

The Phenomenon of Mass Culture

Sultanov Atabek¹,
Pirnazarov Nurnazar²

^{1,2} Karakalpak state university, Nukus, Karakalpakstan

Abstract: In this article, the authors analyze the problems of mass culture, which is a multifunctional, objective phenomenon of the modern stage of culture. Mass culture, in which all strata of the population are involved, has its own laws of origin and development, permeates all types and forms of culture.

Key words: Mass culture, society, cultural industry, phenomenon.

Introduction.

Mass culture as an integral specific phenomenon of post-industrial society has a complex structure, various functional manifestations and acts in the modern cultural space as one of the most common forms of culture existence. The authors of most theories of mass culture regard it as a special social phenomenon with its own genesis, specificity and development trends. Popular culture is a complex phenomenon of modernity and does not lend itself to unambiguous assessment. There are many theories about mass culture, which can be broadly divided into two groups: some express a critical attitude towards mass culture; in others, the acceptance of mass culture as the cultural dominant of our time.

The phenomenon of "mass culture" has been considered as a cultural-philosophical understanding since the end of the 19th century, but it was only in the 20th century that researchers started talking seriously about mass culture as a global socio-cultural phenomenon that radically changed the face of civilization. The term itself originated in the 40s. XX century, in the texts of M. Horkheimer, but originally devoted to the criticism of television. This term became widespread in the second half of the 20th century thanks to the works of representatives of the Frankfurt School of Sociology.

Materials and methods.

Mass culture is a set of cultural values, phenomena, types of art and genres that have been developed and disseminated on the basis of modern technologies and media of communication and information¹. The main features of mass culture are the orientation towards the tastes and needs of the "average person", high flexibility, the ability to transform artifacts created within other cultures, and turn them into consumer goods; commercial nature; the use of clichés in the creation of its artifacts, the connection with the mass media as the main channel for the dissemination and consumption of the values of mass culture.

Popular culture permeates all types and forms of culture. In mass culture, such characteristics as the complication of reality, contextuality, ideology, and mythology are distinguished as a phenomenon². The following functions are characteristic of mass culture: adaptive, communicative, recreational, ideological, commercial, consumer, informational-epistemological, value-orientational.

Popular culture is only "a means of filling free time, which must be somehow killed"³ ... Mareeva believes that it really turns out to be "killed", since a person as a result of this turns out not to be enriched internally, but rather devastated. A regressive process is taking place, the opposite of the one that took place in the era of the Enlightenment, where the enlightened taste was formed. Now, however, they form only a mass-average taste. To the main genres of such mass "art" are detective stories and "ladies' novels" (in literature), "soap operas", talk shows, quizzes (on television), pop music (in music), etc.

Popular culture is a means of entertainment, emotional compensation and detente, but it arises as a result of the general democratization of cultural life, and the scientific and technological revolution is becoming the main link of changes in the 20th century. Scientific discoveries in these conditions quickly affect the daily life of people, and since in an industrial society the dominant principle is the principle of replication,

¹ A.A. Fedorov *Introduction to the theory and history of culture: dictionary* / A.A. Fedorov. M., 2005, p. 175

² Bagdasaryan N.G. *Culturology: a textbook for bachelors* / N.G. Bagdasaryan. M., 2011, p. 292.

³ Mareeva E.V. *Culturology. Theory and history of culture*. M., 2008, p. 361

the achievements of technological progress in the 20th century begin to serve and be consumed by the masses. The researchers note that "not only the achievements of technical progress, but also the masterpieces of world culture, thanks to replication, become available to the broad masses of the population. Today, to see Leonardo da Vinci's La Gioconda, you don't have to go to Paris. She is known to us for many reproductions"⁴

The main figure of the "mass society" of the 20th century is a well-to-do worker who works for hire, the zones of free development of such a dependent and partial worker are quite limited, and his occupation is most often routine work, monotonous and boring activity that excludes any creativity. Such a person does not require "bread", but needs "spectacles" necessary after a monotonous and not requiring creative work day. The need for rest and relaxation is quite natural, and beer in combination with a TV, on which a football or action movie is broadcast, turns out to be the height of aesthetic pleasure in a consumer society. According to Mareeva, "the production of mass art opposes the process of its consumption, which was not the case in a traditional society, where people sang and at the same time were listeners to their own singing.

Mass art is created not by the people, but for the people"⁵. Today, a purely consumer attitude is being formed in culture: many respect and value only what gives them pleasure, entertains, distracts from real life problems, even a whole entertainment industry has been created that should replace genuine art, science and philosophy. Modern a person, as a rule, asserts himself in passive consumption⁶. But a person is capable of development not by consuming, but by producing, and therefore the more we consume today, the more, due to passivity, we waste our intellectual abilities completely in vain.

