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Between Totalitarianism and Chaos: The Problem of Control and Art in Modern Culture

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Abstract: Control is one of the fundamental phenomena of the world civilizational process. The semantics of this term, which goes back to the roots of the Romance language (controlle), means a list or scroll with written elements. It follows from this that control as a means of managing society in any form (from Egyptian temple farms to modern subcultures) appears with the advent of writing. It is noteworthy that dreams of an ideal structure of society in antiquity or the Middle Ages were associated with a large degree of control on the verge of a totalitarian society – for example, in Plato's dialogue "About the state" or in Thomas More's book "About the best state on the island of Utopia". Consequently, in the history of civilizations, the limit of control has determined by its excess in society – this is the phenomenon of totalitarianism, when almost all manifestations of human existence are controlled. On the other hand, it is impossible not to see that the entire human history is a series of different wars – from intertribal to world wars. War in the civilizational aspect is the apotheosis of chaos, the archaization of society as an integral organism. And this is another border of control, where its presence is minimal, and where control appears as a benefit and a security condition. In different historical epochs, control could take various forms, especially interesting are the methods of control in the epochs before the invention of the printing press. Art has always reflected the development of control in society. Especially interesting are the images of control in modern cinema, including TV series and music videos, the audience of which currently significantly exceeds the number of viewers of the "big cinema".

Keywords: Control, Chaos, Mass Culture, Russian Cinema, *Blackout*, Mike Shinoda, Clip "Fine"

1. Introduction

Control is one of the fundamental phenomena of the world civilizational process. The semantics of this term, which goes back to the Romance language roots (*controlle*) means a list or written items. It follows from this that control as a means of managing society, in any of its forms (from Egyptian temple farms to modern subcultures) appears with the emergence of writing. It can be assumed that the emergence of writing is also connected, among other things, with the need to control social processes. The oldest forms of control, whether it was a List of Sumerian Gods from the Farah or documents that recorded the temple property of Sumerian city-states, pursued in the first case – fixing the number of gods and their functionality, in the second - the volume of material resources of temple farms and their movement (i.e., income and expenditure). [1] The lists of gods were obviously a means of ordering the world, as they gave a clear

idea of which elements a particular deity was responsible for, which god needed to be addressed if necessary. The fixation of the property of temple farms obviously proceeded from the ideas of the "depravity" of human nature, and, consequently, the presence of abuse.

In our opinion, the emergence of control as a social phenomenon is connected with the chronological concept of ancient religions, in which time was divided into "centuries", each of which was worse in its qualities than the previous one. For the Western tradition, the most famous are the concept of "Hesiod about the "Five Centuries" [2] and Ovid about the four ages of mankind, set forth in the poem "Metamorphoses". [3]

Similar concepts about the deterioration of time and man can be found in Hinduism, Buddhism (the doctrine of yugas and kalpas), etc. According to the ideas of Hesiod and Ovid, the people of the "golden age" did not need control, as they lived in harmony with the gods, nature and were almost

perfect themselves, preserving youth and beauty until old age.

The ideological basis for the emergence of control as a social phenomenon, obviously, was the realization that times and people are "spoiling" (recall at least the famous exclamation of Cicero – "O, tempores, o mores!"), therefore, in order to maintain decency and order (if a return to the "golden age" is impossible), control is needed. Consequently, the phenomenon of control itself is by its nature close to coercion, to *violence.*

2. Theoretical Base

It is noteworthy that dreams of the perfect structure of society in Antiquity or the Middle Ages were associated with a large degree of control on the verge of a totalitarian society: for example, in Plato's dialogue "The State" [4] or in Thomas More's "Golden Little Book, as useful as it is funny about the best structure of the state and the new island of Utopia" [5] (1516) or a century later in Tomaso Campanella in his "City of the Sun". [6]

For two thousand years, all philosophical dreams about the ideal structure of society have been inextricably linked with various degrees of control, which could be physical coercion (for example, the removal of children from families at birth for their "proper upbringing") and control with the help of state laws, for example, when choosing a profession or distributing benefits.

