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**TÍTULO:** La cultura consumista sensorial de la sociedad capitalista.

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**RESUMEN:** La idea principal del artículo es un análisis socio-filosófico de la cultura sensorial-consumista como un tipo de sección transversal que refleja cómo cada sistema social contribuye (o impide) el desarrollo personal y el logro de la libertad real por parte del ser humano. Los resultados mostraron que solo una sociedad basada en los valores humanísticos puede eliminar los fenómenos negativos en el desarrollo de la cultura. El objetivo más importante de la cultura es la formación de una demanda personal de comunicación constante y polivalente en el campo de la religión, la filosofía, los estudios culturales, la ciencia, la moral y el arte, etc.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** cultura consumista sensorial, actividad humana, cultura de masas.

**TITLE:** The sensate-consumerist culture of the capitalist society.

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**ABSTRACT:** The main idea of the article is a socio-philosophical analysis of the sensate-consumerist culture as a kind of cross-section reflecting how each social system contributes (or prevents) personal development and attainment of actual freedom by human. Results showed that only a society based on the humanistic values can eliminate negative phenomena in the culture development. The most important objective of culture is formation of a personal demand for constant, multi-purpose communication in the field of religion, philosophy, cultural studies, science, morality and art, etc.

**KEY WORDS:** culture, sensual-consumerist culture, human activity, mass culture.

**INTRODUCTION.**

The problem of the sensate-consumerist culture of modern capitalist society belongs to challenging and debatable social and philosophical issues. The role of culture in society has changed, and the very understanding of culture has also changed. Culture, as the agent of the human principle (a socially developed one) in activities, is among the most significant determinants of the mode of reproducing and satisfying the daily needs, interests and goals of society and individuals.

The most important problem of culture is its opposition to the dictatorship of the goods and money relationships and transformation of its sensate-consumerist model of modern society. The sensate-consumerist culture of modern capitalist society is self-contradictory. In the conditions of market-

based economy, the artefacts of the sensate-consumerist culture function as a consumer product, on the one part, and cultural values, on the other part. As the product, they shall be sold and shall accordingly make a profit in the conditions of the liberal-market economy and at the same time they form distorted, false imposed needs, appeasing blatant tastes and contributing to standardization and unification of the personality. At the same time, the sensate-consumerist culture is considered as a generally satisfactory form of democratization and liberalization of society, a tool for cultural satisfaction of common people, an opportunity to become familiar with the world cultural achievements and to realize connection with the entire humanity and its problems.

At present, there is an acute need for formulation of the problem of sensate-consumerist culture that is caused by the insufficient coverage of this issue in the socio-philosophical knowledge. It is fundamental for the modern social and philosophical theory and its solution is related to the content that is embedded in the concepts of “culture” and “sensate-consumerist culture”.

### **Methods.**

Since antiquity, the paramount function of culture was disclosed by Cicero’s concept of “*cultur anima*” – cultivation and nurturing of the soul. The goal of culture was defined in the understanding of the sense, meaning and value of culture for personality development. Culture was understood to be a social mechanism, with the help of which man shapes and, primarily, realises one’s essential powers and thereby “actualises” oneself. Once, G. Hegel noted that the formation of an individual takes place “by moulding and working oneself up” in the process of culture (Akhmedova, 2012). Such transformation is the achievement and development of personality and the realisation of its social attributes stimulated by culture.

Culture is the synthesised social and historical experience of past generations that gives every person the chance to assimilate this experience and enrich it. Thereat, culture is not merely a dialog with the history of the culture of one’s own and other nations. Culture is an instrument for

assimilating the social experience of contemporaries, and it serves for exchanging social forces among nations. The exchange of cultural activities enriches people mutually and adds to their spiritual wealth.

A natural organic links exists between culture and human activities. Culture is understood as an activity focused to organising and humanising the world and life. Antique philosophers considered the *acquiring of culture*, the elevation of personality to universal skills, faculties and knowledge an acknowledgement of the “human creative” aspect of social activity. Culture, in elevating human activity to universal skills and faculties, overcomes subjectivity, and is the force capable of ensuring the originality and uniqueness of this activity, and imparts a creative quality to it.

