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THE CYBERSPACE MYTH AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION, WITHIN THE LIMITS OF NETOCRACY

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Abstract: Technological augmentation in the field of communication is a new way of controlling and manipulating the interface between current political communications and information. This is because, within the new paradigms of power, political communication is under the influence of netocracy, a new and mythical form of cybertechnological superpanopticism. The general objective of this paper is to analyze the phenomenon of cybertechnological globalization where, according to Alexander Bard and Jan Söderqvist, this new form of political and communicative superpanopticism is the result of netocracy. This is related not just to the undermining of capitalism, but also to the myth of internet transparency as the site for communicational freedom. In theoretical terms, this paper seeks to deconstruct this hypothesis based on Slavoj Žižek's position on netocracy. He claims this phenomenon is little more than a new and perverse form of capitalism which engages new methods of manipulating political communication. The methodology used in this paper draws on Bard and Söderqvist's arguments, Žižek's critique and Gilles Deleuze's deconstruction.

Key Words: myth, cyberspace, political communication, netocrats, netocracy, political actors, rhizome, superpanopticism.

1. Introduction

The evolutionary matrix of political communication lies in Aristotle's concept of man as a "political animal," endowed with "articulated language" (Denton 1998, xiii-xv, Aristotle 1981, 51-477). This line of argument suggests that one of the definitions of political communication lies within the limits of communication – as a rhetoric of message transmission and information in post-industrial societies, at the end of the 20th Century (Denton and Woodward 1998, 3-17) – which is currently suffering a paradigm shift. Change that takes place with regard to communication in the information paradigm – as content, thought, action (Denton and Woodward 1998, 3-17) or symbolic communication (which may be mental, verbal, nonverbal or graphic, especially for cyberspace communication media (Graber 2003; 2005, 479-507)) – to cyberpower (Nye 2011, 113-153), where information becomes a means of control and authority (Jordan 1999). However, the myth, which has been intrinsically embedded in the structure of civilization and human nature prior to the emergence of political practice, is somewhat different. Although it no longer forms the basis of global social structures such as religion or society, either in terms of their formation or existence, when situated in the cosmogonic, cosmological, artistic, ritualistic or religious paradigms the myth has established for itself a comfortable and contemporary retreat within virtual space and consumer culture (Bottici 2007). For this reason, it is now possible to speak of a myth of cyberspace, one that fuels political communication yet cannot be reduced to the art of rhetoric, instead becoming a viral phenomenon of manipulation within the cyber-capitalist panoptic system (Foucault 1995, 195-231). Or, if we are to be in Jordan's paradigm (1999, 197-200) and Poster's (1990, 93-98) theories, current societies are moving towards what they call a *superpanopticon* surveillance system of cyberspace *cyberpower*. That is mechanism which, for Poster (1990, 93-98), places post-industrial communication in a "...surveillance system without walls, windows, towers or guards" (Poster 1990, 93), an argument that leads Jordan to see in this *superpanopticon* system a "...myth of the electronic frontier" (Jordan 1999, 197-200). Namely, a myth involving "cyberspace hell", created by the "virtual imagination", based exclusively on information and computerization, as a consequence of total surveillance of the individual and society at the virtual level. This produces a paradigm shift in the concept of Foucauldian panoptic surveillance, from that based on the biopolitical and globalizing trajectory of the world, to that based on the cybernetic and digital trajectory of the world. This is an appearance that also produces a paradigm shift at the level of the netocratic mechanism action from Bard and Söderqvist's (2012) theory, which passes from that of the panopticism surveillance paradigm to that of the *superpanopticism* one.