Talking about the evolution of control in history, for example, in ancient or medieval (Christian) civilization, we can say that in these epochs control could take both non-economic (slavery, military booty) and legal forms (recall the Roman saying: dura lex - sed lex). Religion, its dogmas and rituals were a powerful means of controlling the worldview and mental state of society in the ancient and medieval eras. The combination of all forms of control – from religious to physical - ensured relatively stable social development in those epochs. Some philosophers have played a significant role in the development of the theory of social control, such as Thomas Hobbes in his work Leviathan [7], which discussed the social order and how the state implements it using civil and military power; and also Cesare Beccaria, who in the book "Crimes and Punishments" [8] argued that people will avoid criminal behavior if their actions lead to more severe punishment, stating that changes in punishment will act as a form of social control.[1] Sociologist Emile Durkheim also investigated social control in the work "Division of Labor in Society" and discussed the paradox of deviance, arguing that social control is what makes us comply with laws in the first place [9].

3. Actualization of Control in the Mass Culture Conditions

With the advent of information civilization, control has acquired a number of significant differences from its earlier forms. One of these significant differences is a decrease in religious control, due to the postulation of freedom of conscience (i.e. the right to freely choose a religious affiliation, and not follow it because of the fact of birth in a particular cultural environment).

The second point that influenced the strengthening of control in society was due to the fact that society had a number of technical means that could provide control both at the level of social groups and at a private, personal level.

Here a quite logical question arises – why is control as a socio-cultural phenomenon so clearly actualized in the post-industrial era?

In our opinion, the reason lies in the peculiarities of mass culture, which arose as a social consequence of machine production. The formation of industrial (XIX century) and post-industrial (XX century) civilization was a time of bloody revolutions and no less bloody wars, a time of an avalanche of scientific and technical inventions: from cinema to the Internet, from an airplane to space technology, from radio to the atomic bomb. It was a time of great illusions, when dystopias appeared not only in literature, but also in reality.[2]

But perhaps the most striking metamorphoses occurred in this time with the man himself. In the XX century, people said goodbye to the idea of progress, with the naively optimistic belief that "tomorrow will be better than yesterday." The idea of progress, which experienced its triumph in the XIX century, had its origins in medieval ideas about the boundlessness of the world. In the XX century, when the world finally globalized, it became clear that its resources were limited and could be exhausted within several generations, and this would jeopardize not only further progressive development, but also the very existence of man. An outstanding philosopher of the XX century, a representative of the Frankfurt school, Theodor Adorno, argued that the XX century provides evidence of such a backward movement of human nature, which cannot even be roughly compared with anything similar in the past. One of the manifestations of this "backward movement" undoubtedly turned out to be God-fighting (including the appropriation of the divine prerogative - the right to suicide), which fascinated a person all the more in the twentieth century, the more power the successes of social and cultural development gave him.

All these civilizational circumstances of the "backward movement" led to a deep *anthropological conflict* in which, free from transcendental care, rushing, floating, flying on his cars, modern man found himself in an existential desert, one on one with his limited materiality. A man of mass culture - the creator of virtual worlds, armed with machines and high technology, able to destroy the world several times, almost superhuman - feels powerless and vulnerable to diseases, suffering, pain and fear of imminent old age and death. It is possible that the reason for this *anthropological conflict* lies in the fact that all modern human power is external. It has added almost nothing either to the actual physical or mental abilities of a person. A man in popular culture, if we leave aside his machines, has remained as weak and vulnerable as

he was many centuries ago. In modern popular culture, there is almost no sovereign personality; an anonymous person lives in it, an impersonal ordinary consumer. The reality of modern culture is that with the advent of digital technologies, an ordinary consumer is fixed as a credit card holder, as the owner of an identification barcode, as a carrier of a QR code in a pandemic, as a member of a particular social network, etc. In other words, in the conditions of information civilization, a person is controlled as a voter, as a consumer, as a participant in the information space, receiving for this unprecedented comfort of being and security in history.

