskusstv [Bulletin of Saint Petersburg State University of Culture]*. 2(7). P. 43–54. (In Russian).

Litvintseva G.Y. 2014. Smekhovaia kul'tura Srednevekov'ia i antimir rossiiskogo postmodernizma [Medieval Laughter Culture and the AntiWorld of Russian Postmodernism]. *Observatoriia kul'tury [Observatory of Culture]*. 4. P. 42–49. https://doi.org/10.25281/2072-3156-2014-0-4-42-49. (In Russian).

Lotman Y.M. 2000. *Semiosfera [On the Semiosphere]*. St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo. 704 p. (In Russian).

Lushnikova G.I., Chemezova E.R. 2016. Poetika antimira v proze Ch. Palanika [Poetics of the Anti-World in Palahniuk's Prose]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta [Tomsk State University Journal]*. No. 405. P. 30–37. https://doi.org/10.17223/15617793/405/4. (In Russian).

McLuhan M. 2005. *Galaktika Gutenberga: stanovlenie cheloveka pechataiushchego [The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man]*. Moscow: Akad. Proekt: Fond "Mir". 495 p. (In Russian).

Ryumina M. 2008. O mirosozertsatel'nykh smyslakh karnaval'noi kul'tury [On the World-Contemplative Meanings of Carnival Culture]. *Chelovek smeiushchiisia: Sbornik nauchnykh statei [Laughing Man: Collection of Scientific Articles]*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi respublikanskii tsentr russkogo fol'klora. P. 78-106. (In Russian).

Schmitt J.-C. 1999. *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Wiley. 290 p.

Veblen T.B. 1984. *Teoriia prazdnogo klassa [The Theory of the Leisure Class]*. Moscow: Progress. 367 p. (In Russian).

Wittgenstein L. 1994. *Filosofskie raboty. Chast' I [Philosophical Investigations. Part I]*. Moscow: Gnosis. 612 p. (In Russian).

Yurkov S.E. 2001. Postmodernizm: priblizhenie k antimiru [Postmodernism: Approaching the Antiworld]. *Seriia "Symposium", Estetika v interparadigmal'nom prostranstve: perspektivy novogo veka. Vypusk 16. Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii 10 oktiabria 2001 g. [Series "Symposium", Aesthetics in the Interparadigm Space: Perspectives of the New Century. Issue 16. Proceedings of the scientific conference October 10, 2001]*. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg Philosophical Society P. 85-88. (In Russian).

Zhindeeva E.A., Chetvergova S.S. 2012. Khudozhestvennoe voploshchenie khronotopa «dvoemirie» v rasskazakh Iu.V. Mamleeva [The Artistic Embodiment of the 'Binary World' Chronotope in the Stories of Y.V.Mamleev]. Izvestiia Samarskogo nauchnogo tsentra Rossiiskoi akademii nauk *[Bulletin of Samara Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences]*. 14(2-6). P. 1513–1517. (In Russian).

Zhukova E.A. 2009. Antimir kak sposob voploshcheniia smekhovogo nachala v rasskaze E.I. Zamiatina «O tom, kak istselen byl inok Erazm» [Anti-World as the Way of Embodying the Humorous Beginning in E.I. Zamyatin's "The Healing of the Novice Erasmus"]. *Vestnik Tambovskogo universiteta. Seriia: Gumanitarnye nauki [Tambov University Review. Series: Humanities]*. 7 (75). P. 323–328. (In Russian).

Russian Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication. 2022. 1(4). P. 59–66
DOI 10.24833/RJCSC-2022-1-4-59-66 Research Article

Clickbait as a Linguistic and Cultural Phenomenon (Based on Russian-, French-, and English-language Material)[1]

Valeria A. Buriakovskaia*, Olga A. Dmitrieva**

* Volgograd State Pedagogical University
** Volgograd State Pedagogical University