Cyberspace itself is a postmodern cultural product comprising three main fields; the material (hardware), the symbolic (software) and the experimental (the individual's methods of information, communication and entertainment), where the mediation of the cultural world via the symbolic world results in the production of a simultaneous, hypertext-based culture and communication system (Bell 2001, 6-30). Cybercapitalism, on the other hand, refers to a new form of capitalism involving, and including, the Internet or virtual space. This, in conjunction with the globalization phenomenon, represents a new competitive market that aims to gather funds/information using such means. (Laxer 1998, 1-32). Thus, the modern world is therefore witnessing a conceptual metamorphosis of the myth as a consequence of historical, political, artistic, communicative and, above all, technological evolution. A characteristic currently identified within the realms of cyberspace, consumer society and cultural mass media, as well as in political communication, is that the myth is creating a series of behavioral patterns within in a panchoreography of netocratic *superpanopticism*. *Netocracy*, according to Bard and Söderqvist (2012), is a post-capitalist concept that denotes a new dominant class of the information age, one that has the power to dominate, control and exploit information and communication networks through *netocrats* (members of this class). Netocrats believe they will create new forms of government that will be shaped according to the aristocratic political regime. This will be to the detriment of the capitalist bourgeoisie, a process which, in their opinion, will lead to the emergence of a crisis of capitalism (Bard and Söderqvist 2012, 13-207). Panchoreography describes the global standardization of physical and verbal behaviors – shared mechanisms leading to a homogenization of verbal and non-verbal expressions that are a consequence of the emergence of mass media, consumer culture, and cyberspace – the result being an impoverishment and subversion of civil rights, and an extension of a *superpanopticon* form of surveillance. The role of the myth in this context is to manipulate and distort reality, within the limits of virtual communication, in a way that is antagonistic to the power of cyberspace. Political communication, therefore, is a means, not a goal, for the netocratic elite.

2. Political Communication and Netocratic Superpanopticism

Cyberspace has become the new field for the development and emergence of ideologies, conflicts or political discourses in the paradigm of virtual space as an accomplishment of the Deleuzian ideal of rhizomatic multiplicity (Marks 2006, 194-196) against a background of the proliferation and augmentation of virtual communication environments. From the Internet, this makes for not only a medium of communication at

the fingertips of ordinary individuals, but also a rhizomatic political environment (Marks 2006, 195). This leads to a deterritorialization of the classical models of biopower, from the political communication system plan – which converge from this plan of post-industrial biopolitics – into the (cyber)power of internet networks (Bogard 1990, 15-32). This makes this cyberpower a political communication environment that has the potential to influence both events from a cybernetic environment and from a non-cybernetic one, given that the so-called “geography of cyberspace” is a much more flexible and efficient than the real environment (Rattray 2009, 256), but with real effects and impact on the latter. Such media therefore form bridges (rhizomes) between politics and the political messages emanating from *political actors* in leading positions, as well as from *marginal political actors*. McNair (2011, 67-84) argues that the term *political actors* refer not only to governmental political organizations in positions of leadership, but also to non-governmental and non-party political organizations, including those of civil society, trade unions, various pressure groups or activists who operate outside the official rules established by the institutions and lack the resources that would enable them to make the news or establish public agendas. These *marginal political actors*, like governments, use mass-media to influence public opinion on internal/external policy in their favor. For McNair (2011, 3-15), the reason for this type of communication, within the overall limits of political communication, is enshrined within the intention, content and purpose of this type of discourse and not by the fact that it addresses public and budget revenues, official authority decisions or legislative proposals/debates and sanctions. This is because current political communication has expanded its horizons and now encompasses marginal political actors. The *majority* (from a numerical point of view) and *minority* (in terms of powers held within a state), within a Deleuzian context (2005, 105-310), are, in this context, represented by civil society (where the minorities are subsystems). Political communication within a civil society paradigm differs from the political communication of *political actors* in leading positions (the *majority* in terms of power, but not in terms of numbers), through the fact that *marginal political actors* (the *minority* in terms of power, but not in terms of numbers) do not have the legal power to pass laws. However, for Deleuze (2005, 232-310), the process of *becoming* does not follow the logic of *becoming-majoritarian* (towards *majority*) but *becoming-minoritarian* (towards *minority*), which, in this context, can also be applied at the level of a democratic state. For Deleuze (2005, 232-310), the condition and the definition of becoming is therefore *becoming-minoritarian*, because the *majority* are never becoming. Thus, it does not make sense to speak of *becoming-majoritarian* because the *majoritarian* is a homogeneous system rather than a subsystem such as the *minority*. Thus, the process of *becoming-minoritarian* comprises civil society. The *majority* as power (the *majoritarian-State*) is therefore placed in brackets because it

