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Mass Culture: Its Pernicious Influence on Spiritual and Cultural Advance of the Modern Society

*Any culture is a culture of a spirit.
Any culture is formed on spiritual basis –
it is a product of the work of a spirit over the elements.*
N.A. Berdyaev

Summary

The article deals with the notion of mass culture as one of the phenomena in the modern society's functioning, its conceptual and content component, and quality influence indication on spiritual and cultural state and advance of the society in general and each individual in particular. The author concentrates his attention on the necessity to analyse of the processes related to the influence of the aforesaid multivectoral phenomenon on the culture of the Ukrainian people in general and on its spiritual potential in particular. In other words, they consider its impact on the national culture where the spirit's indication dominates and is regarded as a key culture-generating component.

Key words: mass culture, modern society's, spiritual state society, cultural state society, culture, culture of the Ukrainian people.

JEL codes: A10, A13, P48

Problem statement and its interconnection with other scientific and practical problems

According to "The Main Tendencies of the Spirit Development, Morality Defence and Healthy Way of Life of the Ukrainian Citizens' Formation", "Recently pernicious processes in the spiritual sphere have started their development, the moral fundamentals have become deformed. This is facilitated by the advocacy of cruelty, spiritual impoverishment, violence, while establishments of education and culture educational work slackening" [10]. It testifies to the fact that there exist extremely complicated problems in the field of the state culture that is the national culture. In his work "On Culture", Nikolai Berdyaev states that "objectives of the society are realised not in the spheres of politics or economy, but in the sphere of culture. The value and quality of community is measured with a high standard of culture..." [2], [3;84].

Consequently, if the culture is an indicator of the quality of spirit and the level of spirit's development accordingly, i.e. the development of the spiritual potential that is spirituality. That is why the problem of spirituality, spiritual development of the society is one of the first-priority issues and therefore requires meticulous attention and support, state standing, immediate study and solution. The issue found its reflection in the Action Programme "Towards People" of the Cabinet of Ministers of the present-day government. In accordance with the programme, the free citizen should live in a just country. The highest values are the development of an individual and his or her dignity, spirituality and freedom, equality and solidarity, civic society and democracy, unity and constitutional state, international and interconfessional agreement, mutual respect and tolerance, good and justice" [11].

Analysis of the recent research with relevant problems examination to rely on

Acting on the premise that the phenomenon of culture is regarded as an organised scope of material objects, ideas and images; technologies of their production and operation; steady relations of people and methods of their control; assessment criteria that are established by the society. It is an artificial environment of interaction and self-realisation created by people, as well as a source of social behaviour regulation [9], [3,348]. In this study, we rely on theoretical and methodological research that is explicitly or implicitly related to the problem under consideration. The approaches to the problem solutions are expounded in the works of N. A. Berdyaev, A. S. Belykh, A. A. Zinoviev, S.B. Krymsky, B. G. Nagorny, J. N. Pakhomov, S.P. Rastorguev, A. U. Taras, V.A. Ulshin, U.P. Fesenko, Y. F. Fukuyama, M. Horkheimer, G.P. Shevchenko, etc.

Outstanding aspects of the problem considered

Mass culture as a term was introduced by Max Horkhaeimer in his work "Art and Mass Culture" in 1941 [3,356], that remains actual at the beginning of the 21st century. Moreover, the phenomenon arouses a wide research interest of various scientists who deal with different spheres of contemporary science, philosophy, culturology, social science to mention just a few. Modern pedagogy is, in our opinion, of utmost importance against the subject matter under consideration. We mean the system of pedagogical science, including general pedagogy, theory of pedagogy, theory of upbringing, social pedagogy, family pedagogy, ethno-pedagogy, ethno-didactics, etc., that is aimed at "discovering methodological, theoretical and organisational-methodical fundamentals of the spiritual development of a human in terms of the Ukrainian society transformation" [14,3]. In the article, we investigate the issue of mechanisms of mass culture influence on the spiritual potential of the Ukrainian society at the present stage of its development.

