

Mass culture: towards the essence of the concept

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Abstract. The article examines the process of formation of mass culture, understanding of its phenomenon by various representatives of scientific thought. The presence of opposite views is recorded on the essence of the concept of "mass culture" depending on various assessments of the theory of globalization. Contains assumptions about the increasing filling of the concept of "mass culture" with values, moral and humanistic ideals as the communication and information space of the modern globalizing world develops.

Key words: The phenomenon of mass culture, elite culture, globalization, the system of mass communications, socio-cultural dynamics, spiritual values.

Introduction.

In modern society, mass culture ("culture of the masses") plays a very significant role. The phenomenon of mass culture originated in late antiquity, but it became a significant segment of the integral cultural organism during the late 18th century - early 21st century. Mass culture was the brainchild of the industrial revolution, associated processes of industrialization, urbanization, general democratization of public life, the formation of universal literacy of the population, the degradation of many forms of traditional everyday culture of the pre-industrial type [5, p. 16].

Often, mass culture is presented as a reflection of the "average" spiritual needs of that "mass society" whose critical concepts have become the subject of research by many scientists. It is enough to refer to the works Jose Ortega y Gasset "The Rise of the Masses", Karl Jaspers "The Spiritual Situation of Time", Oswald Spengler "The Decline of Europe", Jean Baudrillard "Phantoms of Modernity", Pitirim Sorokin "Man. Civilization. Society" and others to make sure that one of the reasons for the negative attitude of many representatives of the scientific world of the 20th century to mass culture was the emergence of a consumer society with its the trend towards the commercialization of culture.

So, P. A. Sorokin, accusing contemporary Western society of immorality, immorality, anti-socialism and anti-religiousness, compared it to a gilded shell with which one can play in moments of relaxation. "As a commercial commodity for entertainment," he wrote, "art is increasingly controlled by merchants, commercial interests and fashion trends from commercial dealers of the highest connoisseurs of beauty, forcing artists to obey their requirements, imposed in addition through advertising and other media" [4, p. 452].

Critical analysis of mass culture distinguished in it features of the "low" primitive culture of the masses, which creates a threat "High culture". In addition, it was perceived as an opportunity for arousing "base instincts", the spiritual exploitation of the masses. Prominent representatives of the Frankfurt School (T. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, V. Benjamin, G. Marcuse) emphasized that mass culture forms a passive perception of reality among consumers and allows them to manipulate the consciousness of an individual. However, as the development of mass communication in the context of modern globalization processes has become all-encompassing and has created opportunities for development personality [2, p. 14], mass culture is presented not only as a kind of negative imprint of a consumer society, as a product of exclusively Western culture, Westernization, but also as a real phenomenon of economic, political, cultural globalization, which has included the entire socio-cultural space of the world in the orbit of its functioning. And if a number of representatives, mainly of Western literature of the XX century, figuratively personified mass culture with a monster devouring everything human in a person, and in this form, it is present as the protagonist of many dystopias, nightmare books by J. Orwell, O. Huxley, R. Bradbury, R. Sheckley, it is replaced by the desire for an objective analysis of the conditions in which it develops, and the values, ideals that it

approves and promotes. If not so long ago mass culture was sharply opposed to the "high" elite culture, now this polarity is significantly relaxed.

In the context of current globalization, the mass consumer of cultural products is not some kind of marginal type who is not aware of "high" feelings, but that significant stratum of consumers of cultural products, which, not being a specialized, privileged subject of the cultural subsystem of society, represents that significant the environment to which the rapidly developing media and cultural industries are available, which, first of all, include cinema, radio, periodicals, television, computer networks . Modern processes of globalization have not only expanded the audience of consumers of mass products, but also changed it "Tastes" contributed to raising the standards of forms of mass culture. It should not be forgotten that in market relations professionals, representatives of the cultural elite are involved in the creation of samples of mass culture, so that the created samples of mass culture arouse the interest of a wide range of spectators, listeners, readers, users of Internet sites.

