

## Mass and Elite Culture: Intercultural Communication and Values in the Context of the Formation of a Professional Image and Professional Competencies of a Cultural Scientist

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### ABSTRACT

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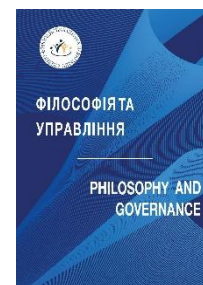
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The mechanisms of the mutual influence of elite and mass culture as a fundamental factor in the formation of a professional image and professional competencies of a modern cultural scientist are studied. The historical dynamics of the transformation of the cultural space from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day are analyzed. In particular, the evolution from the modernist experiments of P. Picasso, which retained a connection with the classical idea of the artist-genius, to the serial production of artistic objects by E. Warhol, which marked the complete assimilation of art by market relations, is traced. It is determined that in the conditions of global dominance of the middle cult, according to the concept of D. MacDonald, the cultural scientist performs the function of a mediator who provides a communicative connection between the art world and the mass audience. The methodological basis of the work was a comprehensive approach that combines the methods of hermeneutics, comparative studies and critical discourse analysis. It is proven that the professional competence of a cultural scientist requires the integration of interaction strategies at three levels: Inner cultural (personal life experience), Intracultural (intra-social experience) and Intercultural (international level), which is the key to effective cultural dialogue. It is emphasized that a modern specialist must have developed intercultural sensitivity, empathy and ethical communication skills, which is the key to cultural stability in the conditions of full-scale war and globalization challenges. The need to update the professional competencies of a cultural scientist aimed at fostering public trust and tolerance through effective strategies of intercultural interaction is substantiated. The emphasis is on the importance of critical thinking and academic reflection as tools for preserving the authenticity of culture in the era of standardized content, where the line between artistic depth and opportunistic product is becoming increasingly transparent. It is established that in the conditions of conscientious war, the cultural scientist becomes an important subject of brain deoccupation, responsible for strengthening the humanitarian basis of identity. The professional image of a cultural scientist-mediator is built on internal resistance to intellectual entropy and the ability to defend cultural values despite commercial demands and one-time fashion trends.

### KEYWORDS

elite culture, cultural scientist, mass culture, middle cult, intercultural communication, professional image.



## Масова та елітарна культура: міжкультурна комунікація і цінності в контексті формування професійного іміджу і фахових компетентностей культуролога

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### СТАТТЯ

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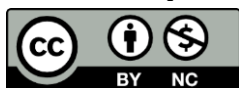
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У статті проведено міждисциплінарний огляд етичних та соціокультурних трансформацій людства. Це зроблено кризь призму еволюції культурних практик, від первісних анімістичних систем до сучасних викликів доби глобальної цифровізації та штучного інтелекту. Матеріал статті викладено за допомогою синтезу методів ретроспективного аналізу, історико-типологічного методу та семіотики культури. Такий підхід дозволив простежити генезу етичних регуляторів як складних знаково-символічних систем, а не лише продуктів технологічного прогресу. Наголошено на необхідності деконструкції концепту примітивності стосовно людських спільнот первісної культури. Аргументовано, що культурні практики того часу, зокрема наскельний живопис та ритуальні дії, слугували інструментами етичної медіації з довкіллям. За таких обставин тварини, рослини та елементи ландшафту сприймалися як повноправні суб'єкти міжвидової культурної взаємодії. Це світоглядне поле, описане через призму «нового анімізму», дозволяє розглядати первісність як систему іншої складності, вільну від жорсткого дуалізму суб'єкт-об'єкт. Далі ми зосередилися на аналітичному висвітленні «неолітичної революції» та виникнення перших давніх цивілізацій. Зазначено, що перехід до відтворюючого господарства, міського планування та монументальної архітектури ознаменував формування якісно нових соціальних ієрархій. Писемність, правові системи та спеціалізація праці постають як механізми легітимізації влади еліт. Водночас, це призвело до психологічного відчуження людини від природи та формування технологічної залежності цивілізації. У роботі обґрунтовано тезу про інерційність цивілізаційного поступу. Сучасна криза довіри до інституцій, екологічна деградація та моральний вакуум у сфері штучного інтелекту є прямими наслідками несвідомого відтворення неолітичних моделей агресії. Визначено, що для подолання сучасної ціннісної дезорієнтації необхідна не лише технологічна, а насамперед етична рефлексія. Вона має спиратися на інтеграцію історичного досвіду загальнозначущості та співпереживання. Ретроспективний аналіз первісних табу та ритуалів, розглянутих як давні механізми відповідальності перед нелюдськими суб'єктами, може слугувати джерелом для формування сучасних етичних орієнтирів. Обґрунтовується ідея цифрового анімізму, що висувається як потенційна стратегія гармонізації відносин між людиною, техногенним середовищем та штучним інтелектом. Акцентовано, що розуміння історичних закономірностей соціогенезу дозволяє подолати архаїчну інерцію мислення та сприяє розробці етичних регуляторів, здатних мінімізувати ризики дегуманізації у контексті глобалізованої віртуалізації соціальної реальності.



### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

елітарна культура, культуролог, масова культура, медіатор, міدل-культ, міжкультурна комунікація, професійний імідж.

## **1. Introduction**

If we look at the development of culture from a historical point of view, it is impossible to ignore the complex interdependence of its evolution under the influence of philosophical and aesthetic, scientific, political and social factors. In particular, the emergence and multifaceted progress of modern art is a completely natural consequence of these processes. Modernism as an artistic phenomenon arose in response to the rapid scientific, technical, and technological progress of the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries. This period was marked by several important achievements of mankind. In particular, the first biplane flight, made by the Wright brothers in 1900 in the USA, the creation of color photography by L. Lumière in France in 1907, and a year later, the first animated film was demonstrated there. Significant changes also took place in the socio-political sphere of that time: women in Great Britain received the right to vote in 1903, A. Einstein formulated the theory of relativity in 1915, S. Freud began to give lectures on psychoanalysis in 1916. As G. Adams metaphorically expressed the essence of the changes of the early twentieth century, “The dynamo machine took the place of the Virgin Mary.” M. Twain no less aptly characterized the worldview and cultural changes of the Western world, calling this time the “gilded age” [5, p. 75].

Such fundamental shifts not only radically changed the worldview of man. The very nature of cultural production was transformed, blurring the boundaries between high art and products of mass culture. In modern conditions, when the information space is oversaturated with standardized content, a new task faces the cultural scientist. It is necessary not only to identify artistic phenomena, but also to act as a mediator capable of maintaining the criteria of authenticity in the era of global middle-cult. In this process, the value orientations of the specialist become decisive. The cultural scientist must act as a bearer of ethical standards that enable a critical perception of reality. It is the internal resistance to intellectual degradation and the ability to defend cultural values that determine the ability of a modern cultural scientist to be an effective conductor between the elite art world and the mass audience.

## **2. Literature Review**

Image culture is the object of scientific attention of researchers from various fields, such as sociology, political science, cultural studies, and communications. Thus, we can speak of imageology as an interdisciplinary field of study [15]. Scientists analyze the processes of creating, maintaining, and changing cultural images through the media, art, literature, and public diplomacy, exploring their impact on national identity and international perception. The role of collective memory through its cultural representation also gains considerable importance [8]. The importance of cross-cultural communications in the modern world, especially for the formation of a country’s image, is increasingly attracting the attention of scientists [13]. The study of this topic covers aspects of representation, the spread of stereotypes, and the role of soft power in shaping the worldview of different cultures [2]. Along with this, researchers focus on the dynamics of cultural change under the influence of globalization and digital technologies, which transform the image into a complex, multi-level system [22].

In parallel, the fundamental discussion about the dichotomy of high and mass is set by the classic works of J. Ortega y Gasset and T. Adorno, who conceptualize the crisis of art in the conditions of industrialization [20; 21]. It is important to note the contribution of D. Howes to the study of cross-cultural consumption. His book, based on rich factual material, examines in detail the cultural consequences of globalization, issues of cultural imperialism, cultural representations, borders between cultures, and spaces for the creation of cultural innovations [12]. T. Kinsella rethinks the role of art in the processes of social transformations, focusing on its potential to influence social change. It is based on the idea, widespread among scientists and contemporary artists, about the ability of art, through beauty and aesthetics, to challenge established models of social interaction. In particular, art challenges itself to find answers to deep existential questions about the future of humanity. O. Kiiianlinna analyzed the epistemological and methodological aspects of evolutionary aesthetics, which is one of the concepts of evolutionary psychology. According to this theory, human aesthetic tastes and preferences are formed as a result of adaptation to the conditions of survival and reproductive strategies. The foundations of evolutionary aesthetics are largely based on Darwinian ideas, substantiating the connection between aesthetic feelings and biologically determined needs. In her work, the researcher identifies three main waves of the development of evolutionary aesthetics, noting that these trends are not rigidly separated in the spatio-temporal dimension, but rather form a smooth process of transition from one paradigm to