Culture characterises social activity from the viewpoint of opportunities that it provides for development of abilities and needs; in other words, of man’s social forces. K. Marx demonstrated that even the simple, “vital” needs of a person, not to speak of higher, social ones, depend ultimately on the society’s cultural level (Gurevich, 1994). Culture acts as a means for shaping social forces, though it would be a mistake to link their formation exclusively to culture. Nevertheless, they are a product of culture to a “significant degree” (Ilyin, 2014).

Culture is not a special sphere of public life as its economic, social, political, or spiritual domains are. It characterises society as a whole, and acts as its peculiar snapshot It reflects how much each social system promotes (or hinders) the development of personality, and man’s attainment of real freedom. The policy of modern developed European countries with their focus on “quality of life” and on the mode of life in general, reflects the adeptness of the social system, under current conditions, to contend with social and historical realities. Primarily, this concerns the need to develop large-scale post-industrial production (with profit interests) demanding a specific labour and everyday life culture to utilise human resources to the utmost in its interest.

Modern economic principles of public organisation determine culture phenomena to a large extent because culture shapes the character of people's attitude towards nature and one another. The level of a society's social and economic development determines the character of culture, and the opportunities and limits of cultural progress of a society. Free spiritual creativity appears only within limits that are defined by the socio-economic principles of organisation of a society. Hence, when we mention culture's economic conditioning, it is insufficient to distinguish the quantitative level of material production and compare it with the cultural level, though its significance is big in defining the opportunities of cultural creativity. It has to be taken in organic unity with production's social aspect and the economic relations between people that define ultimately the social utilities of culture and its social characteristics.

Culture exists and develops in a social system, i.e. within a system of economic, political and world outlook relations. Without accounting for the dependence of culture on these relations, it is impossible to understand its development. No less important is the other economic aspect of public life, which is also essential for the cultural processes occurring in this life. What is meant here are the living standards and welfare of people, and means of subsistence. There is no direct link between the population's welfare level and their cultural one. This link has always been mediated by social relations defining the character of this dependence because, on its own, growth of welfare does not automatically determine the level of development of society's culture. Therefore, in one case, the level of material life acts as a basis and means for cultural development. In other cases, growth of welfare of a society or of its separate classes leads not to development, but to decomposition, decay and degradation of culture.

### **Discussion.**

In the Western literature, the following concepts are close to the concept of consumerist culture: consumerist lifestyle (M. Featherstone); cultural consumption, "the smallest common culture" (J.

Baudrillard); cultural technologies, global consumerism (P. Stearns); cultural industry (T. Adorno); dominant culture (S. Žižek); consumer culture (F. Fukuyama).

Consumerist culture similar to the ideology of consumption, occurs in the West, but its expansion can no longer occur as the expansion of the consumption ideology, since it conflicts with the local artistic cultures and with the world culture in general (Kuznetsov, 2012).

In the modern civilised world, consumerism has become the incurable ailment of humanity. Like a drug, it is addictive and calls for consuming more and more, with an off chance of being cured. Such a social relation is closely linked to the logic and methodology of modern economic thought characterised by absence of values and “fixation of economists on unwarranted economic growth and profit.” Economic expansion has become the blueprint for quite a few modern societies, and any growth of the gross national product is deemed a success. Though it cannot be denied that growth is an important indicator of a system’s success, nevertheless, all kinds of economic growth should be analysed. Something should increase, something decrease, and one need not be especially clear-sighted to be aware and understand that infinite growth of material consumption, in the long run, is impossible (Akhizer, 1992).

