

**PERAET 2021**

**International Scientific Conference «PERISHABLE AND ETERNAL: Mythologies and Social Technologies of Digital Civilization-2021»**

**ANCIENT MAGIC OF IMAGINATION AND MODERN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Alexander V. Motorin (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University (NovSU), Velikiy Novgorod, Russian Federation,  
amotorin@yandex.ru

**Abstract**

The magic of imagination, which flourished in the ancient cultures of India, China, Greece, in the era of computer technology has received powerful new means for its expression in images. Human's magical striving for infinite, that is, divine power, was originally based on faith in the omnipotence of the creative imagination, capable of creating spiritual and material existence. This belief could only be realized through the mathematization and digitalization of imagination and, accordingly, language as the main means of image creation. Modern computer technologies, relying on artificial mathematical languages, make it possible to create interacting and interpenetrating virtual worlds that seek to push back and, in fact, replace the actual material and spiritual world given to humanity. These digital processes in the development of modern culture are accompanied by a new wave of research attention to the ancient magical perception of the world, to the nature of creative imagination in its magical comprehension and mythological implementation by the methods of art and science, which in this case returns to its ancient magical paradigm. At present, researchers are busy both with the current manifestations of the magic of the imagination, and with various epochal features in its historical formation. Attention to the magic of imagination is intensified against the background of the general enthusiasm of researchers of literary texts with ancient pagan mythology, on the one hand, and the possibilities of modern digital myth-making, on the other.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Computer technology, digitalization, imagination, magic



## 1. Introduction

The ancient magical consciousness, its essence and manifestations, over the centuries has caused a wave-like growing attention of researchers. Currently, there is another and very significant growth of interest in this topic. As in past eras, modern researchers are primarily concerned with the highest manifestation of magical perception of the world – the magic of the creative imagination, confessing which, a person considers himself to have acquired divine power, and therefore the ability to create their own truly existing world, involve other people in this world, subjugate them to ourselves, but in essence to create them (or at least re-create) in their own image and likeness, as it is said in the biblical book of Genesis in relation to God the Creator: “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness <...>” (Bible, n.d., Gen. 1:26).

At present, researchers are busy both with the current manifestations of the magic of the imagination, and with various epochal features in its historical formation. In particular, they pay attention to the magical concepts of language as the main means of creation (Karabykov, 2020), to the fact that “reality is constructed by man in the language and is absent outside of construction” (Druzhinin, 2021, p. 67) to the “superstitious-magical religiosity” of dreams – an important component of the ancient magic of the imagination (Podyukov & Svalova, 2021, p. 121), to the “modernist methods of artistic hypostasis in the British philosophical novel” (the method of “objectifying abstract entities, <...> attributing to them real substantive content”) (Islamova, 2021, p. 247), to the magic of the magical imagination as the main direction in the work of V. Nabokov (as cited in Belousova, 2021), to “ideological modeling of the world in American media discourse” (Kushneruk, 2020, p. 92).

## 2. Problem Statement

Attention to the magic of the imagination is intensified against the background of the general enthusiasm of researchers of literary texts for ancient pagan mythology. They write, in particular, about the “charm of the pagan, pre-Christian era” in the work of writers as the main creators of cultural texts (Antyukhov & Sharavin, 2019, p. 148), about the “myth-thinking” of writers based on the archetypes of pagan consciousness (Maslova, 2018, p. 164), about the life of individual pagan deities in the artistic consciousness of the New Time (Koshelev, 2019), about the reflection of ancient mythological motives in the literary work of the New Time (Gavrilov, 2019), about the features of the “neo-mythological novel” (Bogdanova, 2017, p. 132). At the same time, attention is paid to the struggle against pagan magic in the minds of creators inclined to an Orthodox worldview (Bulgakova & Sedelnikova, 2018) and the construction of a mystical Orthodox historiography on this basis (Aizikova, 2017).

The word (and concept) “magic” means the infinite divine power of human. The ancient root of this word is known to the main Japhetic languages. It means power, strength, ability to create: Gothic “mag” – “can”, Low German “m gen” – “to be able”, Zend “maga” – “strength”, Sanskrit “magh m” – “gift”, etc; its Slavic manifestations – *mog-u*, *moshch-nyy*, *mozh-no*, *moch* [can, powerful, can, to be able to] (Florensky, 1994, pp. 45-48; Preobrazhensky, 1914, pp. 563-564).

Actually magical, secret legends explain the origin of magic in full accordance with the data of etymology: “The title *mag* [*magician*] comes from *Maja*” (Heckerthorn, 1993, p. 33); The “high priestly

reign" of the magicians..