Abstract. This article considers a specific type of headline that is common in modern mass media discourse, namely clickbait. The novelty of the research is in the object of study and the material represented in three languages – Russian, English and French. Clickbait as a phenomenon has not been investigated before, nor has its national and cultural specificity in the three analysed linguistic cultures; this fact determines the relevance of the study. The analysis of the language material was based on the hypothetical-deductive method, the continuous sampling method, and on stylistic and contextual analysis. The purpose of this work is to identify the content and stylistic characteristics of clickbait in the Russian -, English- and French-speaking information space. Initially, the English-language lexeme "clickbait" was borrowed into Russian and French, where it received additional nominations. In the Russian language, this word is almost assimilated as a language unit. The authors believe that clickbait is a type of a manipulative influence exerted on the mass audience, the essence of which is to attract and retain the recipient's attention using false or dubious information. To this end, a variety of language and audio-visual tools are used that allow us to assign clickbait to a creolized text type. The authors believe that clickbait is a global phenomenon in the modern information space, whose national and cultural specificity is determined by a national "agenda." The article is addressed to philologists, psychologists and sociologists. The research results may also be useful for undergraduate and postgraduate students specializing in the Humanities.

Keywords: clickbait, headline, information space, virtual reality, impact on mass consciousness, creolized text, mass media discourse, perceiving audience

[1] English translation from the Russian text: Buriakovskaya V.A., Dmitrieva O.A. 2020. Klikbeit kak lingvokul'turnyi fenomen (na materiale russkogo, frantsuzskogo i angliiskogo iazykov). *Filologicheskie nauki v MGIMO [Linguistics & Polyglot Studies].* 23(3). P. 105-112. https://doi.org/10.24833/2410-2423-2020-3-23-105-112

Human beings today exist and actively communicate in two realities: virtual and real. Both are closely interconnected; they constantly interact with and interpenetrate each other. As actors in the information space, we draw information from both realities. According to I.G. Ionin, the ratio of the real to the virtual is such that "practically all existing systems of knowledge, which at the initial stages of their existence are virtual realities, are alive and influence the actual physical reality embodied in it. Strictly speaking, implementation and incorporation (in the true meaning of the Latin word) are modes of existence in virtual systems" (Ionin, 2004).

Ionin believes that two factors are needed in order to create a virtual reality: the distinction between relevance and reference, and the establishment of relevance. Let us take a closer look at these factors. "The establishment of relevance is the arbitrary association of certain objects (or attributes of an object) into an integral 'environment' called the analysis environment of virtual reality (or virtual object). Relevance is not determined by real, tangible connections between objects or their attributes. Virtual reality is not a 'reflection' of actual reality. The establishment of relevance is a random act of the 'creator' of virtual reality. Therefore, it is not actual reality that affects virtual reality, but the other way around. Reference is the real relationship between virtual and actual realities. This relationship is constantly changing under the influence of virtual reality, that is, its transformation into actual reality" (Ionin, 2004).

On the one hand, virtual reality is secondary. On the other hand, information obtained from virtual reality has great potential for influencing actual reality. Accordingly, the information field of virtual reality to a certain extent determines the real life of a person, dictating stereotypes to him or her and imposing values and certain patterns of behaviour on them.

Clickbait occupies a specific niche in the information field of virtual reality. The essence of this phenomenon is succinctly expressed in the words of Anne Roumanoff, quoted in an article by Nicolas Jacquard: "Qu'est-ce que le Putaclic et est-ce une stratégie payante?": on ne sait pas ce qu'on y cherche, mais on trouve tout ce qu'on ne cherche pas. ("The internet: we don't know what we are looking for, but we find everything we are not looking for"[2].

Our analysis shows that the lexeme "clickbait" has been borrowed into both French and Russia with the exact same meaning as the English:

Clickbait – something (such as a headline) designed to make readers want to click on a hyperlink especially when the link leads to content of dubious value or interest[3].

In addition to the semantic borrowing of the word "clickbait," the following units nominating this phenomenon have appeared in French:

---

[2] Jacquard N. Qu'est-ce que le Putaclic et est-ce une stratégie payante? Le journal du CM. 2017. 19 mai. URL: www.journalducm.com/putaclic/ (accessed: 10.01.2020). (In French).

[3] Merriam-Webster Dictionary. URL: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clickbait (accessed: 20.01.2020); O'Donovan C. What is Clickbait? Nieman Foundation for Journalism. Nieman Lab. 2014. 25 August. URL: www.niemanlab.org/2014/08/what-is-clickbait/ (accessed 20.01.2020).