Nevertheless, there is no direct linear causal relation between economics and culture. Their relation is not linear, but diverse, historically concrete. However, it exists and its study presents opportunities for scientific description and explanation of the development of the sensate-consumerist culture of modern society as a definite deformation of culture. The essence of the deformation is that such a type of culture is not focused to the development of man as a personality, but it is an instrument to serve the social interests of domination and submission. The producers of domestic mass culture see man from the perspective of economic utility and expediency. Personality is seen in the functional-pragmatic aspect and is identical to a thing, being thus a resource. The general trend of the sensate-consumerist culture is to consider man, culture, society

and even consciousness from the viewpoint of naturalistic mechanism. The plethora of human nature is reduced to a variety of relations of the “incentive-response” type. Such value preference is actually a tool for subjugating and exploiting one social group by another. “Thus, sensate society with its sensate ethics prepared its voluntary self-subjugation to brute force. By liberating itself from God, from all absolutes and categorical imperatives, it became a victim of outright physical violence and deceit. Society reached the ultimate point of moral degradation and now it is tragically paying for its folly. Its laudatory utilitarianism, pragmatism and practical expediency turned out to be the most unreasonable non-utilitarian disaster” (Jameson, 1985).

The point is that the sensate-consumerist culture of modern society, from its least significant elements to most essential values and practices reflects the exclusively egocentric world outlook, which is the immediate projection of the socioeconomic market system. “The preeminent underpinnings of a consumerist culture are markets composed of sexual puppets – men desiring objects and women wanting to be objects, and objects of desire – vagrant ones, dictated by the market and available in it” (Hegel, 1934).

P. Sorokin, in distinguishing different historical types of culture, places emphasis on the sensate culture of modern society, and its direct impact on the economic and other forms of manifestation of inequality. “The craving for sensate values not only failed to liquidate, but all the more added to the economic and other manifestations of inequality of people.” Endowed with a destructive force, the sensate-consumerist culture of present times is excessively chaotic and debauched for it to be a creative and constructive basis of society. The process of disintegration is irreversible. In P. Sorokin’s opinion, “neither form of culture is infinite in its creational capabilities – they are always limited. Otherwise, there would not be several forms of one culture, but rather one, absolute culture that includes all forms. When the creational forces are exhausted and all their limited capabilities are realised, a particular culture and society either become dead and not creational, or change to a

new form that opens doors to new creational options and values.” (Ilienkov, 1992). The decaying form of culture may very well give place to a new human culture with a never fading impulse. Such changes are the requisite condition for any culture to be a creatively constructive force during its entire historical development. According to P. Sorokin, any great culture is not merely a multitude of various spiritual and material phenomena, coexisting, but in no way connected, but rather a unity whose all parts are transfixed by one fundamental principle, and express one and basic value, which serves as an underpinning of any culture. Culture is a manifestation of the human principle of history. Its development represents primarily the making and evolution of the social man as a subject of the historical process. And if society is focused on humans and their utmost development, then culture is the method and measure of such development.

Powerful factors of internationalisation of public life and culture are in play in the modern world. They have an impact on accelerating integration processes in the realm of culture, and interaction of national cultures is gaining momentum. In conditions of worldwide domination of one liberal model of social development, the impact of one culture on another often takes the form of cultural expansion and even of suppression of weaker cultures. This immediately results in their confrontation, and in some cases this takes on extreme forms of cultural isolation when, on the pretext of cultural identity, the tendency is to “save” it from interaction with the cultures of other peoples.

The problem is accentuated by that the product of “cultural export” of Western countries is a pseudoculture in the form of “mass culture” surrogates. The modern liberal model of society is demonstrating flexibility and skill in exploiting innovations in science, engineering and arts coupled to extensive experience in manipulating the masses and their consciousness to adapt to the volatile social situation and prolong its own existence. The existing system of socioeconomic relations wastes not only the physical force, but also the mind and nerve energy of labourers.

According to Ilyin A.I. “The capitalist system shall constantly update the needs of the society in order to maintain constant customer demand. The system is self-expanding, using the mechanisms of fashion and advertising. The goods that are not valuable enough seem to be more valuable than the really required goods. The useless goods are provided with the image of usefulness. The desire for novelty is cultivated, the production of all new gadgets is accompanied by the production of advertising for these gadgets that announces the need to acquire them” (Ilyin, 2014).