another. The scientist offers a structural analysis of each wave in the context of the relationship between them and the corresponding socio-cultural environment that influenced their formation [14]. The views of V. Drotenko, who considered the ideological and aesthetic transformations that took place in the art of the 20th and early 21st centuries, are unanimous. As the author notes, the conceptual changes on this path were the synthesis of arts in the early 20th century, the rethinking of modern aesthetic principles in the 1960s, the synthesis of arts, postmodern trends in philosophy, and the processes of virtualization of the world in the early 21st century [5].

Understanding cultural challenges is impossible without taking into account the experience of migration processes, as discussed in the study by L. Mayblin and J. Turner [18]. It is also worth mentioning the work of J. Hartley, which directs the reader to the analysis of the fundamental concepts of communication and cultural studies through the perspective of media development and their impact, including on the educational process in different regions of the world [10]. W. B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim focused on approaches to intercultural communication, on the "concept of the stranger" [9].

Despite a significant amount of research in the field of imageology and cultural theory, the problem of the professional image of the cultural specialist himself in the conditions of dominance of intermediate cultural forms remains insufficiently covered. This actualizes the need to combine academic reflection with the practices of modern communication to identify new professional competencies capable of ensuring effective mediation in a globalized environment.

### **3. Problem Statement**

In the conditions of a full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, the issues of cultural stability and strategies of intercultural interaction acquire special importance, becoming an integral part of state security and the formation of an influential subject in the international arena. The problem of intercultural education is becoming more urgent, which in the globalized world is transformed from a purely pedagogical task into a strategic tool of social integration.

The complexity of the task lies in the need to balance between mastering world experience, preserving one's own historical tradition, and developing language and communicative competencies. For a modern culturologist as a professional mediator, these challenges mean the need to form such qualities as intercultural sensitivity, empathy, and the ability to operate with ethical norms of communication, in particular, compliance with political correctness and understanding of cultural taboos. In the conditions of the Ukrainian War of Independence, the issues of cultural stability and strategies of intercultural interaction were transformed from a humanitarian aspect into a component of state security. Today, there is a gap between the academic theory of cultural studies and the real demand of society for the formation of a protected cultural space. We have a dialectical contradiction. On the one hand, the globalized middle-cult through the mechanisms of mass communication levels authentic meanings, offering standardized simulacra; on the other hand, an exhausting conscientious war continues, which, among other things, requires the specialist-culturist to have the ability to influence people's consciousness by conveying cultural meanings and values to form and strengthen the humanitarian foundation of society.

The cultural scientist is faced with the need to go beyond traditional theorizing and become an effective mediator, capable of integrating world experience (Intercultural) with local tradition, while maintaining internal resistance to intellectual simplification. There is a need to rethink the professional image of a specialist as a strategic subject, capable of implementing communicative strategies in conditions of high turbulence and the struggle for the cultural subjectivity of Ukraine.

### **4. Methods and Materials**

The methodological basis of the study is a comprehensive approach that provides a multifaceted analysis of cultural processes and the professional activity of a cultural scientist. The study is based on a combination of the methods of hermeneutics, comparability, critical discourse analysis, and a systemic approach. Systematic analysis of the levels of cultural perception (Inner cultural, Intracultural, Intercultural) allows you to integrate personal experience, social identity, and international cultural concepts into a single model of professional competence of a modern cultural scientist. The hermeneutic method is applied to the interpretation of works of art as carriers of cultural meanings. In particular, this approach was used to analyze the creative activity of P. Picasso and E. Warhol, which made it

possible to trace the evolution of the role of the artist from a genius-demiurge to a subject of serial cultural production and to determine the influence of their practices on the formation of the visual space of the 20th – early 21st centuries. Comparative analysis allowed us to compare the conceptual approaches of J. Ortega y Gasset, T. Adorno, U. Eco and D. McDonald. This revealed the dialectical tension between high art and mass product, and also allowed us to theoretically substantiate the phenomenon of middle cult as an intermediate space in which the main struggle for the aesthetic values of modernity takes place. Critical discourse analysis was used to study modern communicative practices, representations of cultural images, and mechanisms of manipulation in the globalized media space. This method helped to analyze the challenges of conscientious war and the processes of forming worldview narratives in the current conditions.