does not fall within the limits of immanence, instead it falls within those of transcendental netocratic authority (in Bardian terms), which shapes its form and structure from the exterior through informational cyberspace (Bard and Söderqvist 2012). Within this paradigm of transcendental netocratic authority, the state is an inert and passive organism, whose process of becoming requires the intervention of transcendental projections, provided here by the intervention of an external force in the form of a netocratic element, which, by virtue of the power of the information it possesses, falls within the cybercapitalism paradigm. However, the process of *becoming-minoritarian* reasserts the state, and has the effect of *detrterritorializing* state organizations. *Becoming* and *detrterritorialization*, in a Deleuzian context (Deleuze and Guattari 2005), therefore position the state within brackets by numbing it in the process of becoming (of power minorities), primarily via the exercise of voting. This transfers the state's majority power (majoritarian in power) to the consumer of information (minoritarian in power), who, in turn, has the possibility to *become-majoritarian*, but only in a simulacrum paradigm. The state therefore sees itself reterritorialized in the paradigm of a *minoritarian* power, where the *minoritarian* (minority in terms of power) can become the *majoritarian* (majority in terms of power) through voting. This is a vote it grants to a model it has chosen with the purpose of *becoming majoritarian* by nature and regardless of number (the model, as a constant or a standard, being the condition for the existence of the *majority* and, also, the missing element of the *minority*) (Deleuze 1990, 54). However, this *minoritarian-majoritarian* relationship, within the limits of *becoming*, creates an implosion of meaning in the power paradigm given that, according to the interpretations of Bard and Söderqvist (2012), netocracy lies above the state and its policies. This positions the battle between the governing political actors and the marginal political actors within a new simulacrum of informational cybercapitalism. This is because the true battle for power takes place among the elites (the netocrats) which shape, from the shadows, the model of majority as well as that of the state. The simulacrum of this power play between political actors and marginal political actors is fueled by detrterritorializing the power center, moving it from the state – or its political actors, entrusted with political speeches, decisions or negotiations – to the information provided by netocratic power to the marginal political actors. This creates a paradigm shift in the political discourse of power, which is no longer on the side of real political actors but on the side of the netocratic elites within cyberspace and global cybertechnology. The conclusion to be drawn here is that the stake in political communication is therefore power. But this new power, which shapes the politics, technology and culture of virtual societies is, in Jordan's view (1999, 2-3), the cyberpower, a concept similar to netocracy, in the sense that it argues the existence of a virtual elite, aiming for dominance and control of cybernetic space and its users, based on the