The sensate-consumerist culture is an existence of the market mode of spiritual production (i.e. an organised form of production and translation of spiritual values), rather than of culture per se with its lofty humanistic ideals. The sensate-consumerist culture produces a certain imprint on man’s daily life by shaping his system of values, needs, likes, and so forth. The role of this type of culture in people’s everyday life is becoming all the more significant. In current conditions, it is becoming the prime supplier of normative behaviour values, thereby affecting all layers of society, including the elite. The main goal of modern sensate-consumerist culture is to shape images and mind stereotypes, and rehabilitate the economic supremacy of a certain social class by introducing myths about the equal opportunities of all among all.

Certainly, each person possesses a potential creative ability in a cultural activity. However, the realisation of this ability and personal self-fulfilment in cultural creativity under current conditions is by far a thing of chance. It can also be the result of being born to the upper class or by private life taking another twist, giving a person with a humble background a chance of “breaking into” creative elite circles. Thereby, millions of gifted individuals from the people are doomed, having no opportunity for individual perfection. All this will bring huge irreparable damage to the development of the mankind’s culture.

Hence, along with products of the sensate-consumerist culture, consumption becomes an instrument of illusory realization of aspirations and ideals, and serves as a means of psychological security of personality under social misbalanced conditions.

In modern Russian society the sensate-consumerist culture reflects the attitudes of the emerging middle class where the multitude of needs and the drive to satisfy them are considered the attributes of modern man. By creating an image of a worthwhile life through a variety of changing “lifestyles” offered to the consumer as a “commodity” to be used when needed, the sensate-consumerist culture erodes and renders innocuous the cultural, the human, origin of man’s lifestyle. The “values-stereotypes” of the sensate-consumerist culture, diffused by the mass communications media, are so plainly in contradiction to the needs of personal self-fulfilment that this culture is more capable of deepening the crisis of modern society than delivering any expectations of its improvement.

### **Results.**

In the modern world, the interrelation of the culture of peoples living in different social systems is critical because it facilitates advancement of mutual understanding of peoples, and consolidation of peace and international security. Cultural communication brings together the people of different nations and cultures. They get to know one another and this inspires their mutual trust, and boosts interest in collaboration. Hence, the development of specific national cultures and the interaction of different cultures impact social development and they bear a specific social content. Such interaction exposes the human and the personal origin of history expressed in culture.

The mutual impact of different cultures on social processes is attributed to the fact that each specific culture shapes a definite type of personality with an individual perception and image of the environment. This has an immediate impact on the character and mode of activity of a person. The mutual diffusion of cultural and social aspects also implies that culture is not conditioned by social factors but in a way resists them and their social impact. This is especially evident when social

relations are alienated from personality and are in opposition to it as a force dominating over personality. Such a social situation begets the processes of deformation of culture to the extent to which it deviates from its purpose – to serve development of the personality. At his time, K. Marx wrote that the contemptuous attitude of the bourgeoisie to man is inevitably linked to its negation of humanistic culture. “Contempt for theory, art, history, and for man as an end in himself,” he stressed, “is the real, conscious standpoint, the virtue of the man of money ...” (Marx & Engels, 1955). These words apply fully to the modern sensate-consumerist culture of capitalist society that is confining millions of people to a vegetative existence. Without intervening in any way in the course of events, they maybe imagined that changing anything is impossible no matter what.

## **CONCLUSIONS.**

Only a society built around humanitarian values is capable of eliminating these negative phenomena in development of culture. The paramount task of culture is to shape in a person the need in continuous and all-round communication in the realms of religion, philosophy, culture, science, morals, art, and so forth. The goal is to achieve a truly “social condition” when individuals would meet their needs in a well-balanced way, and for each individual to have only those needs that would be satisfied without violating the rights of other people to gain such satisfaction. In this case, social development will create conditions for the human nature to improve gradually by adapting to society until such adaptation will eventually be complete.

## **Conflict of interests.**

The authors declare that the provided information has no conflicts of interest.

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