The material basis of the study is theoretical works on cultural studies, art history, image studies, and intercultural communication, which conceptualize the dichotomy of high and mass in culture.

This combination of fundamental theoretical sources and empirical cases allows us to ensure the integrity of the research and justify the need to update the professional image of the cultural scientist as an intermediary capable of conveying cultural values to a wide audience, taking into account the different levels of cultural perception of the audience.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

An interesting vision of the history of the 20th century was offered by the historian E. Hobsbawm, who called this period a “historical triptych” or “sandwich”, pointing to its complex duality [11, p. 15]. Such a metaphor successfully emphasizes the heterogeneity of the cultural and philosophical dynamics of modernism. From the perspective of changes in the attitude towards art, which gradually lost its elitism and acquired the features of mass culture, new aesthetic ideas about the role and functions of art were formed. These changes became the object of deep reflections of leading thinkers of the 20th century. Among them, the most prominent figures are J. Ortega y Gasset [20; 21] and T. Adorno [1]. Based on their life experience and intellectual heritage, each of them proposed fundamental philosophical and aesthetic concepts that significantly influenced the development of art theory and remain relevant to this day. The theoretical achievements of these thinkers were reflected in the work of iconic artists such as P. Picasso and E. Warhol, who not only established a new artistic paradigm with their works, but also demonstrated its universality and multifacetedness.

For example, the creative legacy of P. Picasso is the embodiment of the artistic revolution of the 20th century. A supporter of the Dada and Surrealist movements, the artist was also part of this movement, but also became the leader of Cubism, drawing inspiration from geometric forms. In his works, he explored various aspects of human life: female sexuality in *Les Femmes d'Alger* and the horrors of war in *Guernica*. A series of works that include *The Weeping Woman* introduces us to Dora Maar, who first appears as his muse. One of the most famous works of the Blue Period, *The Old Guitarist*, vividly reflects his deep emotional world. A characteristic feature of P. Picasso's work is that he is not just an artist, but also a prominent figure in the art world, a true cultural icon. Throughout his career, he has repeatedly appeared in cinema, starting with the 78-minute documentary by Henri-Georges Clouzot, which details the process of creating his works of art and gives viewers a unique opportunity to look into the creative workshop of one of the most outstanding artists of the 20th century. In the National Geographic series “Genius” in 2018, the role of P. Picasso was played by Antonio Banderas. The film focuses not so much on the artist's artistic legacy as on his bright temperament and passionate personal life [24].

Andy Warhol is a cult figure in contemporary art and, undoubtedly, one of the most mysterious and controversial personalities in the artistic space of the second half of the 20th century. His work covered a variety of fields. He was engaged in painting, illustration, design, sculpture, writing, production, cinema, and publishing. Although E. Warhol was not the founder of the pop art movement, it was he who made the American version of this artistic direction world-famous and significant. Pop art as a style is distinguished by the use of images of mass consumer goods and everyday objects. Instead of the classical canons of fine art, pop art suggests shifting the emphasis to the demonstration of elements of mass culture and the material world. One of the most recognizable works of E. Warhol is his painting depicting a can of Campbell's tomato soup, which has become a symbol of the combination of art and commerce in a cultural context. The most expensive among Andy Warhol's paintings today remains his work “Silver Car Crash”. The canvas was sold at auction in November 2013 for \$ 105.4

million. The second position is occupied by a silkscreen called "Eight Elvises", which was purchased in October 2008 for \$100 million. It is followed by "Triple Elvis", sold for \$81.9 million, and "Turquoise Marilyn", sold for \$80 million [23].