Piège-à-clics – Qualifie un article ou une vidéo dont le titre ou le résumé est exagéré délibérément afin d'attirer d'avantage de lecteurs ou de spectateurs. Titre aguicheur, racoleur destiné à provoquer un clic. ("Piège-à-clics – used to refer to an article or video whose title or summary is deliberately exaggerated in order to attract a large number of readers or viewers. A seductive headline designed to get the user to click on the relevant link")[4].

It should be noted that, in 2020, French Language Enrichment Commission announced the forthcoming publication of the *Dictionary of Culture,* the purpose of which is to define various terms in the fields of audiovisual communication, IT, fashion, etc., as well as to provide translations of anglicisms into French. Both "clickbait" and its French equivalent, "piège à clics," were included in the dictionary, with the latter being the preferred use[5].

The topic of how to convey "clickbait" into French was widely discussed on social media. A post asking the question "Est-ce qu'il y a une expression en français qui équivaut le mot 'clickbait'?" ("Is there an expression in French that is equivalent to the word 'clickbait'?") received the following replies:

En cherchant sur internet, j'ai trouvé «piège à clics» ("Searching on the internet, I came across the expression 'piège à clic,' meaning 'click [of a mouse] trap'");

On dit aussi «pute-à-clic» mais c'est très vulgaire ("They also say 'pute-à-clic,' as in 'prostitute click,' but that's extremely vulgar");

Il me semble donc que la traduction exacte de «clickbait» est «putaclic»… Ce mot est littéralement utilisé à la place de «clickbait» par les français et il est donc parfois utilisé comme un nom «Un putaclic» ou comme un adjectif («Les titres putaclic») ("It seems to me that 'prostitute click' is an exact translation… The French literally use this word instead of 'clickbait," sometimes as a noun (a 'putaclic') and sometimes as a verb (to 'putaclic' on the headline of an article)).

Ce terme est beaucoup moins formel et certes encore un peu jeune, mais il reprend l'idée de clic et de racolage vulgaire tout en sous-entendant que le «journaliste» serait prêt à se prostituer pour des clics («pute à clic») ("The term is far less formal and, of course, still quite young, but it contains the idea of clicks and swear words, while at the same time implying that the author of the article is willing to 'prostitute' their work for clicks")[6].

---

[4] Stackexchange. URL: french.stackexchange.com/questions/19022/un-titre-clickbait-lemploi-en-adjectif (accessed: 13.02.2020). (In French);
Wiktionary. URL: fr.wiktionary.org/wiki/pi%C3%A8ge_%C3%A0_clics (accessed 20.01.2020). (In French).

[5] Ficca S. De nouveaux «équivalents français» pour réduire les anglicismes. ww.presse-citron.net/ne-dites-plus-spoil-clickbait-ou-podcast-mais-divulgacher-piege-a-clic-et-audio-a-la-demande/ (accessed January 10, 2020);
Ficca S. Ne dites plus «spoil», «clickbait» ou «podcast», mais «divulgâcher», «piège à clic» et «audio à la demande». www.presse-citron.net/ne-dites-plus-spoil-clickbait-ou-podcast-mais-divulgacher-piege-a-clic-et-audio-a-la-demande/ (accessed January 10, 2020).

[6] Forum on clickbait. WordReference.com Language Forums. 2017. 18 January. URL: www.forum.wordreference.com/threads/clickbait.3277213/ (accessed 10.01.2020).

As the above examples demonstrate, the French audience, or at least some part of it, tends to interpret clickbait as a phenomenon of corrupt journalism. The people who posted in the thread noted that texts containing clickbait do not differ in terms of the quality of their content, originality, readability and grammatical correctness. All these characteristics are secondary to the desire to attract attention and get the reader to click on the headline: *Et tant pis pour la qualité du contenu, tant pis pour l'originalité, pour le confort du lecteur, pour l'orthographe… Dans le putaclic (on dit aussi plus poliment « piège-à-clic »), tout ceci est secondaire. ("The worse the quality of the text, the less original it is, the harder it is to read, the more the spelling suffers … all these things are secondary when it comes to clickbait (or, more politely, 'click trap'")*[7].

