

On Animation in the Era of Post-Animation

By developing 'animasophy', a more philosophical approach in the practice and critique of animation, we are developing something that is quintessentially human. In contrast to other mammals, the human kind is capable of abstract thinking. Birds and animals live in the present, but a human being can represent both the past and the future, construct symbols and tell stories. Men are the only mammals who can be fascinated by abstract texts, by playing with dolls or by the drama of an animated film. Therefore, we could say that animasophy embodies the essence of our humanity. That is, we maintain our humanity as long as we maintain our faith in abstract characters as living beings. The animated film is a modern embodiment of the ancient totemism and culture of masks.

At the same time, we are living in strange times. Authors of virtually all disciplines have a sense that the old paradigms have changed and we have reached a new, post-era. Terms like postmodernism, posthuman, postconceptualism, postdigital, post-truth, etc. are widespread.

Today, animation is more visible and commonplace than ever, largely thanks to the pervasive digital turn. In a sense, one can argue that animation has become a commodity. Until recently, animation required a wide range of special tools and skills, and in some countries also political loyalty. By now, the situation has radically changed. While once animation was the business of a few studios and authors, today virtually anyone with a computer or a phone can make – and are making – animated films. The digital turn has made animation a part of our everyday life.

Therefore, it can be argued that animation itself has reached a completely new era over the past decades – an era of post-animation. But does it involve a renaissance of animation or is it an expansion of a kind of new digital media? What is the future of the animated film and which opportunities and risks are related with animation in the era of post-animation?