The Role of Mythical Form of Thinking Embedded into Earlier and Recent Computer Games in Teaching Religious and Ethical Values

Geçmişteki ve Günümüzdeki Bilgisayar Oyunlarında Mitik Düşünme Biçiminin Dini ve Ahlaki Değerlerin Öğretimindeki Rolü

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ÖZ

Doğu düşünce dünyasında, masal, hikaye, destan, kıssa vb. mitik anlatım tarzlarıyla ibretlik olayların anlatımı yaygındır. Bu söylemlerle, dinleyenlerine, ahlaki öğütlerin verilmesi ve böylece eğitilmesi amaçlanır. Gerçeküstü olayların anlatıldığı bu söylemlerde, güçlü olan insanları, sıkıntı ve zorluklar karşısında saadetin beklediği ifade edilir. Bu tür anlatılarda, bir yandan umut yaşatılırken diğer yandan sabırlı olmak, zorluk anında dürüstlükten vazgeçmemek, güçlü olmak gibi mesajlar dinleyiciye verilir. Ancak günümüzde gerçeküstü olaylar yani mitik kurgular, çizgi film, animasyon ve bilgisayar oyunlarında canlandırılmaktadır. Bu oyunlarda ise en acımasız silahlarla, en acımasız savaşların yapıldığı ve en güçlü olanın kazandığı anlatılmaktadır. Saldırgan, acımasız ve gücü ele geçirmek için her yolu deneyebilen gençlerin yetişmesine neden olan bu oyunlar, eğitim açısından araştırılması gerektiği gibi oluşturduğu düşünme biçimi açısından da araştırılmalıdır. Bu makalede geçmişte anlatılan hikayelerdeki gerçeküstü olayların düşünülme biçimiyle, günümüz gerçeküstü olaylarının canlandırıldığı bilgisayar oyunlarındaki düşünme biçimi, dini ve ahlaki değerlerin öğretimi açısından karşılaştırılacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Mitik düşünme biçimi, Hikayeler, Bilgisayar oyunları, Dini ve ahlaki değerler, Öğretim

ABSTRACT

In the world of eastern thought, narration of exemplary events is common through methods of mythical expression such as fairy tales, stories, myths etc. In these discourses, it is aimed at giving moral advice and thus educating the audience. It is stated in these discourses in which surreal events are told people who stand up against distress and difficulties retain their happiness. In such narrative texts, on one hand hope is being kept alive; on the other hand, such messages as patience, clinging to honesty under harsh times and possessing stamina are conveyed to the audience. Likewise, today, surreal events; namely, mythical fictions are animated in cartoons, animation and computer games. In these games, it is told that the most brutal battles are carried out through the most merciless weapons and only the most powerful one wins. These games, causing youth to grow up as aggressive, merciless and likely to try each way to seize power, should be examined in terms of education as well as that way of thinking. In this article, the form of thinking in the stories in which surreal events in the past were narrated is compared in terms of ethical values with the form of thinking in recent computer games in which surreal events are embedded.

Keywords: Mythical thinking form, Stories, Computer games, Religious and ethics values, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

In the world of eastern thought, myths, stories and fairy tales have an undeniable valuable role in educating the community. These forms of communication mediate the transmission of religious and moral ideas in an indirect way. In these kinds of stories where all types of events are conveyed in a symbolic language, the opportunity of perceiving the true nature of life arises notwithstanding reality. Even if a feeling that reality has

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been suspended is created by implying a represented reality, moral and religious information is given indirectly. In addition, creative thinking reveals itself in stories in the form of thinking in which both imagination and intuition are effective.

Today, human beings find themselves caught the grasp of rational knowledge, science and technology even if human imagination is used to produce a surreal event, neither the language of wisdom nor indirect statements of truth or moral and religious teachings can be found in the resulting works. In the works that are created as visual materials, most of which are works of science fiction (computer games, cartoons, animation, etc.), battles in which the most merciless weapons are used, and the most merciless battle is carried out, the most powerful wins. Unfortunately, in terms of subject, language and style, such works are far removed from historical works leading to the evolution of people who are aggressive, merciless and who try to seize power. In this paper, we will focus on the differences in the contents and forms of thinking in both surreal tales form the past and surreal events today. In the teaching of religious and moral values, the damage caused by abandoning the language of wisdom for a form of thought that has pragmatic and selfish qualities leading to an erosion of values and corruption in thinking, will be focused upon.

MYTHICAL THINKING FORM IN THE PAST

In the mythical form of thinking the aim is to instruct society in religious and moral values by indirectly applying the expression of truth. Such a way of thought is an indispensable method not only for societies that are referred as primitive, but also for contemporary societies that has deep traces of rationalism. The eastern and western world shares some common points in terms of ways of thinking while they have some points of conflicts and differences regarding language, style and content. According to this, particularly in the oriental mythical legends, rather than events that revolve around one subject, there is a narration that provides different and interconnected messages. The message given to people in these stories is generally likewise: If a person is honest and hard-working there is no difficulty he/she cannot overcome. Relief will automatically appear after each tribulation.