reason that “...everything is made of information or can be transformed into information” (Jordan 1999, 181). Such a mechanism is powered by *virtual imagination* – seen as the way in which virtual space is represented in the collective imagination that undermines the myth of virtual space transparency (Jordan 1999, 179-207). From this two paradigms result for Jordan. First, the dystopic one, is that of the *superpanopticon* surveillance system (*cyberspace hell*), which is based on three dystopian tactics – one aimed at monitoring social order by implanting tracking devices in humans, one aimed to thoroughly supervise the individual, and their actions through technology, and one that feeds on the anxiety and fear of cyberspace as a consequence of the first two tactics (Jordan 1999, 180-181). From this it follows that this superpanopticon Jordanean system, unlike the Foucauldian panopticon system, exercises total surveillance of the individual and of society, but at the level of cyberspace, by archiving all the social interactions which it stores as information in databases distributed and interconnected through cyberspace. The second paradigm, the utopian one (*the cyberspace heaven*), allows a resuscitation of the myth, contributing to the ‘minortarians’ (marginal political actors) process of heading towards a majority, and forms the simulacrum of power games built on the simulacrum transparency of communication. Therefore, for Buchanan (2009, 197-198), this last position leads to a leveling of collective human consciousness and intelligence in the plan of cyberspace, leading to a kind of panchoreography, at least in the sphere of social surveillance (Jordan 1999, 201). This erases the border at the level of political communication, between political actors and marginal political actors. This is the case because, as long as everything is made out of information or can be transformed into information (Jordan 1999, 181) at the cyberspace level, this creates for both camps of political actors a simulation in the paradigm of difference. This is because for the netocrats from this superpanopticon system, what matters is the information they can use in their own interests and not in that of the political actors/marginal political actors, which are only a means to reach the goal, namely the cyberpower in the Jordanean paradigm. That is why the mechanism of action of the superpanopticon system aims at creating a simulation of freedom of expression and power games, between the minority and the majority, in order to establish a rhizomatic multiplicity with the help of cyberpower, which will lead to an easy control of the political discourse from the biopolitical plane. Rhizomatic multiplicity, in which we talk about a deterritorialization of traditional political powers and a reterritorialization of these powers, in the cyberspace cyberpower paradigm, whose paradox is both to liberate and to dominate (Nye 2011, 113-153; Jordan 1999, 2). But what is being released is not at the level of biopower, nor at the level of biopolitics, but at the level of the myth of the collective imagination of cyberspace, which creates the simulacrum of freedom of expression (Schussler 2016). This is because cyberspace will

not lead to a total release of information from the biopolitical authority of the political actors. On the contrary, it leads to additional control of both information and its users/issuers which, for the moment, creates a simulacrum of the power of marginal political actors (Nye 2011, 113-153). For example, for Bennett and Segerberg (2013, 1-19), Twitter is not only a marketing tool used by political actors, but also a source of counterattack for marginal political actors. This is where this cyberpower at the political communication level (attributed to Twitter by the netocratic elite), which in Jurgherr's view (2015, 85-86) changed traditional political communication through this empowerment of marginal political actors which, by creating of an implosion of meaning at the informational level, manage to manipulate the political elites or the media, thus gaining access to the traditional sphere of political communication. Cyberpower that has managed to create a domination of both the minority and the majority, through this superpanopticon surveillance system, which includes both biopower and global biopolitics subjected to digitization and computerization.

Therefore, the myth residing in the political communication of cyberspace draws in the symbolic rhetoric of the masses which, according to Bard and Söderqvist's (2012) netocratic theory, fuels a false freedom and a simulacrum of the *becoming-minoritarian* process towards a majority. At the top of the cyber-mythical pyramid lies the true elite (of netocrats) that hold the reins of power, as they do in relation to political discourse, which for these marginal political actors is the means of deterritorialization and of the simulacrum of power. Political discourses are not provided within the logocentric-rhetoric limits of historical reality, but through the hypertextual nodes and subconscious manipulations of the feeling of freedom of expression. This feature also perverts the symbolic communication of the myth in the direction of a behavioral and ideological panchoreography supervised and shaped by netocrats. This is a myth that, in terms of political communication, does not work at the level of rationality, dialectics or discursive rhetoric but at the level of facts, in the naturalist interpretations of events or ideas, and by touching and manipulating the collective consciousness as well as the individual's emotional subconscious (violent or anguished). In cyberspace, it creates a discontinuous and perverse myth of political discourse which distances itself from dialectics and instead moves towards the area of stereotypes, simulacra and denotative distortion of meaning, both metalinguistic and connotative. This is because, within the parameters of Roland Barthes reasoning, the myth is both a communication system and a signification mode, a type of discourse that is not limited to verbal/oral communication, but instead transcends this boundary and makes its way into the symbolic (metalinguistic) communication widely found in mass-media, publicity, advertising or electoral propaganda (Barthes 1991, 107; 1977, 165-170). Thus, the political discourse adopts the symbolism of the