Statement of the problem

Our main target lies in the above-mentioned mechanisms detection and the analysis of the mass culture impact on the spiritual state, “spiritual climate”, and national culture of the Ukrainian society at the present stage of its development.

Research data summary on the scientific results basis

The scholars who studied the processes of the society’s evolution remark that starting from the second half of the 20th century modern civilisation has acquired significant achievements in different spheres of the social life – science, technics, culture; it has faced with the seemingly unsolvable global problems that are widely noted and discussed. The list of the problems is presented in the science literature, as well as specialised and reference literature in the following succession: military and political, resource and economic, demographic, ecological and other problems that develop mainly through crises in the field of public health, education, culture, and the growing rates of criminality [4,428].

In our opinion, the key indication that characterises the civilisation of the concerned period of history is the economic dominant. It presupposes the respective model of the society’s functioning. The model has brought to crisis phenomena in the system of the spiritual, moral, humanistic values of a person. It lies in the emotive and perceptual sphere which is the foundation of culture of any person and the society *en masse*.

The economic dominant of the society’s functioning produces in the society individualistic, egoistic potentials. Owing to that the balance assisting spiritual, moral and humanistic relations of individuals is broken. In other words, what is violated is the culture of relationship grounded on human values maintenance, tolerance towards the cultures of different nations, necessity to integrate the national culture into the world cultural space, development of international friendship and multilateral cooperation, etc.

The society that is grounded on the economic dominant is condemned to extinction of the national culture that is the fundamental spiritual and cultural basis of the nation (traditions and customs, language, ethical norms, religious ideas, etc.) and its substitution with mass culture.

The problem of mass culture is not a new one; however, at present, we are of an opinion that it is a top-priority issue concerning the development of the modern society.

The scholars define it differently. The Soviet philosopher I.T. Frolov, for instance, calls the phenomenon “mass culture” [13,265], the Russian scholar A.A.Zinoviev – “westernisation”, the scholars of the Lvov Humanitarian Studies Centre – “money culture” that functions on the basis of the “calculation thinking”, PhD of Lugansk East Ukrainian Volodymyr Dahl National University B.G. Nagorny applies to the term “McDonald’s culture” guided by the principle of individualism [8, 92-100].

Reference materials give the following variant: mass culture is the product of the so-called “mass society”, the culture of its specific functioning. It is defined by organised industry of consumption and ramified network of the mass communication media that accordingly influence the individual and social consciousness and those creating advertising for the support of demand for the products of such a culture. It is an instrument of ideas on meaning of life maintaining and ways of social being altering as well as the means of socialisation, upbringing and inclusion into the economic and political institutes of statehood. The key social functions of the culture are as follows: people’s integration into the existing system of social relations; turning their attention from the problem comprehension of reality to entertainment perception of entertainment mass products, relaxation and play of fancy that lead a person into the dreamland and create an illusion that he participates in solution of some burning problems of modern times; psychological control over the intellect of the masses and influence on them with the aim of standardised wants, stereotyped thinking and various forms of adaptation and communion with the promoted world order; reconciliation of a human with the existing and aggravating contradictions typical for the modern stage of the civilisation’s development. There occurs a partial, distorted communion of the masses with the separate values of culture that is basically contrary to the genuine democratic culture aimed at the spiritual and practical cognition of the world, humanistic development of the world cultural historical process, creative development of the spiritual wealth of a human and his or her moral improvement [13,265].

