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## Information Culture of the Mass

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**Abstract:**

*The significance of the research is determined by the necessity to improve the quality of information culture of the modern society. In this context, the article refers to the "mass" or "the mass person" that has a certain way of thinking and life style which begin dominating under certain conditions.*

*"The mass person" represents a historically arisen and historically passing phenomenon generated by a certain stage of the development of technology. The research is focused upon a brief outline of philosophical and historical stages which have led to the emergence of the "mass person" who strives only for the benefit and achievement of the personal purposes. He obediently accepts ready-made stamps and stereotypes, without caring for their validity.*

*As a result, despite all the talks of individualization, the original identity is lost and replaced with the average, mass person who is going down the stream, turning into a slave of sociality that once again convinces us that "the mass person" is now a phenomenon which arises quite suddenly, but as a result of those substitutions about which we have spoken above.*

*It is that norm which is characteristic of the society constructed on the ideas of pragmatism and usefulness.*

**Keywords:** *Information culture, modern society, information, civilization, mentality, manipulation, consciousness, rationalism, ideology.*

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## 1. Introduction

One of the main tasks of any person in the modern world is to manage to adapt to a continuously changing life as well as to avalanche growth of information. In the late twenties of the last century Ortega y Gasset (1985) warned: *"The gap between the level of modern problems and the level of thinking will grow if the exit is not found, and this is the main tragedy of any civilization. ... But today the very man suffers from the crash, being incapable to keep up with his own civilization... The growing civilization is nothing more but an urgent problem. The more achievements we have, the more dangerous they are. The better life is, the more difficult it will become"*.

The civilization can be compared to a human organism which gets some viruses from the outside, copes with them, adapts to them and develops some immunity if it has a strong and durable constitution. But when it is exhausted as a result of objective and subjective factors, it is not able to adapt and select "viruses" any more. In such cases, with the absence of adequate measures the human organism cannot cope with the illness any more. The same processes happen to a civilization, too. Russia has always absorbed and processed in a multinational cultural pot, various innovations and trends both from the West and from the East, but it has always adapted the new to the features of its own cultural background.

At the present stage, Russian civilization has lost its ability "to digest" the foreign cultural experience and now it is following the line of least resistance. Namely, there is a thoughtless absorption of the low-quality cultural experience, which is besides alien to Russian mentality. Pure rationalism, pragmatism and benefit have never been the sources of Russian culture. The thoughtless planting of alien ideologies leads to the destruction of the cultural basis, depersonalization and loss of the national idea. The last one is so important that the existence of any civilization seems impossible without it. For the uniting and binding beginning is absent, the society turns into the community of individuals. They are connected with each other by nothing, but their advantages and achievement of momentary purposes, directed to the enrichment, as a rule.

During such crisis, we can observe the splash in destructive tendencies in relation to the high culture, the growth of cynicism and irresponsibility which lead to the loss of shame and even the instinct of self-preservation. All together it means a sharp rise of the anticulture. At the beginning of the 20th century, the anticulture was resisted by a rather strong implanted culture which did not allow destroying the person and the society completely from within. But then, in the 21st century, the situation has become much more difficult. The anticulture has connected with the "mass culture" using the most advanced technologies and being focused on pumping out of profits due to the sharp simplification of the interior. As a result, new technologies are used for the consciousness manipulation, imposing of various stamps, stereotypes and prejudices, distortion of people's perception of the world and themselves. In fact, they try to turn a person into a certain new being – a biosocial robot which

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obediently executes commands of representatives of global information and commercial elite for whom the concept of the national culture does not exist.

## 2. Literature review

The man, if he wants to remain, has to learn to reply to new "calls", otherwise he will also die following the culture. Vernadsky (2012) warned: *"It is late to look for high ideals when the life of fed and trained animals is reached"*.

The culture assumes some repeated, more or less periodic returns to the samples, their revival and reproduction in new forms and in new circumstances. Thus, Pushkin addressed to the creations of Dante and Goethe. Dostoyevsky and Akhmatova, in their turn, addressed to Pushkin. So in order to update the culture and to give it a new life, it is necessary to come back, synthesize some new experience with the former, sometimes even forgotten, achievements. At the same time it is also necessary to take into the account and comprehend the distinction of rhythms of various cultures. According to Ern (1991), each nation and each culture have "the internal rhythm of their life": *"All loans and studies from other national cultures do them good if they are in harmony with this rhythm or are realized by it ... the distinction of the rhythms, which are violently connected, causes some painful interruptions. These ones can lead to a big tragedy"*.

Therefore, the absence of taking into account or just simple ignoring of rhythms of different cultures turns into miscomprehension and alienation, attempts of violent imposing of their own representations, values and forms of communication. In such situations, the original dialogue of cultures becomes impossible.