According to the Russian Concise Dictionary of Information Technology, "clickbait is a derogatory term used to describe web content whose purpose is to generate income from online advertising, especially at the expense of the quality or accuracy of information. In some cases, generating income is not the main goal"[8].

In modern linguistics, clickbait is understood as "a means of attracting an audience through the use of specific headlines, which in certain cases are accompanied by graphic materials that coax internet users into reading specific content based on the natural human feelings of curiosity, indignation or bewilderment" (Volskaya 2018).

Clickbait as a tool can trace its roots back to the 19th century, when the press first started to look for ways to win the attention of readers through intriguing headlines. The main function of clickbait is to attract the attention of internet users and encourage them to follow the link by clicking on it (Nikolayeva 2018).

The phenomenon of clickbait is interesting, first of all, from the linguistic point of view: how is clickbait constructed? What linguistic means are employed in its construction? What strategies are used? How does it impact readers? Second, the reaction of the audience to clickbait makes it possible to set the value priorities of internet users, thus revealing the axiological component of this linguo-cultural and social phenomenon.

What is more, the influencing power of clickbait is manifested in the fact that, "as a result of the use of clickbait with certain discursive practices leads, false topoi of events become fixed in the mind of the reader, ultimately leading to the creation of false or falsified information" (Volskaya 2018).

Clickbait has become an integral part of advertising discourse, whose effectiveness is measured, among other things, by the number of clicks. Websites that contain clickbait material and not informative; their sole purpose is to generate as much traffic as possible in order to earn revenue from online advertising. In this sense, it is hard not

[7] Ibid.

[8] Concise Dictionary of Information Technologies. Humanitarian Technologies Laboratory. URL: www.ht-lab.ru/knowledge/dictionaries/kratkiy-slovar-it/4445/ (accessed 07.11.2019). Iin Russian).

to agree with Zygmunt Bauman when he writes, "in a world over-saturated with information attention turns into the scarcest of resources and only a shocking message, and one more shocking than the last, stands a chance of catching it" (Bauman 1995).

From a pragmatic point of view, as N.N. Volskaya correctly notes (Volskaya 2018), the use of clickbait is limited in its scope to the following areas:

1) In internet marketing – to increase the number of visits to the target site
2) In mass media – to generate interest in the article the clickbait leads to
3) In online advertising – to generate income from ads
4) In offline advertising – to hold the reader's attention on promotional content.

In modern life, the competition for the reader's attention is great, and clickbait is becoming the main tool for getting eyes on a particular target site. Originating in tabloid journalism, clickbait has become one of the ways to influence mass consciousness in politics.

We believe that this can be explained by the fact that the official media pay attention to the frequency and recurrence of clickbait, viewers get used to these models and pay greater and more active attention to them.

In the Russian information space, a certain niche is occupied by websites containing teaser ads. These sites can be characterized by as clickbait sites. Owners of this kind of web resource are happy to include any kind of paid content. Teasers can often be found on news sites and online streaming services. The impact of clickbait in these teasers in enhanced by images. These include photographs of celebrities and stars, which are used in conjunction with the goods being advertised:

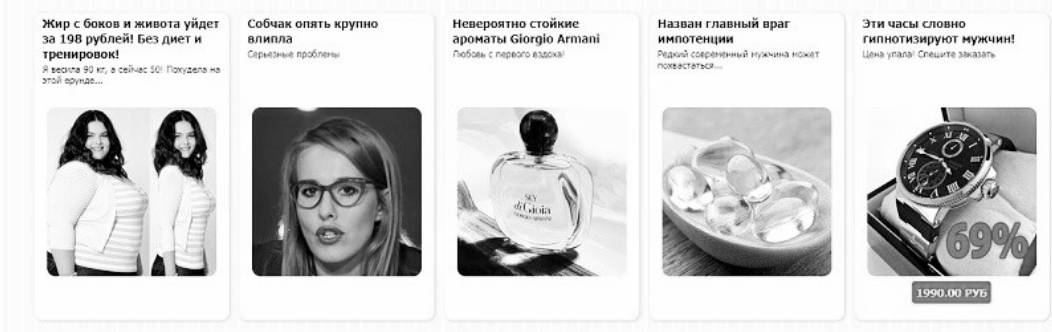

Figure 1. Examples of teasers within the Russian information space

Table 1. Examples of teasers within the Russian information space (with translation)