Proceeding from the capacious description of the concrete conceptual programme of the society treatment, we may judge of the use of aggressive forms of an unnatural intrusion of a different vision of the world. It is related to the direct influence on the moral, spiritual and cultural national fundamentals change as well as alternations in the mentality of the nation, its emotive and perceptual climate (psycho-ecological state) of people. One of the principal means of mass culture’s components spreading, that maximally influence the emotive and perceptual sphere of any person and society, is mass media and mass communication media. We are of an opinion that “informational ecology” sign is directly related to the problem under consideration. The Russian scholars have made good progress in the relevant sphere of research. They set a target to investigate the question: to what large-scale level do the psycho-ecological problems, which are related to the rapid development of innovative technologies of the mass media and the Internet, apply? For this purpose the Committee on Underline Information Influence and International Organisation “Doctors for Human Rights” were formed in Russia. The key specialists out of nine independent organisations, including the Research Institute of the Russia’s Ministry of Home Affairs, the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the State V.P. Serbsky Research Centre for Social and Forensic Psychiatry, and State Duma, became its members. The committee established that “wave elevation of brain radiation among the TV viewers who watched definite programmes altered on alpha rhythm (8-13 Hz). The state fits the perception regime of the hypnotic suggestion or reaction for the commands that escaping human consciousness come in the right cerebral hemisphere. The research of the chief specialist of the Research Institute of the Russia’s Ministry of Home Affairs L. P. Grimak has proved that TV hypnosis may

shape such negative behavioural programmes as illnesses and murders” [5,189]. For similar problems solution, the active technologies of influence on TV viewers are being worked out. The committee established “the use of technical means for unconscious visual information presentation by the disparate method and neuro-linguistic programming mode as well as underline hypnosis. Both methods are summed up in the course of transmission and merge on the principle of neuro-semantic hypertext” [5,188]. The scholars put the following question and attempted to answer it: “should we really be afraid of the global changes that modern technologies of the mass media bring? And what is the nature of this impact? Numerous experimental data make it possible to state that digital technology offers different opportunities that create preconditions for either unpremeditated or purposeful huge masses manipulation, influence on their mental and physical health as well as their genetic programme of development” [5,187].

Relying on the results presented by the Russian scholars one may judge about the intrusion in the spiritual and cultural sovereignty of people, life external and internal eco-space and eco-state of any individual that is human rights and freedoms violation in its turn. U.P. Fesenko characterised the phenomenon of the mass culture as a process of “dehumanisation and primitivisation of a contemporary society”.

We consider that if the algorithm and content of mass culture is a part of the cultural development programme, and consequently, a part of “the culture of the society”, “vision guidelines”, it will not be even mentioned about any “spirituality”, “national culture” [6,256], “national art”, “national idea”, etc.; these notions do not form a part of the categorical apparatus of mass culture [13,256]. PhD Ulshin supposes that the essence of the human culture is determined by his or herspirituality, disinterested service of the society, sacrifice in the prejudice of one’s own interests, sympathy and empathy, etc.; thereby, spirituality is connected with the world outlook, preferences, life purposes, character and other features of character. Though spirituality presupposes high culture level, but not vice versa [12,234]. Investigating the problem of the place of definite convictions, values and ideals in the individual’s vision system functioning, A. S. Belykh characterises the process as “the transformation of social spirituality in an individual one by means of its mastering and appropriation, bringing it in accordance with personal interests, inclinations, aspirations grounded on the truth, good and beauty” and vice versa [1, 4]. According to the scholar, its aim is “the achievement of harmony with the one’s own activity, visual environment and desirable future” [1, 4]. We accentuate the importance of “national culture” in the spiritual development of a nation and consider it necessary to address the opinion of our country’s scientists on the problem. They reckon that “trying to solve the problems common to each of the national cultures, one cannot help but study their origin. As the notion of “nation” in the current interpretation is closely connected with the state structure of a nation, that inhabits a certain territory, therefore, the national culture should be first and foremost regarded in connection with a state history. That is why, as history reaffirms, the political state borders remain artificial and quite unstable. They change much quicker than the traditions of the nations, that are fixed in the complex of people’s mode of life, reflected in its mentality, language, material and spiritual culture heritage” [6,256]. “The nations of the complete world with unique civilisations being

developed were formed only in the inimitable complex of the natural, racial and ethnical as well as language and geopolitical factors” [6,256].

