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MASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT: THE PROBLEM OF ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of mass consciousness as an object of the information effect. The methodological approach allows put aside these effects in specific circumstances in order to identify the specific activity of mass consciousness in the information society. The heuristic value of this approach is relevant both to the development of the theory of mass consciousness and to the explanation of the activity of the information system. A philosophical analysis of the nature of mass consciousness from a dialectic point of view makes it possible to realize the dual nature of this phenomenon: the perception of a personality and the perception of a social group; self-sufficiency and manipulability as a characteristic of essential traits. When considering the relationship between mass consciousness and the information environment, it is necessary to pay attention to the goals, methods and results of the impact of information from various sources on the content of mass consciousness. The category «information environment» denotes the sphere of ideal phenomena taken in unity with their social media, creators, translators.

1. Introduction

The spread of information and communication technologies since the end of the twentieth century has acquired a scale that demanded the attention of the scientific world. And despite the relatively short time allotted to the study of this phenomenon, the results have already emerged not only in determining the significant directions of the methodology of analysis, but there is also a theory that explains new parameters of social development: M. Castells's theory of the network society. A theory that has entered scientific circulation, updating the formulation and solution of a number of problems of a changing world and theoretical research (Burkova, 2018).

Reflections on mass consciousness in the information aspect refer to the current direction of intellectual attention. The social reality called "information revolution" or "digital civilization" includes a wide practice of the functioning of mass consciousness, actualizing the formulation and solution of a number of problems of the changing world and theoretical research. Information is an essential factor in the production of this type of consciousness. The question of the specificity of the influence of information culture on the mass consciousness belongs to the most controversial and requires, in our opinion, more specific outlines. Explicitly or implicitly, the interpreter (this is especially noticeable in publicistic works) includes in it what it needs to solve its problems.

There is nothing unusual in this phenomenon - the situation is typical for discussing a scientific or practical problem, during which points of view are indicated, positions in the explanation are identified. We are talking about a social phenomenon, the process, scale and essence of which is not determined only by the actual functioning of information in the technological aspect. Therefore, the polemic nature of the judgments written on this topic and a wide range of discussion issues using the tools of various fields of science are understandable (Hepp et al., 2015).

1.1. The study of mass consciousness is carried out within the framework of various scientific disciplines and from the point of view of possible research prospects:

The study of mass consciousness, despite the fact that the very concept of "mass consciousness" entered the circulation of science relatively recently, already has a history and tradition of approaches, authorities, with a certain organization of intellectual experience. We will rely on works that have weight and significance in the European and Russian traditions.

The definition of the concept of "mass consciousness" remains a research task (Shulepova, 2019). However, there is a generally accepted explanation, which we will use as a working concept: mass consciousness is an everyday, practically functioning social consciousness, intergroup, but individual in the form of implementation. This definition will allow us to consider mass consciousness as subjective, possessing ontological properties, and being realized.

1.2. The inclusion of people in the information environment does not happen by itself and contains a number of problems that are reflected in modern science.

Let us note the main directions of posing and searching for urgent questions:

a) development of new concepts; b) determination of social behavior by multimedia networks; c) the role of the media in shaping stereotypes of the mass consciousness; d) mass media as a tool of social myth-making; e) people's attitude to information technology; f) "fake journalism"; g) social media; h) networking.

The developed directions became a guideline in the selection of questions of the chosen topic, determined the logic of consideration, to a certain extent, of the material, influenced the selection of examples.

2.   Problem Statement

1) Reveal the methods and results of the influence of information on the mass consciousness;

2) Reveal the specifics of the functioning of mass consciousness in the conditions of modern information and communication technologies.

3.   Research Questions

It is, of course, impossible to cover the whole range of problems of the informational component of mass consciousness. Certain limitations of the problems under consideration are due to the specifics of the directions of philosophical analysis of mass consciousness selected in this case.

3.1. Analysis of types of information in the mass consciousness; ways of information impact.

3.2. Revealing the peculiarities of the perception of information by the mass consciousness.

4.   Purpose of the Study

The main goal of this paper is a socio-philosophical analysis of mass consciousness as an informational phenomenon.

4.1. Philosophical analysis of mass consciousness includes consideration of some of the main forms of existence of information in the mass consciousness (fakes, myths). We will pay special attention to the most acute problems of the functioning of myths and fakes in the mass consciousness: prerequisites, strategy and practice, reasons.

4.2. The philosophical analysis of mass consciousness presupposes a comprehensive analysis of the properties of mass consciousness as an object of influence (manipulation), as well as the identification of ways of responding to the influence, suggesting the presence in the mass consciousness of such an essential feature as self-sufficiency or isolation on itself.

The main thing for us in the search is the embodiment in the mass consciousness of certain aspects of the human essence.

5.   Research Methods

The methodological basis of the work is:

a) ontological approach; b) dialectical method; c) a comparative study of the types of information in the mass consciousness; d) elements of interdisciplinary analysis.

6.   Findings

The formation of the information environment is an objective and subjective process; controlled and spontaneous. And these characteristics in a special way affect the content and functioning of the mass consciousness (Chiang & Hsiao, 2015; Dashevskij, 2015). The ontology of its elements is focused on both statics and dynamics, becoming a symbolic reality that connects the self and society.

6.1.   Information technologies cannot ensure social existence if they do not lie on the basis of culture, are not embedded in everyday life

The information world created by computer technology and the Internet has certain properties that attract both its creators and its consumers:

a) selection of information product in accordance with requests; b) informatization is easy to reproduce, replicate and destroy at will and needs; c) poorly regulated space; d) manipulative capabilities; e) language diversity; f) projection of self-images; g) the relative availability of development; h) certain security and personal protection; i) transformation of information from a means into an end in itself (Choi et al., 2017; Myrick & Wojdynski, 2016; Vliegenthart et al., 2016).