If the work of P. Picasso, with his experiments with form, still retained a connection with the classical idea of the artist-genius, then E. Warhol made a radical turn, transforming the very mechanism of art creation into mass production. The figure of E. Warhol and his commercial success became a vivid illustration of how art is finally assimilated by mass culture, becoming part of market relations. According to L. Cheshire, "Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup shocked art critics and the public of the time, but fierce debates around this work are still going on. Following in the footsteps of artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Robert Rauschenberg, Warhol began to create art generated by chance and technology, which seemed to have been completely untouched by the artist's hand" [3].

The concept of mass culture covers a wide range of meanings and phenomena. This phenomenon also includes aspects such as fashion, popular consumer goods, the entertainment industry, literature, music and even cooking. Mass culture is democratic in nature, since it appeals to all social strata of the population, without distinction of class, nationality or economic status. Moreover, thanks to modern means of mass communication, everyone has access to a significant number of artistic works of high aesthetic value. Thus, mass culture can be understood as a set of phenomena and values chosen and supported by the majority of society [16]. In the second half of the 20th century, the opposition high/low in relation to culture began to lose its rigidity. In his 1964 essay "Apocalyptic and Integrated," U. Eco proposed abandoning snobbery regarding mass culture, instead calling for reflection on how the intellectual elite and artists can convey cultural values to the masses, shape tastes, and influence the aesthetic development of society [6].

Hence the need to understand the phenomenon of middle culture (a term coined by D. MacDonald). This is an intermediate space where the intellectual demands of society meet the aesthetics of accessibility. Middle culture offers the viewer the illusion of involvement in high meanings through understandable forms, which is a defining challenge for the modern cultural scientist. Understanding the mechanisms of formation of this intermediate culture allows the specialist not only to analyze cultural processes, but also to effectively navigate the complex strategies of translating cultural meanings in a globalized society. D. MacDonald's concept becomes the theoretical basis for modern research, since it is in this space that a professional cultural scientist most often works, balancing between the quality and accessibility of content. D. MacDonald analyzed three types of culture. First of all, this is high culture, to which he includes not only opera and ballet and what requires a certain appearance and norms of behavior: "A work of high culture is the embodiment of feelings, ideas, tastes and visions that are distinguished by their uniqueness, and the audience perceives them accordingly – as separate individuals" [17]. The researcher includes P. Picasso, E. Poe, I. Stravinsky and J. Joyce among such individuals. Even J. G. Byron and C. Dickens, who would seem to deserve more, turn out to be representatives of mid-culture, since they responded to the demands of the market. For D. MacDonald, middle culture is not so much a productive synthesis as a dangerous imitation. He warns that the main threat of middle culture lies in its ambiguity. It defiantly masquerades as high culture, parasitizing on its aesthetic achievements, while selling banal and standardized meanings to the audience. According to the critic, the "warm sludge of middle culture" permeates all spheres of life, from academic publications and intellectual clubs to Hollywood cinema and literary bestsellers. Works that use avant-garde techniques only to decorate banality blur the boundaries between artistic depth and opportunistic product [17].

For a cultural scientist, D. MacDonald's position is an extremely valuable tool for critical analysis. It helps to distinguish a genuine artistic innovation from its middle-cultural copy. In this context, the professional competence of a cultural scientist lies in the ability to reflect on this disguise. A specialist must not only identify middle-cultural products. It is necessary to understand the mechanisms by which they become popular. Accordingly, and critically assess their impact on the aesthetic development of society. In contrast to the idealized consumption of high art, where a work is an expression of the author's unique feelings, middle-cult offers a safe, comfortable illusion of belonging to an elite world, which poses a challenge for modern cultural studies: how to maintain the criteria of authenticity in a globalized space without losing touch with a wide audience? The professional activity of a cultural scientist in the conditions of globalization requires the ability not only to navigate complex media flows. It is necessary to be able to defend the values of cultural pluralism, ensuring a dialogue between local identities and the globalized mainstream. As V. Sheiko aptly noted, it is worth considering that cultural

exchange has two closely related components: cooperation and competition. The latter, even if its essence is hidden, can manifest itself even more sharply than in the political or economic spheres. States and peoples, like individuals, are often guided by selfish motives, seeking to preserve and expand the influence of their own culture, as well as use the achievements of other countries in their interests [25].

