

'Versioning'

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Forewords

My essay after a while of researching began to behave similarly to the transcript of Laric's Versions in which he did not write a single word of his own piece's narration but edited together 'found' texts. My essay is full of quotes and almost even without my additional leader bridge sentences you could read the essay associatively jumping from one quote to the following one.

INTRO

Inspired from the video of Oliver Laric's 'Versions' and Kirby Ferguson's 'Everything is remix' serie I decided to try to give an overview of how these theories function in practise on a particular slice of the virtual land of memes through an analysis.

Origin of Meme theory

Meme theory is related to Richard Dawkins The selfish gene.

The essence of the theory is the discovery: culture is formed by very similar unwritten rules to biological evolution that could be described by these three words: 'Copy, Transform, Combine'.

'In culture memes (ideas, behaviours, skills) are being copied, transformed and combined.

And the dominant ideas of our time are the memes that spread the most.' (Ferguson, Kirby – Everything is a remix part 4)

Ideas by nature they just does not behave as solid objects – they are much more fluid.

An idea that believed to be unique can be broken down into smaller elements, influences that were collected or experienced or observed by the author who mixed these element into a progressive mash-up. And the result seems to be an invention of something new.

The word meme is already a remix of a pre-existed word 'gene'.

COPYING

Laric and Ferguson discuss the same trend: one of the biggest opportunity that digital technology gives to the users is the power of infinitely copying data with such ease that was not even imaginable before. 'But from the perspective of the content industry, these limitations in analogue technology (i.e.: books, vinyl records, tape record) were not bugs. They were features.' (Lessig, Lawrence – Remix, p. 63) These limitations are all vanished once and for all since the digital and internet revolution – not much for the delight of the leader of the content market. They are fighting with the help of law to cut back copyrighted material from being re-used, remixed, spread without letting them gaining profit.

But all three of them miss to discuss about a certain field of the virtual culture where copying is less problematic (probably because of it stands outside of the market). There is a new rapidly growing and enriching field where 'copying' or better say adjusting or recombining is almost the goal itself. On the 'capital spelled' internet a new 'digital folklore' began to grow: this slice of the virtual world called memes.

The internet transformed the passive media consumer into an active even pro-active contributor to itself. It made each and every user an active participant in forming and spreading culture also feeding their needs from the same place.

In the subculture of memes copy and remix are the main tools.

'Just everything have been photoshopped'. (Laric, Oliver – Versions)

The creator of memes uses the main benefit that the digital technology gives: it can copy without any type of loss what has been created before. If the user's aim is to merge entities it does not have to start from generate both parts separately then combine – it can skip the first step and instantly focus on the process of combination. 'Our new ideas evolve from the old ones' (Ferguson, Kirby – Everything is a remix part 4)

'As Johan Söderberg says, "To me, it is just like cooking. In your cupboard in your kitchen you have lots of different things and you try to connect different tastes together to create something interesting." The remix artist [or meme creator] does the same thing with bits of culture founding his digital cupboard.'

(Lessig, Lawrence – Remix, p. 97)

If copying is the goal itself, than what is the meaning of authorship and ownership in this subculture?

According to Ferguson the law recognizes ideas as intellectual properties. Ideas form part of authorship and ownership simultaneously.

Unlike the world of memes: it has overcome the old fashioned idea of authorship.

In this subculture there is almost no authorship.

Once a meme is born the community is the owner and once someone submits a meme entry becomes a member of the community.

This may one of the reason why is so adorable and enjoyable to contribute. Everybody can legally feel to copy.

The creation of a meme is an activity of a community and no matter who picked it first and no matter who invented it (there is no category like 'author of this meme' at knowyourmeme.com).

Kirby says that the original intent of 'The copyright act of 1790' is entitled "an Act for the encouragement of learning". The Patent Act is "to promote the progress of useful Arts." changed significantly driven by the market: the intent was to enrich the common pool of knowledge.

Nowadays is no more than protecting the company's interest.

The memes are the utopistic manifesto of Creative Commons – if not even more because a usage of creative common licence often asks for credit. But the concept of credit has no among memes. 'But in a digital memetic community, plagiarism doesn't make any sense as a concept – if there is "no such thing as originality," then there is no such thing as appropriation from others and further there is no assertion that the work is "your own." In a memetic community, citation isn't an ethical question because plagiarism cannot exist.' (Ramirez, Paul)

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