However, in the conditions of such a reduction in existential freedom, only *two spheres of personal freedom remain in society.*

The first sphere is the space of physical physicality. And although in the conditions of the fundamental reality of our planet, the parameters of the human body are a constant value, nevertheless, in the modern cultural situation there is a space for various identification experiments.

The second sphere, which is more diverse and relieves mental stress from excessive civilizational control, is art, in which cinema acts as the most mass and technological and which, in the conditions of mass culture, is the leading art of the era.[3]

An ordinary member of mass culture lives not only in his everyday circumstances, but also in a virtual world created by information flows, in which he can visualize any of his fantasies and see the most incredible collisions. What may seem the most realistic of virtual works - of course movies!

4. Selecting an Object for Analysis

In one of his works, the Russian researcher V. A. Kurennoy proposed a method for studying modern cinema, which involved rejecting the aesthetic component of cinema (originality and quality of director's work or acting). First of all, the visual structure of the film, the images and symbols used in it are evaluated.

V. A. Kurennoy considers cinema as one of the types of mass culture, and therefore its main cultural units are not elite films of the art house series, but blockbusters embodying the basic stereotypes, behavioral strategies and values of modern society. [10] And we would also add - meanings and mentalities that are a psycho-emotional reflection of these meanings. As already noted, the information age has expanded the forms of control in society, including in its arsenal not only various digital resources, financial instruments, but also new artistic images. Art has always reflected on the development of control in society. Especially interesting are the images of control in modern cinema, including TV series and music videos, whose audience currently significantly exceeds the number of viewers of the "big cinema".

I would like to note that the reflection of time in images, or rather, its experience through mental sensations– is one of the functions of art and the fact that cinema is capable of visualizing mentalities once again confirms its aesthetic and artistic status. However, unlike traditional forms of art, which have always been quite elitist and did not react so quickly to the change of mentalities in culture, cinema has the opportunity to capture an actual dynamic psycho-emotional portrait of those who for many centuries were called the "silent majority".

Control on the cinema screen and in the film industry can take different forms: as external – censorship, propaganda of actual values, or mind control. Internal forms of control in cinema are expressed, first of all, in an artistic image transmitted through ideas that are reflected in the script of a film, clip or series.

In this regard, the Russian blockbuster "Outpost" (in the world screening, the film was released under the title "Blackout") directed by Egor Baranov, which was released in 2019, is very symptomatic.

It is no coincidence that this film deals with the problem of control, which is becoming one of the most urgent in the conditions of information civilization, and from the point of view of social reflection reflect the mental problems of modern mass culture and, in particular, its ordinary representative.

In Egor Baranov's film "Blackout", all energy sources are turned off on most of the planet, communication systems stop working, and billions of people die from a terrible toxin. The survivors fall under alien control so much that they turn into zombies capable of fulfilling only external will, i.e. most of the planet is under alien, absolute control, which has turned people into a means to achieve external goals. In the "circle of life" there remains a small piece of land where energy sources have been preserved, on which there are still elements of social control that ensure relative order, they are necessary to ensure more or less normal human life. The government is trying to take control of the situation and is sending reconnaissance groups and tank columns to the territory of darkness (blackout). Intelligence groups must convey to the government the meaning of what is happening in these territories and repel the attacks of millions of crazed zombies. Most of the film, as befits a blockbuster, is occupied by shooting and hand-to-hand combat scenes.

At the end of the film, the alien defector Id, claiming to be God, reveals the true meaning of what is happening. He tells the remaining members of the intelligence group that the Earthlings are the children of the virus of aggression and reproduction, that the Earthlings themselves had to clear the earth of 8 billion people because of their love of wars. In the process of disagreements, the alien Id himself dies. As a result, an alien ship hovering over Moscow falls, and three survivors from the reconnaissance group enter the spaceship. They manage to destroy almost all the aliens sleeping in suspended animation. However, they could not raise their hand against the alien children! Thus, the filmmakers simultaneously pose both a question and an ellipsis. Nevertheless, the viewer is likely to be pessimistic – after all, children grow up!

It can be stated that the Russian blockbuster presented the problem of control as an artistic image in its existential

manifestations, arguing that both rigid total control and its complete loss, leading society to chaos, are unacceptable for humanity.