*preceded the predominance of Assyria, Media, Persia. Aristotle claims that it was even older than the founding of the Egyptian kingdom; Plato considered their antiquity to be myriads of years <...>. Nowadays, most of the writers agree that the predominance of magicians arose five thousand years before the Trojan War. (Heckerthorn, 1993, p. 33)*

According to biblical tradition, in the antediluvian history, magic was developed by the descendants of Cain, the Cainites, and after the Flood, by the descendants of Ham, the Hamites, who founded the magical kingdoms of Babylon and Egypt, then spreading to the East. The source of all this magic was Satan, who in the form of a serpent tempted the first people in Paradise, convincing them that if they eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge, they will become "like God" (Bible, n.d., Gen. 3: 5).

A person achieves conviction in their infinite power, believing that by the power of their thought, their imagination, they willfully create their own unprecedented reality. In foreseeable antiquity, this higher magic developed in its main centers: Egypt, Babylon, Media, India.

Since the time of Pythagoras and Plato, who, according to legend, learned from the Egyptian and Babylonian sages, the magic of the imagination receives a philosophical pantheistic interpretation, the crown of which was neo-Platonism. For the neo-Platonists, "man <...> is already God by his very substance <...>. Theurgy consists only in <...> to achieve the nakedness of the deity in man" (Losev, 1988, p. 301). In his exalted divine state, man, with the power of imagination ("fantasy"), begins to create reality due to the fact that, according to Iamblichus, "divine fantasies driven by the will of the gods seize the fantastic (phantastice) ability that is in us" (Losev, 1988, p. 286). Moreover, here "fantasies" act "no longer in a passive-reflective sense, but in the sense of the creative arrangement of life itself", as Losev (1988) explains.

To achieve complete control over the process of imagination, the magical consciousness from ancient times required the subordination of image creation to the human mind, capable of calculating, calculating, calculating the created reality in accordance with the will and ideas of the creator. At the same time, the mind is thought to be either a part and manifestation of the infinite and faceless divine Mind, or occasionally, in solipsistic extremes – the focus of the whole essence of this Mind. In any case, the mind of a person, and hence the person themselves, seems to be a deity, actively creating their own world. The mental-calculus approach to the creation of images already in antiquity led to its digitalization and, accordingly, to the powerful development of mathematics, which was originally viewed as a magical science about the universe and about managing it (ancient Greek μαθηματικά, from μάθημα - "study, science").

Some modern studies on the history and methodology of physics and mathematics note the dead end of excessive rationalization and, accordingly, mathematization of scientific knowledge and creativity in general. On this path, the magic of the imagination, which presupposes infinite freedom and self-will of the person-creator, degenerates into a spiritless rationality, driving the boundless possibilities of being into the narrow logical schemes of a transient human understanding, which easily changes with the change of the theories human creates, but retains its narrowness and inflexibility unchanged. At the same

time, an important way of harmonious combination of moderate rationality necessary for magic and at the same time equally necessary creative freedom is considered the ancient theory of an infinite plurality of worlds or "parallel universes", which has been developing in various ways from antiquity to the present day (Kuypers & Deutsch, 2021). Among the possible worlds, the world of information occupies a special and increasingly important place: "In some respects, information is a qualitatively different sort of entity from all others in terms of which the physical sciences describe the world" (Deutsch & Marletto, 2015, p. 1).

### **3. Research Questions**

It is necessary to investigate the basic principles and logic of the development of the magic of the imagination as the highest manifestation of the magical perception of the world. Particular attention should be paid to the mathematical digital comprehension of the imagination and the construction on this basis of various, but internally interconnected images of the universe.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is to study the features of the magic of the imagination in its digital implementation and development from antiquity to our time.

### **5. Research Methods**

The subject of the research led to the use of appropriate methods: hermeneutic, cultural-historical, comparative-historical. These methods make it possible to determine the creative content of texts, in particular, in the aspect of expressing magic in them, based on imagination and perception of the world in different cultures and eras.

### **6. Findings**

Apparently, barely emerging, the magic of the imagination became the magic of speculation, that is, it was subordinated to the calculus activity of the human mind as the focus or manifestation of the Divine Mind. Only in this way could a person assure themselves of their complete power over the course of creation, and hence the creation of reality itself. Pythagoras and his followers interpreted this question quite philosophically. "The Pythagoreans' awareness of the role of number as a quantitative description of the universe contributed to the sacralization and "cosmization" of number. For the Pythagoreans, number became the most important element of mythopoetic systems, an image of the world, indicating the path from chaos to space" (Voloshinov & Ryazanova, 2011, p. 336). Following the Pythagoreans, Plato and his followers deified numbers, seeing in them the ideas of the divine Mind (see Losev, 1994).