Жир с боков и живота уйдет за 198 рублей! Без диет и тренировок! Я весила 90кг, а сейчас 50! Похудела на этой ерунде…	**Lose that side and belly fat for just 198 roubles! Without dieting or exercising!** I went from 200 to 110 pounds, all thanks to this…
Собчак опять крупно влипла Серьезные проблемы	**Sobchak puts her foot in it again** She's looking at some serious problems
Невероятные стойкие ароматы Giorgio Armani Любовь с первого вздоха!	**Unbelievable long-lasting scents from Giorgio Armani** Love at first breath!

Назван главный враг импотенции Редкий современный мужчина может похвастаться…	**Impotence's main rival revealed** The rare modern man can boast…
Эти часы словно гипнотизируют мужчин! Цена упала! Спешите заказать	**The watch that has men mesmerized!** Price drop! Hurry to order yours

Most English-language sites that contain clickbait are geared towards popular culture. For example, the English-language sites Upworthy and BuzzFeed were created specifically to influence the target audience in issues pertaining to politics, business and the environment, yet they are full of tabloidesque content on various topics that are mostly utilitarian or scandalous. This content is divided into categories *(Quizzes, Best of the Decade, Shopping, News, TV & Movies, Trending, Newsletters, Best of the Week),* although it does not venture beyond three key topoi: celebrities, shopping and entertainment. These sites cover politics in the same way that they cover news about Hollywood stars. The information is "reinforced" by posts from social networks:

Selena Gomez Said She Doesn't "Stand For Women Tearing Women Down" After Hailey Bieber Denied Shading Her;

Trump Said He's Building A Wall In Colorado, And No One Knows What He's Talking About.

French-language sites that cover politics include a number of *des sites complotistes ("conspiracy websites"), including Conspiracy Watch, Cadoitsesavoir.fr, Onsaitcequonveutquonsache.com,* which were shut down in 2018.

There are also the specialty websites (Reveoulezvous.fr, Quelmonde.fr, Unmonde2fou, Tu sais quoi, etc.) set up by John Faqra, which are also closed at the moment. Faqra also runs a number of websites that actively promote false medical information *(Alter santé, Le Mag Santé, A ta bonne santé, Osons rêver d'un monde meilleur, Santenatureinnovation, Sante-nutrition and Topsante).* These sites are not moderated by medical professionals and cannot be considered a reliable source of medical information[9].

The ubiquity of clickbait is evident on the YouTube video hosting service, where videos often contain provocative titles designed to attract as many users and generate as many views as possible.

Our analysis of the research material found that the following characteristics of the content of clickbait in particular stand out: lack of information, misinformation and falsification, all of which create a manipulative effect. For example:

Cucumbers are not the same as they used to be…

They stole my granddad's apartment…

L'ail est 15 fois plus puissant que les antibiotiques ("garlic is 15 times more potent than antibiotics")

Female doctors share bikini pics…

[9] Air du temps, sites anti-complotistes et sites anti-fakenews. Observatoire du journalisme. 2019. 29 Octobre. URL: www.ojim.fr/air-du-temps-sites-anti-complotistes-et-sites-anti-fakenews/ (accessed 20.01.2020). (In French).

In terms of lexical features, the following are particularly interesting: the use of demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these), which is done intentionally to create a sense of dialogue with the recipient; the tendency to address the reader as "you"; and the inclusion of phraseological units, catchphrases and colloquialisms in headlines/titles:

Learn how to earn 5000 roubles a day!

You've never seen anything like it!

Cet enfant est un vrai prodige. Découvrez ce qu'il a fait … ("This kid's a bona fide wunderkind. What did he do?").

These mayors are leading the way ... / Эти мэры идут в направлении к …/

The stylistic features of clickbait include the use of ellipses for no apparent reason, question and exclamation marks, rhetorical questions and plays on words, epithets, and hyperbole:

SHOCK! This was found in a woman's body!