5. The Soundtrack of the Film as a Symptom of Control as a Global Problem

It is symptomatic that the soundtrack to the film "Blackout" was written by the outstanding master of the modern musical landscape Mike Shinoda (Linkin Park), [11] indirectly confirming the global scale of the reality reflected in the film and the psycho-emotional state of the masses. The music of this composition, which has a heavy, chiseled size, resembles the inexorable tread of either military units or merciless Fate. The melody, which is very simple, harsh in emotional coloring and, at the same time, sad, is built in the form of a dialogue in which the verse consists of their abrupt, harsh musical phrases, and the lyrical bridge (chorus), in which the heavy rhythm disappears, sounds like complacency, which has nothing to do with the real situation.

The lyrics of this composition are also built in the form of a dialogue, but a visual dialogue, connecting pictures of external actions and internal states as in a film montage.

On the one hand, "Tell all the children to lock those doors, I've seen the smoke in the sky before", i.e., an external action, followed by "I feel a chill building up inside", i.e. a description of the internal state; and again, "To send out the battle cry" external manifestations, which are replaced by a statement of the enemy's intentions "They're hungry for my skin"... This whole terrible jerky picture ends with the endlessly repeated as a prayer, falsely pacifying phrase "Everything is gonna be fine, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine."

6. War as an Expression of Chaos or the Lower Limit of Control

In the film, three degrees of control are shown to one degree or another: the control of alien beings who brought him to the end point, i.e. control is so comprehensive that it deprives the personal will of each individual. At the same time, the film "Blackout" is a blockbuster, i.e. filled with scenes of fighting and destruction. On the other hand, it is impossible not to see that the film presents another side of this problem, i.e. the lack of control leading to chaos. It is no coincidence that at the end of the film, the alien defector Id, tells the remaining members of the intelligence group that Earthlings are a product of the aggression virus (and this is a few months before the Covid pandemic!), and that Earthlings themselves had to clear the Earth of eight billion people because of their love of wars.

Indeed, it is impossible not to see that the whole of human history is a series of different wars – from tribal to world wars. For many millennia, in the conditions of archaic and national cultures, war has been a means of intercultural communication and self-identification. In the ideological and political topography of these epochs, it was a measure of the success of culture. Since the war was associated with overcoming space and material resources, it also acted as an indicator of the energy potential of civilizations. The war, because of its energy costs, required strength, dexterity, endurance, healthy aggressiveness, enjoyment of the struggle from its participants - that is, everything that accumulates youth in itself.

In essence, the wars of antiquity and the Middle Ages remained a technical and technological phenomenon external to the axiological heart of culture. It can be argued that in the conditions of traditional cultures, constant local wars had a more external, contact character, "heroic character".

Everything began to change significantly, starting with Modern times and especially since the XVIII century.

Firstly, the growth of militaristic traits in culture was associated with the beginning of the process of globalization, in which European (Christian) culture became the leading society and whose domination required military force.

Secondly, European culture, following the artistic flourishing of the Renaissance, experienced the rapid development of science in Modern times, which ended with industrialization and the entry into the history of the machine. Interestingly, the vast majority of figures in the humanities and arts assessed the machine as a socio-cultural phenomenon very negatively, unlike politicians and representatives of technical and natural science knowledge. The Russian philosopher A. F. Losev wrote in the autumn of 1929: *"There is something ruined, pathetic and suffering in the car. The machine is not chaste, cruel, internally devastated. There is some kind of fundamental mediocrity, spiritual philistinism, boredom and darkness in it. It is the deepest cynicism of the spirit, limited to the average stamped and mechanical things."* [12]

The machine reinforces the existential characteristics of war, since it (the machine) is free from moral imperatives, it is strong, ruthless, generates a cult of power, i.e. the essential characteristics of the machine are determined by war as an existential form.