myth through the new technological codes that cyberspace makes available to it. The hypertextual environment facilitates both the transmission of the political message (by the political actors) and its reception (by the marginal political actors) through the World Wide Web. The resuscitation of the myth as a method of manipulating or controlling critical or rational thinking, thus slides towards the method of control implied in netocratic cybertechnological superpanopticism. The netocratic myth holds the informational superpanopticism controlled by the elites of cyberspace, giving birth to a chimera and a simulacrum of information transparency in the public arena. Cyberspace is a product of the digital globalization process, generating a true technological revolution both at the informational level and in terms of power games, where reality takes on the new dimension of *hyperreality* (Baudrillard 1995). For Bard and Söderqvist (2012), the informational netocratic network is filtered (by the netocratic elite in its favor) in such a way that truly valuable information or events constitute a transactional field at elitist (netocratic) level, which excludes and restrains both the public arena and capitalism. These are subsequently served with a second-hand information palette, which enhances this simulacrum and the implosion of reality, resulting in dispossession of the public arena and capitalism from the power of information (Bard and Söderqvist 2012, 104). Thus, a myth is created by cyberspace (in late capitalist societies), where what is at stake is the myth of the electorate's contempt of political actors. This is a consequence of the fact that netocracy has superpanoptic control of the entire political discourse in informational societies where, within the limits of capitalism, politicians are the producers and the electors are the consumers (Bard and Söderqvist, 2012, 39). The obscure superpanopticism of netocracy therefore creates a double power game. On the one hand, this is played out at a purely netocratic level (elites' game) whilst on the other it is played out at the level of the *minoritarian's* process of becoming. Minoritarians who, in the simulacrum of *becoming towards majority*, are situated within the immanence of self-determination and self-organization. This creates form and meaning (in the political discourse) within the transcendental myth of netocratic superpanopticism which, in terms of the illusion of cybertechnological transparency, generates an excess of information that encrypts the meta-information designed to fuel the netocratic superpanopticism. McLuhan (1994, 3-7) believed that the medium is no longer the message, but instead becomes the user as a consequence of the content created by the internet user, leading, in Bard and Söderqvist's vision, to the dissipation of the border between production and consumption between both the producers of political speeches (the political actors) and cyberspace users (Bard and Söderqvist 2012, 104-105). Power games, are therefore no longer determined by the political actors governing the state, but by the netocratic elite (governing information cybertechnology) who also determine social games.

3. The Myth of Cyberspace

Technological development, through the marketing of a varied package of communication and gadgets against a backdrop of global digitization, is part of consumerist-capitalist policy. Technology is the means by which information transitions from the dimension of knowledge to that of simulacrum (Baudrillard 1995). Knowledge no longer resides within the paradigm of the true-false relation, but instead within the paradigm of hyperreal symbolic communication. This can also be identified in political discourses present in cyberspace, as a mythical virality of power games. According to Bard and Söderqvist's (2012) thesis, netocracy has undermined the old political discourse and has transformed it, along the political actors, into entertainers who have lost their true discursive power under the influence of this netocratic superpanopticism. This has led to the deterritorialization of the power of political discourse, from one that is real to one that is hyperreal, or, in other words, from the real to the cyberspace simulacrum. Superpanopticism which, according to Žižek's (2003, 255-267) paradigm, fuels the simulacrum of power games, is an arena where the marginal political actors (used by netocrats in manipulating power) are the ones (re)creating the rhetoric of the political discourse under the careful supervision of the netocratic elites, who rely on a *rhizomatic multiplicity* (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 3-30) of communication rather than a uni/(bi)dimensional one. A symbolic, mythical and simulacrum communication, rather than a real one, could transform political communication into a *desiring-machine* (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 1-9). Thus, there is a continual flow of political discourses connected to the netocratic machine of the mythical superpanopticism of cyberspace. In politics, that which we identify as being the myth of the political discourse (as fantasy) is in fact the outcome of the production of the desire for power, in the sense that the flow of the political discourse machine produces the reality of desire for power, as opposed to a mythical representation. Nevertheless, political communication, in its mythical dimension, cannot be eliminated due to the rhizomatic nature of cyberspace which, through its fractal structure, always retains the possibility of finding itself someplace else, in another hypertextual node or link, and can remake itself or undergo metamorphosis. This rhizomatic network appears, in Žižek's (2003, 255-267) vision, to signify the omnipresence of cyberspace and the internet which, for him, is simply another commodity of capitalism, ergo a new means of manipulation and consumption. The paradigm of Bardean superpanopticism has therefore been replaced by the rhizomatic proposition. This superpanopticism, in Bard's (2012) paradigm, exercise its power not only in the categories of population – which are going to be supervised and kept under control, as in Foucault's panoptic vision (Foucault 1995, 195-309) which attributes to the capitalist system a panoptic form of control and supervision of the