Popular culture is created by professional artisans, and its audience is made up of passive consumers. A special quality of mass culture produced specifically for the market is its ability to rid the consumer of all intellectual effort. M. Weber called them "specialists without a soul and consumers of pleasures without a heart." Professional artisans are fluent in techniques, but the problem is that they are devoid of poetic inspiration and the most inspiring idea in general.

Results and discussions.

There is a point of view according to which mass culture is a means of deceiving people, but there have always been people in society - representatives of the intelligentsia, striving for the heights of knowledge and culture, designed to create the necessary spiritual and intellectual atmosphere, bearers of high culture, who object against the transformation of each of us into a "one-dimensional person". This is how this phenomenon of the 20th century was defined by the representative of the Frankfurt School of Philosophy G. Marcuse, the author of the book of the same name.

According to Marcuse, "one-dimensional man" is a happy man with a slavish mind. Another representative of the Frankfurt School, T. Adorno, who introduced the concept of "cultural industry", took a critical position in relation to this book. He claims that "the industry culture" is a deliberate integration of its consumers from above.

For centuries divided "low" and "high" culture, it, to mutual damage, leads to a common denominator. The "cultural industry" openly speculates on the consciousness and subconsciousness of the masses, imposes on them a certain, namely, unassuming and even perverted taste.

The "cultural industry" is a betrayal of a person. G. Marcuse pinned his hopes for the successful overcoming of mass culture on the "avant-garde"⁷.

Researchers G. Seldes and D. White agree that there is a lot of usefulness in popular culture and that without it, firstly, the average person would be deprived of information that is significant for life, and secondly, even if it were absolutely vulgar, it is inappropriate to talk about its negative impact on a person, since a person chooses himself⁸.

⁴ Mareeva E.V. *Culturology. Theory and history of culture. M., 2008, p. 361*

⁵ Mareeva E.V. *Culturology. Theory and history of culture. M., 2008, p. 363*

⁶ Mareeva E.V. *Culturology. Theory and history of culture. M., 2008, p. 364*

⁷ A. V. Kukarkin *Bourgeois Mass Culture: Theories. Ideas. Varieties. Samples Technique. Business. M., 1985, p. 106*

⁸ Bagdasaryan N.G. *Culturology: a textbook for bachelors / N.G. Bagdasaryan. M., 2011, p. 290.*

D. White believes that popular culture "delights, entertains and enlightens in its own way, and it is inappropriate to blame it either for human vices or social anomalies."⁹

The attitude to the phenomenon of mass culture in modern society is very contradictory. On the one hand, this phenomenon is seen as a completely justified search for new means of introducing people to social life, and on the other, accusations are brought against it suppression and standardization of personality, homogenization of individuality, manipulation of public consciousness, devaluation of historical, cultural and artistic values, primitivization of tastes, blurring the boundaries of high and low, sacred and profane etc. Popular culture cannot be viewed simply as a pseudo-culture - primitive and standard. It's complicated and controversial phenomenon: thanks to modern technical means, the masses of people gain access to all forms and types of culture. Mass culture is "a far from unambiguous phenomenon, deserving deeper attention of a researcher, taking into account all the historical and social vicissitudes of the development of human communities"¹⁰. Popular culture is an indispensable component of the cultural and historical process. "Today we can consider proven that mass commercial culture is a necessary component of a democratic social order and market economy. Its fundamental versatility, non-elitism and open orientation towards making a profit turn it simultaneously not only in an inevitable result, but also in the necessary basis of civil society and the rule of law"¹¹

Conclusion.

We subscribe to the point of view expressed in the literature: "Starting from the very initial stages of education and upbringing, a person should become familiar with the most significant achievements of culture and art, understand their value and meaning, learn to master the world and build your life according to the laws of beauty. This will allow people to be critical of various cultural phenomena, their own interests, to the world in general and to the world of their own life, starting with everyday life and ending with spirituality"¹². Today it is necessary to develop mechanisms for the selection of promising and necessary directions of mass culture and weed out those that lead to the irrevocable degradation of cultural values and samples. Mass culture needs transformation towards elevation, which contributes to the spiritual growth of people.

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¹⁰ Pronkina A.V. Mass culture as a cultural category // Bulletin of the Ryazan State University named after S.A. Yesenin. 2012, No. 1 (34), p. 74.

¹¹ Razlogov K.E. On the other side of pleasure [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://nlenskaia.narod.ru/masskult/razlogov.pdf> (date of access: 04.04.2019).

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