The language by which this message is conveyed is a plain and simple language, one that can easily be understood by all. Although the language is simple, by using popular expressions, it is able to express a great deal in just a few words**.** (Alkayış, & Doğan, 2011: 462) These expressions, which increase the depth of the words' meaning, allow not only the mythical stories to be embedded in the mind, but also, due to the beauty of the words, allow the development of estheticism. Moreover, the narrators of the mythical stories begin the stories by stating that the words do not belong to them, but rather are related to the people of wisdom. For example, the following example: *Hakiman-ı namdar* (famous wise men) and *Nediman-ı ruzigar* (contemporary storytellers) has been recorded/reported (Seyidoğlu, & Yavuz, 2012: 143) Thus, the audience/reader is convinced that stories conveyed are not unfounded and trivial. In fact, by referring to those who are perceived as wise, the

audience/reader is prepared to receive the stories, and the impressive energy of the words is increased. In the surreal events related there are messages concerning religious and moral values.

At this point, it can be asked why there is an estrangement from rational thought within the enchanting environment of mythical thought that has been created. Is it possible for the listener to be distanced from the real world? Indeed, although there are societies or individuals, even if these are few, who identify the form of mythical thinking with reality, and regulate real life and values accordingly, there is a majority who accepts this form of thinking as an indirect perception of reality and attempts to convey messages through mythical thinking. It is possible to logically explain wisdom in extraordinary events which are sometimes described in stories as though they were real. The reason for this is the plausible, convincing and impressive language of wisdom used in surreal events. In fact, although there is no logical pattern in mythical stories, the relevance in language of wisdom provides a connection between reality and wisdom. (Cassirer, 2005: 44-45) Although events related in mythical stories are not encountered in the real world, there is an attempt to create a perception of reality by combining fragments taken from real events. Irrational events that prevent the comprehension of reason can relate to reality by means of the conveyance through which the reality of wisdom is reflected. (Koç, 1995: 129-130) It may be suggested that the intermediary role generated by the language of wisdom, between the reality of wisdom (*hikemi gerçeklik*) and logical reality prevents the development of an irrational thinking form.

After identifying the advantages in the application of mythical stories as a method in teaching religious and moral values, we can examine the meaning of these stories. In the world of eastern thought, myths signify a symbolic meaning rather than directly portraying its objectives. Although the objective is reviving past events in the minds of people, the permanent values are echoed in today's world of thoughts. Information expressed in a symbolic language in myths plays an effective role in satisfying religious demands, in teaching moral objectives, and generating a practical approach and conducts within the society. In the mythical thinking form it signifies the words of objective rather than the actual words portrayed. In other words, the contribution of mythical stories and the form of mythical thought leading to guarding and strengthening morals, and the performance of religious rituals is undeniable. As an indispensable element of civilizations, myths are not a fabrication of intellectual effort, but may be interpreted as moral messages that occupy an important place in teaching the society.

When considering the aspect of conveying the wisdom and experiences of the past, it may be suggested that these moral messages serve as a "social recollection" to humanity. The perception of reality and system of values represented in the form of mythical thinking by symbolic language is revived in the minds of society by surreal stories. The representation of values and reality mediate in the perception and complexion

of the real world. Therefore, these mythic stories that have a place in the minds of society always serve as understanding the nature of real-life in simplicity. The monsters, giants or heroes that have extraordinary powers and are portrayed in mythical stories, do not display their existence in a simple nature. In the background lies a perception of a reality that reflects the nature of real life. In view of the information presented in these stories, the individual determines the position in his/her own tangible world. Whereby, the individual makes existential decisions that he/she feels essential for his/her existence. Individuals accept or reject the series of values presented in myths.

MYTHICAL THINKING FORM AT PRESENT

At this point, if we trace the mythic stories of the past at present, we will come across stories appearing in the form of computer games, animations or cartoons. Now we come across a form of thinking where visual images are in the forefront rather than verbal contents.

Primarily, it may be suggested that the form of visual thinking of the audience, of those participating in these games or animations is stronger than those of the past. However, it appears somewhat difficult to suggest that cognitive activity such as perspective of thought, interpretation or critical thought develops following the fast streaming images that appear on the screen. Ninety-eight percent of the brain-nerve (neuro-cerebral) system is related to our inner world, while only two percent is related to the outer world. Although images provide a rapid and permanent means of learning, these are also limited and cause diminishment in deep thought. While words, envisagement, imagination, intuition, thought and reflection are all related to our inner world.

At this point we may analyze the two most popular computer games played online throughout the world. The first is called the "League of Legends" also known as LoL; and the other "Defense of the Ancient" also known as DotA (The Official Raptr Blog Home, 2015).