A number of researchers believe that mass culture is completely subordinate to the laws of a market economy [3], while others, on the contrary, believe that culture in today's realities is not only a commodity, but also remains a certain spiritual value [1].

Taking into account that the audience of consumers of mass culture itself is becoming mass and the concept of "mass culture" as a reflection of the negative aspects of the industrial consumer society is no longer adequate to the realities of the modern post-industrial, information society, the problem of further comprehensive analysis of the concept of "mass culture" is especially urgent. Considering that now through the mass communication system millions of people get the opportunity to get acquainted with the works of "elite", "high culture", which was previously available only to a limited part of society, it becomes necessary to identify new approaches to the essence of the concept of "mass culture", the mechanisms of its functioning. Among others, the motives for further a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of mass culture are the facts that the same types of culture can belong to both elite and popular culture. So, classical music - to elitist, popular - to mass, paintings by Rembrandt - to the elitist, popular print - to the mass, the works of Voltaire - to the elitist, the women's novel - to the mass, etc. This duality became the basis for identifying the positive functions of mass culture, in particular, familiarizing with the spiritual values of the masses, previously alienated from the dominant "high culture." In fact, negative and positive (optimistic) concepts of mass culture reflect either a critical or an apologetic assessment of the trends in the theory of globalization. According to the first, globalization is a destructive force that threatens stability and the development opportunities of man and society, according to the second, globalization is a necessary component of modernization, ensuring conditions for development democracy, rule of law, civil society. This characteristic of the tendencies of the theory of globalization applies to mass culture as well. It seems that, in general, assessments of both globalization and mass culture do not fit into the "black-white" scheme, given that culture is not autonomous from society, it reflects a multifaceted range of problems, phenomena, processes presented in public relationship. Assuming the prospects for the development of mass culture, it should be borne in mind that its subject is not just the mass, but also the individual, united with other individuals by many different connections. With the growth of his educational level, new needs, emerging in the context of rapidly modernizing various spheres of human society, cultural needs are also changing the masses in general and the individual in particular. This is the basis of reasoning about the possibility of changing the nature of mass culture from "dehumanized" (the term Jose Ortega y Gasset) to the "superhumanized". At one time, P. Sorokin, fixing the crisis of art and Western culture in general, expressed the hope that a new type of art would be formed in the future - ideational or idealistic, identical to the spiritual needs of a new man of a new era, in which a "sensible" (commercialized) culture there will be no room. "After the torment and chaos of the transitional period, the emerging new art - perhaps ideational - will perpetuate in a new guise the unfading elan (impulse, aspiration - French - VT) of human culture" [4, p. 462].

Against the background of the theory of sociocultural dynamics formulated by Sorokin, it can be assumed that modern mass culture, reflecting social experience life of certain people and communities of the industrial and post-industrial stages of development of society, is a kind of basis,

a kind of "embryonic predecessor" (A. Ya. Flier's term) of the emerging new socio-cultural phenomenon. The contours of such a phenomenon can be traced already in the current reality, where not only the market forms demand for a particular cultural product, but also consumers of cultural products affect the quantity and quality the product offered by the market. When everyone has the opportunity to buy or not to buy this or that product, a person receives the right to purchase such cultural products that correspond to his spiritual needs, while the cultural product represents a certain spiritual value. Undoubtedly, the question of what kind of value this is - aesthetic, humanistic or inhuman, anti-aesthetic, which develops the most invariable properties of human nature, does not disappear.

Numerous studies show that now the amplitude of the spiritual needs of the individual is more and more inclined towards "high" interests, previously attributed only to the elite. It is no coincidence that more and more various types of mass culture (from advertising to television and radio broadcasts, show programs, etc.) address universal universal human, spiritual values: peacefulness, mercy, a healthy lifestyle, family preservation, respect for nature, etc. This confirms the idea that the appearance of mass culture as, possibly, some kind of new socio-cultural phenomenon depends on the creators of culture themselves and on those value needs of the individual, which are formed on the basis of his familiarization with cultural models and norms correlated with moral and moral principles that spiritually uplift the individual.

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