Don't miss your chance to win 1 million roubles…

Une mère est capable de tout faire pour ses petits… Cette vidéo émouvante d'une chienne de rue le prouve! ("A mother will do anything for her children… this touching video of a stray dog will prove it!

Look at the horror of what he did…

Le Top 10 des plus... Le 3e est incroyable ! ("The Top 10… Number 3 is incredible!")

'The Kissing Booth 3' Was Just Announced and after that Shocking Cliffhanger, I'm So Relieved. OH MY GOD!!!!

Antoni Porowski Posted a Photo of His New Haircut and He's Officially the Sexiest Man Alive.

A distinctive feature of English-language clickbait headlines is the use of extended syntax – complex long sentences that often do not contain any punctuation. Headlines with numerals are extremely common:

Just 29 Random Products We Really Love

21 Things That Are Totally Legal Even Though They Seem Questionable

17 Unbelievable Photos of Things That Fit So Perfectly It Hurts[10].

Thus, clickbait is characterized by creolization and recurrence. On the one hand, the text is supported by a relevant picture or video. On the other hand, it is necessary to repeat the information frequently.

The Russian, English and French examples of clickbait headlines we have used clearly demonstrate the prevalence and universality of clickbait in these linguistic cultures.

Unlike the English- and French-language information space, there are no special clickbait sites in the Russian-language information space. However, many online publications contain clickbait headlines.

[10] Buzzfeed. URL: www.buzzfeed.com/ (accessed 17.11.2019);
Upworthy. URL: www.upworthy.com/ (accessed 11.03.2020).

A certain ethno-cultural feature can be detected in the French-language information space, where speakers actively use French language units. This offers an insight into how clickbait is perceived in the modern mass consciousness and, to some extent, into the language policy in France.

The universal features of clickbait can be seen in all the linguistic cultures we have looked at. From the point of view of text design, clickbait is a creolized text. Images are used to enhance the manipulative impact of the title on the recipient. Most often, the image is fascinative, that is, the headline is accompanied by an eye-catching image designed to shock the recipient and produce a range of emotions – from anger, disgust and fear to curiosity and delight. The verbal component of the text, enhanced by a picture or video, has great pragmatic potential.

Clickbait is a global phenomenon in today's world. Language tools are used in the creation of a clickbait item to somehow attract the attention of the audience, regardless of the language they speak. At the same time, there is an appeal to basic human emotions, since the content of the clickbait title is ambiguous, scandalous or vague. Russian-, English- and French-speaking audiences are subjected to manipulation, which differs only in the content of the respective national "agendas."

About the Authors:

Valeria A. Buriakovskaia – Dr. Sci. (Philology), Associate Professor, Head of Chair of English Philology, Volgograd State Pedagogical University, 100 Prospect Universitetsky, 400062, Volgograd, Russia.
Email: vburyakovskaya@yandex.ru

Olga A. Dmitrieva – Dr. Sci. (Philology), Associate Professor, Head of Chair of Russian as a Foreign Language, Volgograd State Pedagogical University (Volgograd, Russia). Email: dmoa@yandex.ru

Conflicts of interest.
The author declares the absence of any conflicts of interest.

References:

Bauman Z. 1995. Ot Palomnika k Turistu. [From pilgrim to tourist]. *Sotsiologicheskiy zhurnal. [Sociological Journal]*. No. 4. P. 133–154. (In Russian).

Volskaya N.N. 2018. Klikbeit kak sredstvo sozdaniia lozhnoi informatsii v internet-kommunikatsii. [Clickbait as a Means of Creating False Information in Internet Communication]. *Mediaskop. [Mediascope]*. No. 2. URL: http://www.mediascope.ru/2450 (accessed 11.11.2019). (In Russian).

Ionin L. G. 2004. *Sotsiologiia kul'tury: put' v novoe tysiacheletie. (Uchebnoe posobie dlia studentov vuzov). [Sociology of Culture: A University Textbook]*. Moscow: HSE University Publishing House. (In Russian).

Nikolayeva A.V. 2018. Klikbeit v SMI. [Clickbait in the Media]. *Russkaia rech. [Russian Speech]*. No. 3. P. 43–47. (In Russian).