In general, both games-as in the case of most computer games-consist of war stories inspired from mythical stories. It was reported that LoL, in which the player himself participates in the game, has been played for over 1.3 billion hours in total. According to this, the playing duration which exceeds a million hours a year means there are significant changes and developments in the game industry (The Official Raptr Blog Home, 2015)

Both games which are played online in teams are fictionalized upon the destruction of beasts that are half-man and half-animal. As we can understand from both the names LoL and DotA, in terms of fiction and topic, this offers the opportunity to virtually experience the displays of power of an extraordinary level in the mythical world. In order for the team in the game called DotA to win, the Ancient, namely the past, the older one must be destroyed. This war, experienced virtually within a sense of reality, satisfies a variety of emotions such as competition, ambition, victory, violence, aggression, violating

rules, magical powers, fame, pleasure and entertainment. Of course, in addition there are also some values that are taught in these games.

For example, the rules of the game known as LoL, referred to as "the Magician's Laws" are defined as follows: 1. Support your team. 2. Drive constructive feedback. 3. Facilitate civil decision. 4. Enjoy yourself, but not at anyone else's expense. 5. Build relationships. 6. Show modesty in victory, and grace in defeat. 7. Be resolute, not indignant. 8. Leave no newbie behind. 9. Lead by example (Gameinfo, 2016). Naturally, the regulations prepared in view of the rules the players must comply with during the game are aimed at teaching the player certain moral values. However, these values do not recommend being patient, honest or making an effort when faced with situations such as distress and difficulty; or rules regulating the conduct of individuals in a society. When studying the values taught in mythical games, although there are certain values valid during game, there are no rules which teach and regulate conduct of individuals in the society.

Essentially, these games are environments where individuals virtually bring themselves into existence and demonstrate their power, and even where they fulfill the things they want to do in real life. In a documentary film, titled *Free to Play* filmed in 2014 by game developer Valve Cooperation in the United States, the psychological condition of young people who play DotA and their families are portrayed. In the documentary film based on the tournament called *the international 2011* held in 2011 and open to participation by players from all over the world, it explains the efforts of the young players to win the one-million-dollar prize. ("Free to play", 2016) In this tournament held every year, the prize money is increased to maintain the interest of the youth.

The young people described in the *Free to Play* documentary film are addicted to the DotA game to the extent that this disrupts their education, and even more interesting is that these young people believe that this game classified as an e-sport could become their career. Again the youth speaking in this documentary film expresses that playing these games is "the only thing they are proud of in their lives", "computer games mean everything to them", and that these games are "the means of eliminating grief and the only thing on which they can totally concentrate". In other words, in these computer games played virtually and online these young men experience being the world's greatest and enjoy the pleasure of fame. (Free to play, 2016) In all honesty, in this documentary-the programmer of the DotA game also belonging to the same company- not only relates the problems the young people who play this game encounter within the family, at school and in the society, it also implies when these young people continue to play the game, they can earn both money and reputation.

In this case, we may concentrate on the probability of these games which reconstruct the form of mythical thinking by converting it into the form of irrational thinking. Indeed, the connection with rational thinking of the youth who spend a majority of their time playing these games on the computer gradually

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diminish. Although these games demonstrate that strategizing, planning and concentrating before acting or before each move is effectively necessary, this, in the tangible world of reality, in terms of presenting the gains and existence of the individual, actually increases the problems of the individual rather than solving them. The damage caused by these computer games involving violence and aggression may be listed as follows: physical reactions, violent perceptions, aggressive emotions, aggressive behavior increase while social behavior decreases. (Çakır, 2013: 139) In addition, these disadvantages associated with strategy games have also been determined:

The tendency towards 'violence' is much greater among children who play strategy games from a young age. In the case of strategy games, it is indicated that during the period when children begin to question the power of reasoning, it creates a sense of confusion in their inner world and can disrupt their sense of conscience; and the ambition to win can sever them from social life, which can become a factor inducing addiction in children. (Çakır, 2013: 140)

Expressing this in another way, in the games fictionalized by the mythic world, the battles of these players against creatures or heroes who have extraordinary magical powers, initially disrupt their sense of conscience and then go on to eliminate many of the human values.

CONCLUSION

As a result, it may be suggested that although there was no logical pattern in the mythical thinking of the past, it did enable the teaching of religious and moral values through the language of wisdom without declining to irrationality. These stories led to individuals gaining various values and self-development in the intellectual, aesthetic and linguistic fields. In addition, these stories also contributed to the generation of peace and tranquility within the society. In contrast, it may be suggested that the form of mythical thinking in today's computer games induces the corruption of these values rather than teaching religious and moral values. In these games, in addition to being

portrayed as weak, ordinary, and even imperfect, as long as it is compliant to the objective of the game, it manipulates individuals to believe that killing all living creatures, human or animal, is in fact an art. Therefore, in an ironic manner we may say that although killing is not one of the seven arts of history, because it is an act which intelligent people are capable of may still be considered an act of art. After all, these "intelligent" people are not compelled to comply with the general rules of morality. Indeed, the rules of right and wrong are defined for those who are weak. In short, we can say that the fictionalized form of mythic thinking in today's computer games makes no contribution to teaching religious and ethics values or intellectual, linguistic, esthetic, any other kinds of values. The world in which humans are encircled by visual qualities and reason and where kindness, values, emotions, spirituality has disappeared would become unlivable. Humans have been transformed into a mechanical living existence with an artificial intelligence.

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