The relevance of such a dialogue is reinforced by global demographic transformations. Over the past two decades, demographic changes have significantly influenced the growth of racial and ethnic diversity in the global workforce. According to Global Demographics, the demographic map of the world demonstrates a significant imbalance. About 60% of the population is Asian, 14% African, and 11% European, while the share of North Americans is only 5% [19, p. 153]. The figures given show that the cultural landscape of today has ceased to be Eurocentric. For a specialist in cultural studies, this means the need to revise professional tools. The ability to work with a multicultural environment is becoming a basic professional competence. In conditions dominated by global flows of information and entertainment content, a cultural scientist must act as a mediator capable of transforming demographic diversity into cultural dialogue, avoiding both Westernization and isolationism or excessive Orientalism. Thus, the formation of the professional image of a cultural scientist today is inextricably linked with the ability to demonstrate intercultural empathy and understand the specifics of values inherent in different regions of the world. To better understand cultural challenges in the educational environment and to develop effective cultural education strategies, it is necessary to consider that there are several levels of cultural perception. The "Inner cultural" level refers to personal life experience, which is formed through interaction within the family, communication with brothers, sisters, or other family members. It also covers differences between families in the same settlement, religious community, school or workplace. The "Intracultural" level is not related to the direct life experience of the individual, but is based on the experience gained within a single society. It includes factors that include racial or ethnic origin, religious or gender identity, appearance, or socio-economic status. The "Intercultural" level refers to cultural concepts at the international level and analyzes the interaction between representatives of different countries and cultures. These levels do not exist separately. On the contrary, they are closely intertwined and mutually influence each other, creating a comprehensive understanding of cultural features and challenges in cultural education [7].

Analysis of the scientific and theoretical achievements of the second half of the 20th – early 21st centuries demonstrates that the implementation of intercultural education strategies in the educational process was often reactive, not proactive. Today, in the conditions of globalization, glocalization and unprecedented migration processes, traditional approaches to intercultural communication require immediate renewal. For Ukraine, which is experiencing the consequences of a full-scale war, the development of educational programs requires a holistic approach that integrates the levels of Inner cultural, Intracultural and Intercultural interaction.

Of particular importance in this period is the worldview and ideological dimension of intercultural education, aimed at counteracting the war of conscience, the war on the destruction of consciousness, and overcoming its consequences, in particular through the processes of brain de-occupation. The challenges facing modern education, from the emotional burnout of the teaching staff to the urgent need for new professional competencies, require a rethinking of the role of the cultural scientist. In this system of coordinates, the cultural scientist ceases to be just a theorist, but instead becomes a key subject capable of responding to the complex socio-cultural challenges of war and predicting strategies for post-war reconstruction and strengthening the humanitarian framework of identity and subjectivity. An analysis of the cultural scientist's activities in the context of contradictions between elite, mass and middle culture shows that the specialist today operates under conditions of high responsibility. His professional image is determined not only by the ability for analytical reflection, but also by the skills of strategic management of cultural meanings, which is extremely important for strengthening national and cultural identity and counteracting destructive information influences.

## **6. Conclusions**

The transformation of the cultural space of the second half of the 20th – early 21st centuries and its impact on the formation of professional competencies of a modern cultural scientist are analyzed. The study showed that the transition from the modernist search for an artistic form to the postmodernist commercialization of art created a new landscape, where the boundaries between high

and mass became transparent, and the concept of middle-cult turned into the dominant environment of cultural communication.

In the conditions of globalization, demographic shifts and full-scale war, the role of a cultural scientist was transformed from an academic observer to an active subject-mediator. The professional competence of a modern specialist integrates the ability to perform hermeneutic analysis of artistic codes, critical reflection on the mechanisms of mass consumption, and skills to work in a multicultural environment, based on the understanding of the Inner, Intracultural, and Intercultural levels of interaction.

It is proven that the conscientious war has exposed the need for such a specialist-culturologist, who is a core subject of influence on the consciousness and worldview of people. A modern professional culturologist is largely responsible for the formation of a humanitarian framework of identity.

His professional image is determined not only by the ability to analyze a cultural product of various kinds, but also by internal resistance to the depreciation of truly significant and iconic achievements of culture and cultural heritage, the ability to defend cultural values despite commercial demands or the desires of an undemanding public, and effectively counteract destructive informational influences. Thus, a modern culturologist is a filter of authenticity that provides a communicative connection between the art world and the mass audience, acting as a guarantor of the preservation of the cultural subjectivity of the state in conditions of global turbulence.

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