In modern information culture, war appears as one of the plots of hyperreality, as an aesthetic phenomenon (cinema, computer graphics). Here, the war is still being glorified, an enhanced ethical message is attributed to it, since freedom of choice, which is most acute in war and can cost the lives of not only the participants of this choice. War in modern art appears attractive due to its aesthetics. The heroes here are beautiful, strong, beautifully built. In addition, even in futuristic wars, you can often see an anachronistic mixture of the latest technical achievements and medieval armor and ancient weapons. This is far from accidental, this is seen as a reflection of the trend towards more recent aesthetic experiences, i.e. this is another manifestation of psychoemotional archaization this time in the field of aesthetic experiences. In the artistic sphere, war has become a place of search for freedom, clear ethical preferences and

fresh, but at the same time, archaic aesthetic experiences.

Since in the civilizational aspect of war there is an apotheosis of chaos and the archaization of society as an integral organism, this is another border of control, on which its presence is minimal, and on which control appears as a benefit and a condition of security.

In the film "Blackout", in addition to chaos, as a consequence of the war with aliens and total control in the territories subject to aliens, an earthly civilization is shown trying to stay at an acceptable level of social control.

7. The Mental States of a Society That Is Forced to Balance Between Chaos and Totalitarianism

Although the plot of the film "Blackout" is apocalyptic in nature, however, in the film it, as in the soundtrack of Mike Shinoda's "Fine", illustrated with footage from the film, reflected not only the confrontation of control and chaos, but also those *mental states* that are characteristic of society in the modern historical period, which force this society to balance between total control and chaos.

7.1. Fear

This word and condition are present in the film, but it becomes clear from the plot lines of the film that this is not a biological fear of death. One of the heroes of "Blackout", whose remark is included in the soundtrack of the film, says: "Didn't you know that we were all going to die? Then why be afraid of her?". The fear reflected in the Russian blockbuster is a civilizational fear, a collective fear, close to the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious, which has its expression in social action. And this social action manifests itself in the passion for destruction.

7.2. Destruction

The film is full of frames showing the process of destruction of skyscrapers, residential buildings, bridges, roads with aesthetic voluptuousness. The landscapes in this film are ruined cities, not natural landscapes. In a psychological sense, the passion for destruction is the release of negative energy of the subconscious caused by the irritation of society from the surrounding reality, the destruction of visible objects of which is associated with liberation from it.

7.3. The Desire for Freedom

In the film "Blackout", the acquisition of freedom is presented in two images: on the one hand, it is a heated aggressive crowd in an open clash with the police guarding the authorities, i.e. with those who provide control in society. In essence, here the desire for freedom appears as a chaotic tendency. On the other hand, the desire for freedom is presented as a personal, private choice, which is mainly influenced only by internal ethical values.

7.4. A Premonition of the Apocalypse

The film has a strong apocalyptic tone. The end of civilization is near, it can happen at any moment. And although in the film an apocalyptic threat comes from outer space, the reason for its arrival is the internal properties of a person as an aggressive, spoiled, viral being.

7.5. Hope for the Post-Apocalypse

Perhaps strangely, there is a utopian hope for a post-apocalyptic civilization in the film. In "Outpost", the alien Id says that from the remaining people he was going to grow a new race free from militaristic tendencies and build a new perfect world.

8. Visual Afterword to the Movie or the Problem of Control/Chaos in Mike Shinoda's Clip "Fine"

The Russian action movie "Blakout" had a very unexpected sequel. Perhaps this is the only case in the history of cinema so far (in any case, the author of this article does not know anything like this), when a month after the premiere of the film, Mike Shinoda's music video for the musical composition "Fine" (it is the soundtrack to the movie "Blackout") was released. Perhaps it was the proposal of the film crew, perhaps it was Mike Shinoda's desire to use his atmospheric composition as the music track of the video - whatever it was – at the end of 2019, the premiere of the video "Fine" took place.

According to its artistic characteristics, the clip was a combination of two quasi-realities, according to its creative strategy, resembling the clip "Iridescent". [13]

In the clip "Fine" [14], footage from the film "Blackout" was presented in the role of documentary events. The only thing that was changed in these frames was that the Russian inscriptions of the posters were replaced with English ones, which gave the nature of a universal action to what was happening (if only because English is the language of international communication). Another variant of quasi-reality was the existence of the Ruler of the "world, who disposed of the "documentary" reality at his discretion.