From time immemorial, language is considered the main tool, or rather, the source of magical image creation – the main means of spiritual communication. At the same time, the language is understood broadly: from natural folk languages (initially – a single universal language) to the languages of mathematics and modern computer programming. Language is a creation and a gift from the gods. One

who knows all the secrets of the language becomes a perfect magician, or god. Magical linguistics from ancient times to modern times also resorts to mathematical, digital understanding of the language. The main goal of such linguistics is the revival of the lost divine language and not even the language given to Adam in Paradise from God, thanks to which Adam could co-creatively give names to the entities created by God (Bible, n.d., Genesis 2: 19-20), namely the language of God Himself.

The new computer virtual world, created thanks to artificial mathematical languages, seeks to digitize everything previously existing and, at the same time, to create directly digital, unprecedented levels of being. So, in the general universe there are subordinate digital areas-worlds with their co-rulers, each of whom, in the spirit of magic, yearns for complete power over the entire universe.

1) *The world of "mass media"*. Lies in this world are equal and equal to the truth; they are essentially indistinguishable. *In-forma-tion* – giving the form necessary for the informant (that is, in translation from Latin – type, visibility) to the worldview of each person.

2) *The world of advertising*. Advertising creators – "image makers" – create "images" ("image" is the root in this English word of the common Indo-European: "magician"). Image-makers force every person, entire nations and all of humanity to take part in the magical production and artistic transformation of the whole world in a painful, submissive way.

3) *The world of PR*. PR – public relations, "social relations, relations" – a private type of advertising that concerns more people with their relationships than things. "PR people" are the same image-makers in their own way, but they "promote" not things for sale, but people.

4) *The world of computer games*. The magic of digital cinema and animation (animation) develops through the development of interactive co-creative-passive participation of the audience in the game, replacing the material world with a virtual world, calculated by the creator of the game, which takes the position of "god" for everyone involved in the game. The participants in the game are left with only the semblance of will and free choice, which they are actually deprived of, paying for the imaginary pleasure of their life time, which is essentially priceless. So, people turn into "nerds", endlessly moving away from material reality and steadily dying painfully.

5) *The world of digital technologies in education*. Uses the possibilities of all other worlds, trying to absorb them into itself. Provides unprecedented opportunities for the implementation of the main goal of education in its magical understanding: it allows you to more powerfully influence the human consciousness, cleaning it from all unnecessary, from the point of view of the teacher, for the sake of writing on this blank sheet or blank board (tabula rasa) any image necessary for the educator.

*The world of monetary relations and settlements*. This important part of general ancient magic is rapidly being digitized in our time, infinitely surpassing the dreams of the ancient alchemists about the production of gold from other substances. This area of digital magic, not without success, penetrates into all other areas of the worlds and subjugates them. Money magic digitizes the very essence of being, offering its understanding of values and dignity as a measure of value.

## 7. Conclusion

The main features and manifestations of the ancient magic of the imagination remain relevant at the present time. Moreover, they have intensified thanks to modern digital computer technologies, the

rapid development of which has given a new breath of magical digitalization of creative imagination and language. The English word "computer" essentially means "warehouse" in the sense of accumulation, addition, calculation of accumulated information, data. From this main purpose, digital computer languages and programs (recipes) created on their basis have rapidly grown (in less than half a century), magically affecting the familiar, generally accepted image of the world and even creating new unprecedented, virtual worlds – a special kind of reality in which they are involved living people with their minds and bodies, thanks to which this reality takes on a living fulfillment and penetrates into human existence.

The magic of imagination permeates all areas of modern culture and determines their development. The study of the historical formation of magical creation allows one to understand the future of human culture as a whole.