political and economic systems – but also in cyberspace (the arena for manipulating information and political communication). Thus, it creates a type of cyberspace myth where we are faced, on the one hand, with netocratic superpanopticism and, on the other, with the globalization phenomenon (which constitutes the flow of the netocratic machine and of cybercapitalist cyberspace cyberpower). According to Bard and Söderqvist (2012, 68-69), this capitalist globalization phenomenon – which involves the free market, both as work force and as commodity, along with the traffic of goods, services and capital beyond national borders – is metamorphosed into netocratic globalization. If power in capitalist globalization is granted by money and material property, or private property, then in netocratic globalization (cyber)power is granted by information and the capacity for it to be manipulated (Žižek 2004, 303). Therefore, netocratic globalization first appears under the guise of a social phenomenon resulting from digitization – meant to create useful relations between humans in terms of communication and networking – which subsequently proves to be a panchoreographic superpanopticism that seeks to steer behaviors and ideologies in the direction of impoverishment, as well as diminishing freedoms of manifestation/expression. However, Žižek's (2004, 192-195) theories divides this netocratic superpanopticism into an antagonism between pro-capitalist netocrats (those who are trying to obtain added value from maintaining informational control) and post-capitalist netocrats (those who seek to undermine the capitalist bourgeoisie and class struggle). The link between the myth and the virtuality of cyberspace is that both are evading the reality necessary for the linearity and order of history. Influenced by Bergson's philosophy, Deleuze (1995) posits that virtuality is not opposed to reality (seen as a fusion of the *actual* and the *present*), but is a fusion of the past (as memory) with the future (as fantasy) which, for Bergson (1991), gives rise to a world with two centers, one of reality with corresponding *perception images*, and one of virtuality with corresponding *memory-images*. This, however, does not exist in a pure state as Deleuze proposes a philosophy of affirmative difference rather than one of negative difference. The lack of negation in this equation of difference means that virtuality encompasses reality, yet at the same time is halved (becoming virtualities), which transforms it into a partial or fragmented object that does not exist in a pure state, but instead as an entity incorporated into real objects, or as an entity short of its own identity (Deleuze 1995, 28-168). Thus, if the myth relates to reality – a consequence of its opposition to Logocentrism, which is endowed with the rendering of reality – then cyberspace relates to reality through virtuality, which means that cyberspace has become, in effect, the realization of the myth. This is because the virtual world of cyberspace is like the world of the myth – it is magical, fantastic, utopic/dystopic and timeless, a result of the symbolic violation of the principles of reality that govern daily human