According to Markuze (1986), the development of technology inevitably leads to the emergence of new, effective and even more "pleasant" methods of the external control over the individual. Due to it, the internal freedom of the person is exposed to the demolition. As a result, a "one-dimensional" society is formed, in which "one-dimensional" people live who are deprived of human feelings and spiritual life.

However, it is not about the destruction of science and technology per se and the revival of the culture on their ruins. It seems to be a rather primitive view of the problem. The science and technology are children of rationalism and rationality of which the modern West is proud. Rationalism, with its belief in boundless opportunities of the human mind, and rationality, with its aspiration to remake the world on the most "effective" and "useful" samples, are the basis of the modern western outlook.

It turns out that many threats for the development of the person and society are connected with the evolution of rationalism, i.e. the doctrines about that the true bases of life, knowledge and behavior of people are the universal principles of reason. The problem of the evolution of rationalism is extremely important to

understand what happens in the modern "rationalistic" society to the culture, in particular, to clarify the reasons of its decline and destruction. A lot of great thinkers, such as Ferguson (2000), Schelling (2014), Solovyov (2012), Spengler (1993) and others pointed out the following: one of the conditions of the fruitful cultural development is the respect for balance between the rational basis, on the one hand, and sensual-contemplate and moral-religious beginnings, on the other; as well as their mutual equilibration. When this balance is broken, the culture inevitably endures some crisis and decline.

### **3. Methods of the research**

The research is completed in the neoclassical paradigm and proceeds from general scientific methods including culturological, dialectical, ontological methods, as well as methods of historicism and objectivity. The methodological basis is determined by the systemic and evolutionary approaches chosen because their application makes it possible to create and analyze not only a static, but also a dynamic model of culture. The research also proceeds from a comprehensive approach, which includes culturological, dialectical, ontological methods, as well as methods of historicism and objectivity. As the main methods in the work used structuralist, reflexive, comparative methods.

### **4. Results**

If we remember some eras of cultural rise, the so-called "axial time" of the 8th-3rd centuries BC, Renaissance of the 15th-16th centuries and the period of the 18th-19th centuries in Europe and Russia, it will turn out that the rational basis during these eras did not suppress the sensual-contemplate and moral-religious beginnings, but was with them in a complex but harmonious interaction and a peculiar symbiosis.

During Antiquity era, in the classical period, for example, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato moderated rationalism as belief in a possibility of human mind to comprehend the world and the divine truth. They counterbalanced it with some esthetic perception of the reality which was inherent in Greeks. However, even Aristotle's, who lived during the era of crisis and actual crash of the classical Hellenic world, purely rationalistic perception started to hide all other ways of knowledge of the world and the person. The rationality in the classical antiquity began degenerating into pragmatism, commercialism, pursuit of money and pleasures. As a result, it led to the decline of Ancient Greek culture, loss of spirit of the creative search, which is characteristic of the classical Hellenic world.

Something like that repeated during the era of decline of Ancient Rome when former religious, mythological and moral ideas began losing their value and were replaced by the rationality and cynicism. The Roman society and its culture began degrading and decaying. However, the rationalism as a powerful philosophical current really arose on the verge of the middle Ages and modern times. Originally, philosophers-

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rationalists not only denied the existence of God, but also reconciled belief, reason and religion quite successfully. In the 15th-17th centuries, during the era of blossoming of the Western European culture, the rationalism neither suppressed religion and art, nor fought with them, but coexisted and interacted.

So, in the 15th century, Kuzansky put forward the idea that the final mind is capable to approach infinitely the Divine reason, never reaching its completeness, but never interrupting the approach to it, too. In the 17th century, Descartes and Spinoza did not reject the existence of God, human soul, morality, but tried to understand and comprehend them in a new way, following the representations of philosophy and science of their time. Spinoza in his "Ethics" also sought to prove morality by a scientific "geometrical" method, proceeding from axioms and proving the theorems following from them. In other words, Spinoza made an unprecedented attempt to connect together science, philosophy, morality and religion. Rationalists of the 15th-17th centuries, who lived in and remembered the great rise of culture of Renaissance, still understood the unity of all parties of the human being and also felt that immoral, religiousless and not-accepting-beauty "reason" was not only dangerous, but also represented nonsense.

The decisive change in the development of rationalism occurred in the 18th-19th centuries during the age of the Enlightenment when the old feudal order in Europe died and was followed by the death of the former faith in God, morality and art. The rationalism began turning promptly from a philosophical and humanistic current into the ideology designed to justify the claims of "the third estate" and to prove the approach of a new industrial society. There was the Enlightenment ideology, from which the liberalism ideology soon grew up.

Kant (1994) was one of the few thinkers of the age of the Enlightenment who dared to doubt the claims of the simplified rationalism and the ideology which arose on its basis. The philosopher showed that the reason which was beyond a certain circle of the phenomena faced unsolvable antinomies, i.e. the problems which were not subjected to the "pure mind", science and rationalism. Kant (1994) showed the basic limitation of the "pure mind" and existence of important areas, for example, morality, history, sense of beauty which could not be comprehended by the pure rationalism. Hence, the reason is the only one of the sides of human nature. And there are many others, not less important ones, the ignoring or suppression of which inevitably leads the person and society to the self-damage. Kant's ideas still have not lost their value and relevance. But the following development of the technical civilization has shown that the philosopher's preventions and critical evaluations were, in fact, ignored.