## References

- Aizikova, I. A. (2017). K probleme konteksta ierusalimskogo proekta V.A. Zhukovskogo (po materialam politicheskoj publicistiki i religiozno-filosofskoj prozy 1840-h gg.) [To the problem of the context of the Jerusalem project of V.A. Zhukovsky (based on materials from political journalism and religious and philosophical prose of the 1840s)]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 46, 96-112. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/46/8>
- Antyukhov, A. V., & Sharavin, A. V. (2019). Bogatyrstvo kak nacionalnoe proyavleniedohristianskoj Rusi v tvorchestve A.K. Tolstogo [Wealth as a national manifestation of pre-Christian Russia in the works of A.K. Tolstoy]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 58, 129-150. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/58/9>
- Belousova, E. G. (2021). Volshebnik i fokusnik v esteticheskoj i hudozhestvennoj sisteme V. Nabokova [Magician and magician in the aesthetic and artistic system of V. Nabokov]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 69, 210-225. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/69/10>
- Bible (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2021, from <https://azbyka.ru/biblia/?a>
- Bogdanova, O. A. (2017). Russkaya revolyuciya 1917 g. v neomifologicheskromane nachala XX i rubezha XX–XXI vv.: preemstvennost i polemika [The Russian revolution of 1917 in the neo-mythological novel of the early 20th and the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries: continuity and controversy]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 48, 132-142. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/48/9>
- Bulgakova, N. O., & Sedelnikova, O. V. (2018) Konceptosfera romana F.M. Dostoevskogo «Besy»: k opredeleniyu bazovogo koncepta i ego funkcii v poetike romana [The concept of the novel by F.M. Dostoevsky's "Demons": to the definition of the basic concept and its function in the poetics of the novel] *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 54, 126-146. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/54/8>
- Deutsch, D., & Marletto, Ch. (2015). Constructor theory of information. *Proceedings of The Royal Society A Mathematical Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 471(2174). <http://doi.org/10.1098/rspa.2014.0540>
- Druzhinin, A. S. (2021). Yazyk i realnost: do ili posle, vmeste ili vmesto? [Language and reality: before or after, together or instead?]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 69, 67-93. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/69/4>
- Florensky, P. A. (1994). *Opravdanie kosmosa* [Justification of the cosmos]. Izd-vo VGK.
- Gavrilov, V. V. (2019). Motivy mifa ob Orfee i Evridike v romane M.A. Bulgakova «Master i Margarita». *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* [The motives of the myth about Orpheus and Eurydice in the novel by M.A. Bulgakov's "The Master and Margarita"]. *Vestnik*

- Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 57, 172-181. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/57/10>
- Heckerthorn, C. W. (1993). Tajnye obshchestva vseh vekov i vseh stran. Ch. 1. [Secret societies of all ages and all countries. Part 1]. RAN.
- Islamova, A. K. (2021). Gipostazirovanie obrazov-fenomenov v britanskom filosofskom romane vtoroj poloviny XX v. [Hypostasis of images-phenomena in the British philosophical novel of the second half of the XX century]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 69, 246-264. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/69/12>
- Karabykov, A. V. (2020). Yazyk Adama, evropejskij nacionalizm i podjem renessansnoj komparativistiki [The Language of Adam, European Nationalism and the Rise of Renaissance Comparative Studies]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 66, 65-86. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/66/4>
- Koshelev, V. A. (2019). Akklimatizaciya Baby Yagi v russkoj literature. [Acclimatization of Baba Yaga in Russian Literature]. *Russkaya literatura* [Russian Literature], 2, 41-51. <https://doi.org/10.31860/0131-6095-2019-2-41-51>
- Kushneruk, S. L. (2020). Ideologicheskoe miromodelirovanie v amerikanskom mediadiskurse. [Ideological world modeling in American media discourse]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 67, 93-111. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/67/5>
- Kuypers, S., & Deutsch, D. (2021, February). Everettian relative states in the Heisenberg picture. *Proceedings of The Royal Society A Mathematical Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 477(2246). <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspa.2020.0783>
- Losev, A. F. (1988). *Istoriya antichnoj estetiki. Poslednie veka. Kn. 1-2*. [A History of Ancient Aesthetics. The last centuries. Book. 1-2]. Iskusstvo.
- Losev, A. F. (1994). *Mif. Chislo. Sushchnost* [Myth. Number. Essence]. Mysl'.
- Maslova, A. G. (2018). Mifologizaciya hudozhestvennogo prostranstva i vremeni v tvorcestve S.S. Bobrova [Mythologization of artistic space and time in the works of S.S. Bobrov]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 51, 162-176. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/51/13>
- Podyukov, I. A., & Svalova, E. N. (2021). Kulturnaya semantika znakov-simvolov v tekstah narodnyh snovidenij (na materiale tradicij snovidchestva v Permskom Prikamie [Cultural semantics of signs and symbols in the texts of folk dreams (based on the traditions of dreaming in the Perm Kama region)]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya* [Tomsk State University Journal of Philology], 70, 122-136. <https://doi.org/10.17223/19986645/70/7>
- Preobrazhensky, A. (1914). *Etimologicheskij slovar russkogo yazyka. T. 1-2* [Etymological dictionary of the Russian language. T. 1-2]. Izdanie Akademii nauk.
- Voloshinov, A. V., & Ryazanova, N. V. (2011). Pifagorejskoe uchenie o chisle: genesis chisla kak objekta kultury [Pythagorean doctrine of number: the genesis of number as a cultural object]. *Vestnik Saratovskogo gosudarstvennogo tekhnicheskogo universiteta* [Bulletin of the Saratov State Technical University], 1(1), 336-343.