existence. But what, then, is the link between myth, cyberspace and political communication? An answer can be found in Henry Tudor's (1972, 13) theories, which argued that political myths relating to political issues are fictions or illusions, a series of stories that evade reality and the present by being both timeless and fantastic (Deleuze 1995, 28-168). Thus, the first link between the three components of the equation is to place reality between brackets, not by abolishing it, but by *conscious perception* perversion – perceived as a conscious act of the perception of political discourse in accordance with linearity and historical order – in favor of *memory-images*, perceived remembrances of unconscious residues of the myth, and as ideology. For Bergson, these *memory-images* constantly oscillate between thing (object) and act, where the act of perception produces an analogue to the image which derives from matter, more precisely from the material world, which for him leads to the association of an image with a thing or an object (Bergson 1991, 77-133). Furthermore, *conscious perception* is an analogue to the mind and to knowledge (to the detriment of action), to the consciousness accompanied by discernment, and is associated by Bergson (1991) with *pure perception* (the *pure* presence of things untouched by memory). On the other hand, *conscious perception* represents virtuality and not actuality, as it presents only one face of the thing in a process of separation of the part (mind) from the whole (matter) and is therefore a representation conceived within the limits of immanence and virtuality (Trifonova 2007, 25-125). This affords the actual political discourse (which is an act) the possibility of resuscitating the mythical dimension of rhetorical and political rituals and reintegrating them in its system of manifestation, as ideology. This ideology, initially, addresses the ideas in their scientific and rational form, where the reality of the world (history) still exists, but which is subsequently detoured into an image (simulacrum). In turn, this manifestation can be found today within the paradigm of a virtual immanence of becoming, situated within the limits of an eternal return to significance. This is because, according to Tudor (1972, 30), ancient political myths revolved around a ritualistic system where the past of a nation was dramatized, and the future was presented in a certain light. Such a position smothered the virtual dimension of the myth as a fusion between past and future. However, current perspectives on the political myth construe cyberspace not only as a materialization of *memory-images*, but also as an immanent materialization of virtuality. This implies that the fictions or illusions regarding political issues which were emphasized by Henry (1972) represent a recognition of current events as a consequence of *memory-images*. Thus, certain forms of propaganda, slogans, media debates or messages on various social networks are not new in terms of their form or structure, but they do represent the return of the mythical-political rituals that have left their mark on the collective consciousness rather than the historical consciousness of individuals (Bottici 2007, 246-261).

Today, this collective consciousness no longer refers to the tribal or primitive government system, where the Gordian node of this collective consciousness was fed by the religious system (Bottici 2007, 131-201), but to a system that has been subjected to axiological or moral norms and values resulting from the process of netocratic globalization. Under these circumstances, the timelessness of the myth and of cyberspace allows for the manifestation of netocracy, given that its superpanoptic structure is aimed at manipulating the perception of political discourses within the collective consciousness. This, in Žižek's (2003, 261) view, renders netocracy a product or a weapon of capitalism, whereby post-industrial society has been replaced by the informational society, albeit within the limits of informational consumerism. This has generated a paradigm shift in political discourse, which is no longer centered on economic reality or added value, but on informational value. Thus, information moves from truth-telling to the simulacrum perimeter of the myth, where the struggle for power has not disappeared but has transitioned from the registry of money and commodities to the registry of information simulacrum. The battle is fought in the land of mythicized information, and within its parameters this simulacrum of power can be observed, afforded by the permanent modification, de(re)coding of the discourse and informational exchange in cyberspace. This reveals a single viable power, the cyberpower of netocrats, over the consumers of information. This characteristic, enshrined within political discourse, leads to the existence of vigorous information networks, given the fact that both political and marginal political actors are no longer separated by veracity, but instead are involved in the same process of manipulating codes and symbols in an implosion of meaning.

4. Conclusions

Although interest for the myth disappeared at the beginning of the 20th Century, it has recently returned within the paradigm of cyberspace and political discourse that moves from the register of collective consciousness into that of collective imagination in cyberspace. The myth, however, has lost its transcendental allure – that of an immobile and passive world waiting to be shaped by a superior exterior power – and is currently undermined by a technological immanentism, exercised through the cybertechnological cyberpower of the virtual space. This speaks of an immanentism and autonomy capable of providing form and meaning to the world from within cyberspace. Like the myth, this reveals a series of conflicts, external to or within human nature, which in the present context are manifested within a superpanopticism of the political discourse. In the sense that power games are now taking place at the level of cyberspace, where the netocratic elite (behind the flow of information), is the one that creates both an implosion in the freedom of expression and

the authenticity of information, and at the level of the participants in power games. Thus, the capitalist consumerism of virtual information feeds a duplicitous face of the myth that oscillates between the utopian and the dystopian paradigm of superpanopticon cyberpower. This superpanopticon surveillance system is nothing more than a new facet of capitalism, whose stake passes from the register of money and commodities, into that of information authority, thus creating an informational and control superpanopticism that places us in a hyperreality of events and a simulacrum of meaning.

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