If the artistic strategy of the clip is quite traditional for the last two decades, then its content side has a clear socio-cultural message. In Mike Shinoda's "Fine" video, the dialectic of chaos and control was brought to its final stage and became the driving storyline, while the soundtrack in the film performed a psychological function and colored the already pessimistic scenes in disturbing tones.

In the clip, the source of universal control on a planetary scale is a certain personality – the Lord- Ruler (Mike Shinoda played this role). The Lord-Ruler's habitat is located at the same time at a height, so that he can observe all events from above, and at the same time, the Lord is in a dark, armored room. The control center for the entire planet is located here. It is enough to wave the hand of the Lord-Ruler and on the

screens of the control center there are the destruction of cities, mass protests, the fall of planes, military clashes. In the final scene, the Lord-Ruler turns off the light, i.e. deprives the whole Earth of energy, and it plunges into complete darkness. It is impossible not to see that the Ruler of the world, as a source of such concentrated control, is only capable of generating chaos and destruction, and in the end this turns into the end of earthly civilization.

The clip "Fine" can be considered as a kind of visionary work, in which, a month before the onset of the twenties of the XXI century, premonitions of a pandemic, social unrest, and the increase in military clashes were reflected in an artistic form, which raised the issue of social control more acutely than ever. It is very symptomatic that the clip shows with great artistic persuasiveness that absolute, complete control on a planetary scale is possible provided that the earth's civilization is destroyed in general.

9. Conclusions

The relationship between chaos, the social expression of which is war, and control, the extreme form of which is totalitarianism, will be a key problem in the coming XXI century. Art very sensitively (and in different ways) anticipates and comprehends these collisions. In this sense, the Russian blockbuster "Blackout" is not the only example. In this sense, we can mention Denis Villeneuve's American film "Dune", which interprets the problem of both war and control in an epic way.

I would like to draw attention to the fact that the phenomenon of control in society is one of the oldest problems of civilizational development, but which has become particularly acute in modern conditions. The example of a reaction to the dialectic of chaos and control given in the article is also interesting because here we see not only a cinematic (director's) understanding, but also a musical image of global control created in the video by Mike Shinoda.

Notes

1) The term "social control" was first introduced into sociology by A. V. Small and J. E. Vincent in 1894.
2) The great historical utopia of the XX century – the world socialist system led by the USSR (1917-1991). The great literary utopias of the XX century are – Evgeny Zamyatin "We" (1920), John Orwell "1984" (1949), Aldous Huxley "Oh, brave new world" (1932).
3) The leading art of the epoch is any kind of the three types of art in which philosophical, aesthetic, mental and artistic features are embodied with the greatest completeness of epochs. There is a clear trend in the evolution of the leading arts: the older the epoch, the more in demand spatial arts are. They are the first to be mastered by man, in the future a transition to temporal arts is visible, when space turns out to be "exhausted" closed. In the postmodern era, the leading temporal arts are visualized. This is due to the emergence and presence of hyperreality, for which space is also time. Although music has not lost its leading role in the new century, however, the role of the youngest art form, cinema, is already growing.

Cinema, combining almost all of the well-known types of art and design elements, is becoming the most authentic art for the new century. In the art of cinema, one of the characteristic signs of modern culture clearly emerges. Like multifunctional objects of a technogenic environment, when the same object can be a telephone, a computer, a camera, etc. - cinema is just as "multifunctional" and it contains not only various types of art, but also the latest technical achievements. Currently, cinema is the most technogenic of all kinds of arts. Cinema is like a mirror in which all seven types of art are reflected, each of which participates in the creation of a cinematic image. However, in addition to various types of art in cinema, design is also a full participant. Hairstyles, makeup, make-up, costumes, interiors - sometimes it is thanks to the design that this or that tape captures the characteristic features of the artistic image of the film production.

See Francisca Foortai. "Philosophical Aspects of Fine Arts", St. Petersburg: LSU named after A. S. Pushkin, 2018– 172 p.

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