However, the process of rationalization was stimulated in every possible way by the rapid development of capitalism which was based on speeding up of the technical progress. At the beginning of the 20th century the German sociologist, Weber (1990), wrote about the inevitability of general rationalization and bureaucratization

of life under the conditions of capitalism. The person and society, according to Weber, in the process of complication of their life inevitably get into "an iron cage of rationality" without any exit: the rationality dictates to the person all his acts, thoughts, actions, and he is doomed to submit to these requirements.

According to Weber, impersonal forces of rationalization such as calculation, aspirations to benefit, the development of technology overcome human feelings, thoughts and actions, carrying out "a world demagicization" as personal values are destroyed by structures of rationality. At the same time he considered the process of rationalization as a characteristic feature of the western civilization, its economic, political, social and cultural life. However, Weber did not raise the question of whether rationalization destroys the western society from within, whether the person degrades in the process of development of technology, rationality and bureaucracy.

In the middle of the 20th century, the other German thinker, Jaspers (1932), claimed that as a result of rationalization, the technical "device" dominates in the society, and each person turns into a simple "function" of this device. "This development is connected with the activity rationalization: decisions are made not instinctively or on tendency, but on the basis of knowledge and accounting. development is connected with mechanization: any work turns into the activity counted to a limit, connected with necessary rules which can be made by various individuals, but remains same...

The individual breaks up into a number of functions. To be means to be in business: *"where the personality would be felt, the efficiency would be broken... When turning certain people into functions, the huge device of ensuring existence withdraws them from the substantive maintenance of life which has influenced people as a tradition previously"*.

## 5. Discussion

It is obvious that since then rationalization, scientific and technical progress have been rooted into the consciousness of people even more, having enslaved them and made helpless before inevitably arising failures. Thus, throughout the last several centuries, there was a whole series of substitutions where the reason was changed for calculation and aspiration to benefit, rationalism for rationality, philosophy and history for ideology, versatile development of the person for transformation into "functions", and, as a result, degradation. The person-"function" is the mass person.

His domination in the modern society influences the culture in the most destructive way. The signs of the destructive influence adjoining on the new "civilized alienation" are rather precisely described by Ortega y Gasset (1985) in his "Revolt of Masses". The heaviest consequences of domination of the mass person in the modern society, according to the scientist, consist in "the actual loss of morality as which it is necessary to understand not only external norms of this society, but

internal beliefs of the person in impossibility to break these or those commandments, understanding that their violation will be fraught with spiritual degradation, defeat in the fight of the good and evil in the heart of each person". Gradually, the morality was changed for "human rights" and "political correctness", therefore, the internal spiritual destruction of the person and society sharply accelerated. However, it is necessary to understand that the "mass" is not all people, not the whole society and even not a certain social group. It represents a certain life-type of people which prevails in the modern society, and belonging to which does not depend on the class association, education or material welfare.

## **6. Conclusion**

1. Thus, "the mass" or "the mass person" is a certain condition of a group of people or one person, a certain way of thinking and life style which begin dominating under certain conditions. "The mass person" represents a historically arisen and historically passing phenomenon generated by a certain stage of the development of technology. Such person is unsettled, he forgets about his own origin, being thrown into storm of the market, lost, aloof and aggressive. He is looking for the way out from the situation in his "simplified life", primitivization of the culture, standards of behavior, in order to be the same as the rest of the society, but not Himself. The mass person is interfered by such categories as: freedom, morality, conscience, esthetic taste, culture. Therefore, he aspires to that they were changed for the lack of freedom, permissiveness, industry of "the mass culture". Such society does not need any censorship, the person is simplified and enjoys the mass-culture-chewing-gum. The good and evil lost their sacral meaning. The person strives only for the benefit and achievement of the personal purposes.

2. Unfortunately, the statement of the personal beginning, the appeal to morality sources most often amplify only after the exit from historical cataclysms and accidents which ruin a great deal of lives. Only when on the edge of the abyss, the person begins to distinguish the truth from a lie and look for the deep, but not superficial bases of his existence. In some situations of external wellbeing, the person is inclined to fall into spiritual and intellectual hibernation. He obediently accepts ready-made stamps and stereotypes, without caring for their validity.

3. As a result, despite all the talks of individualization, the original identity is lost and replaced with the average, mass person who is going down the stream, turning into a slave of sociality that once again convinces us that "the mass person" is now a phenomenon which arises quite suddenly, but as a result of those substitutions about which we have spoken above. It is that norm which is characteristic of the society constructed on the ideas of pragmatism and usefulness.

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