As we analyse the aforesaid and bear in mind the conceptual basis of the term “mass culture”, we may conclude that the enumerated notions come into clashes with mass culture, as they are purposefully ousted, blocked and neglected with it.

The problem of “mass culture” is defined by the authors as a global, all-embracing, universal problem of paramount importance that is characterised as centuries-old and synthetic. In our opinion, the problem is a threat to the rights and freedoms of an individual with a spiritual vision dominant, a threat to the development of a democratic state governed by the rule of law; it is also a peril of the national culture development and the development of culture of the people inhabiting the territory of Ukraine, a threat to keeping to the historical, spiritual and material values functioning on the basis of the spiritual and cultural, moral and aesthetical, moral and value components.

Summary and prospects for further research

Such a social phenomenon as “mass culture” has always been an urgent problem that negatively influences the spiritual development of a contemporary society, national culture, ethno-culture, a pivotal component of the nation’s identity.

1. On the present-day stage of the extensive development of the communication technology that significantly limited the individual ecological information space (IEIS), the pernicious influence on an individual has noticeably increased. By the IEI space we presuppose the space where a person feels convenient and protected from various intrusions. The factor considered is one of the main negative indicators that influence the emotive and perceptual sphere of each member of the society.
2. The processes of globalisation’s gradual intensification being stimulated with the achievements of the scientific and technical process are coordinated by the use of the relatively improved means of informational communication. All this reduces that time volume needed for an individual for comprehension that in turn makes him or her to concentrate their attention maximally on various information objects, components, accents, sounding, etc. It sets a human to receiving definite information volume in a certain duration (in accordance with S.B. Krymsky, it is defined as “density of social relationship” and “monada’s effect”) [7, 21-22].

A number of problems related to the mass culture influence on the spiritual society’s development require further research. It is reasonable to trace the changes that may occur in the course of time in the content and conceptual basis of the term, its structuring, instruments, means and technology, its customers, the so-called producers and consumers, the role of mass media and mass communication media in the value guidelines of mass culture, etc.; the research in the field under consideration will lay down the foundations in the society for the operative modelling of methods and sub-technology of a health-improving and rehabilitation character.

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Kultura masowa: jej negatywny wpływ na duchowy i kulturalny rozwój współczesnego społeczeństwa

Streszczenie

W artykule rozpatruje się pojęcie kultury masowej jako jednego ze zjawisk w funkcjonowaniu współczesnego społeczeństwa, jego komponent konceptualny i treściowy oraz cechę jakościowego wpływu na stan duchowy i kulturalny, jak również rozwój społeczeństwa w ogóle i każdego człowieka w szczególności.

Autor podkreśla konieczność zwrócenia szczególnej uwagi na zbadanie i analizę procesów związanych z wpływem tego wielowektorowego zjawiska na ogólną kulturę narodu ukraińskiego, a zwłaszcza na jego potencjał duchowy, tzn. na kulturę narodową, w której dominuje wskaźnik duchowy i jest uważany za podstawowy składnik tworzenia kultury.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura masowa, współczesne społeczeństwo, stan duchowy społeczeństwa, stan kulturowy społeczeństwa, kultura, kultura narodu ukraińskiego.

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Массовая культура: ее негативное влияние на духовно-культурное развитие современного общества

Резюме

В статье рассматривается понятие «массовая культура» как одно из явлений в функционировании современного общества, его концептуальная и содержательная составная и признак качественного влияния на духовно-культурное состояние и развитие общества в целом и каждого человека в отдельности. Автор выделяет необходимость обратить особое внимание на изучение и анализ процессов, связанных с влиянием этого многовекторного явления на общую культуру народа Украины и особенно на его духовный потенциал, то есть на национальную культуру, в которой признак духовности является доминирующим, есть главная культуро-образующая составляющая.

Ключевые слова: массовая культура, современное общество, духовное состояние общества, культурное состояние общества, культура, культура народа Украины.

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