6.2.   The information component in the mass consciousness creates a problem space and requires attention

The essence of the phenomenon under consideration is the modeling of any reality (ordinary world or an invented one) for its acceptance by a real subject. Reality modeling is possible with varying degrees of detail and in different forms. An important aspect that determines the commonality of fakes and myths is the interdependence of their existence. This process is directly related to how effectively and in what interests the information and language of each of them are used (Blondheim & Rosenberg, 2016; Flaxman et al., 2016; Heatherly et al., 2017). The research problem is their correlation with the world of existing existence, the given of society and mass culture.

The bearer of mass consciousness takes a lot on "faith". He chooses a consumable product that meets situational desires. Therefore, the semantic load of words, signs, symbols can remain outside the area of his attention.

The use of myth in various spheres of activity creates an interest in the dissemination of reality by people, which preserves the experience of "information" at the mass-mythological level (Ekström et al., 2016). At the same time, the meaning of the information environment is questioned.

The fake technology is designed for clip thinking. For the functioning of fakes, as well as myths, it is necessary: information, its distribution and receipt. This opportunity is provided by the presence of a place and a source that can offer this information, as well as an interest in new information.

Internet sources: individuals, organizations, mass media. The greater the competition between them, the greater the likelihood of spreading fakes and myths.

Fakes are close in nature to rumors. What conditions ensure their credibility? First, the initial doubt about the officially submitted information. Secondly, the desire to receive a more detailed, more entertaining description of an event or fact, a portrait of a person in the specifics of details. The nature of this desire is curiosity. Third, the search for new explanations in a situation where new events cannot be explained by the usual methods or existing theories. Fourthly, the impossibility of verifying the information with the available means (Corner, 2017; Skopal & Herke, 2016).

In order to resist manipulation, there must be a mechanism in the mass consciousness that sets limits to this process. The object of influence has the property of resistance, and not only the property of pliability. Both of these properties provide self-defense. The latter is needed by everyone as a means of ensuring stable life.

Empirical studies of the value orientations of Russians regularly reveal its self-sufficiency, which can be illustrated by the following situation: people listen to recommendations with interest and pleasure, but live in the old way, neglecting the temptations of new opportunities (Gricenko, 2019; Levada, 2006; Toshhenko, 2017).

Therefore, it is important to analyze the mass consciousness "from the inside" both from the point of view of the laws of its social genesis, and in terms of its immanent properties. It will help answer the question: is the subject of mass consciousness himself capable of limiting the impact of manipulative techniques? What explains the preservation of his independence and freedom?

The current growth in the volume of publicly available information, a wide range of its distribution in the context of the information and communication revolution leads to a number of problems:

a) verification of facts and events with the ambiguous role of experts and analysts; b) the need to master large volumes of information while reducing the timing of its receipt; c) recognition of unintentional or deliberate misinformation; d) impossibility to control the dissemination of inaccurate information / unlimited audience for its consumption; e) the choice of a model of human interaction with a technogenic environment, a model of human relationships in the presence of a variety of communication means (Lee et al., 2017).

How are these problems perceived in the mass consciousness? It is obvious that the idea of them does not always imply a rational vector. Research in this direction will make it possible to explain the reactions of the mass consciousness as an expectation, with the prospect of foreseeing one or another fact in the behavior of the masses, one or another information they require.

7. Conclusion

The "view of the world" in the mass consciousness is formed in the unity of three approaches: information, normative and practical. As a self-contained sphere of imperatives, it can act both as a subject

and as an object of manipulation. This, in turn, explains its property to be realized as an independent reality that creates the person himself and his world.

7.1. Fake and myth (social): characteristics and specific features

Several oppositions can be noted that are common to both myth and fake:

a) real-imaginary; b) personal-interpersonal; c) real-apparent; d) actual-possible; e) natural-artificial.

These characteristics help to overcome criticality and indifference, removing the uncertainty and doubt of people, providing attractiveness and typicality of information.

7.2. Conditions and reasons for accepting a myth:

a) lack of information, forcing to rely on the language of myth, judgment of common sense and on the corresponding own experience (perception, sensation, intuitive judgment, and so on); b) a large amount of information that does not add up to a single picture, the absence of which makes it difficult for social adaptation; c) targeted information pressure.

7.3. Conditions and reasons for accepting a fake:

Fake is the information obtained in a formal and informal way, which is not justified, but is taken on trust. Conditions of trust:

a) a priori distrust of any source of information (complete information is not available); b) the desire to receive a more detailed description of an event, lifestyle and the like, and thus satisfy curiosity or fill the "lack" of everyday reality (multiplying reality with informational activity); c) a sense of comfort in the information world: the fake language allows, even in the absence of a certain education in any field of knowledge, to be perceived.

7.4. The absolute limits of mass consciousness are the essence of this phenomenon

It is methodologically significant to analyze mass consciousness taking into account its own laws that determine the originality and difference from other forms of consciousness. Mass consciousness is a form that is not free from the action of random determining factors, however, they do not become decisive, determining certain preferences of the bearer of mass consciousness in the information world in a situation that contains a moment of absolute truth.

Analysis of the connection between information and mass consciousness allows us to understand the social and epistemological nature of mass consciousness, its main properties and specificity as a form of social consciousness.

The methodological approach, based on the identification of the determinative value of networks and the network society, allows us to understand the processes of the influence of information resources and the Internet on the mass consciousness.

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