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HOW REFLECTION OF UNIVERSAL VALUES IN THE MOVIES INFLUENCES INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Єрьомін М. Б. Як відображення універсальних цінностей у кінематографі впливає на міжнародну комунікацію

У статті мова йде про те, як відображення універсальних цінностей в аудіовізуальних медіа (наприклад, кінематографі) впливає на міжнародну політичну комунікацію у якості як чинника, так і результату. Пропонується низка прикладів, пов'язаних з головною метою статті – наголосити на зростаючій необхідності комплексного вивчення впливу популярної культури на загальнолюдську етику через емоційне апелювання до універсальних цінностей.

Ключові слова: міжнародна політична комунікація, універсальний код кінематографу, універсальні цінності, аудіовізуальний контент, кінематограф.

Universal values are often addressed in conjunction with many scientific approaches in philosophy, political science, sociology and psychology. And yet, somehow the term seems to be rather vaguely described in all of them, leaving a lot to desire for those, who will address the concept in their theoretical and practical assignments. For some indiscriminant reason depiction of universal values in culture on a global scale rarely sparks the interest of political science, despite how global and overwhelming certain aspects of popular culture may be in the age of global networks and digital revolution. Of course, «popular» and «universal» are not equal concepts and yet, there seems to be just a right amount of similarity in two of them to be very effective in combined efforts, as proven by massive popular music concerts dedicated to global problems, which raise money to fight global problems and/or dedicated to spread awareness of such problems. An example of such concert was held by ANTIAIDS foundation on September 12, 2008 – a grandiose free concert by famed rock band Queen gathered an audience of 350,000 people in the central square of Kharkiv.

But the impact was doubled by the fact that on December 1, 2008 filmed version of the concert was released in cinemas all over Ukraine. As the founder of ANTIAIDS Olena Pinchuk (known at the time as Elena Franchuk) put it: «We're trying to involve as many people as possible in the fight against AIDS in Ukraine. Our awareness projects were built on music, paintings and fashion. And now, it is time for cinema. It is vital for our work as Movie Theater is a place where young people spend their time, meaning that we can reach them there» [2]. Queen at the time were, of course, no strangers to audiovisual media themselves – often credited for single-handedly making music video a regular practice for record companies with 1975's «Bohemian Rhapsody»; they also extended their influence to feature films in 1980's, writing score for «Flash Gordon» (dir. Mike Hodges, written by Lorenzo Semple Jr. and Michael Allin, based on the characters created by Alex Raymond, Starling Films, Dino De Laurentiis Company, 1980) and, more commonly known, original songs for a cult film «Highlander» (dir. Russell Mulcahy, written by Gregory Widen, Peter Bellwood and Larry Ferguson from a story by Gregory Widen, Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment, Highlander Productions Limited, Davis-Panzer Productions, 1986) [9]. It feels natural that this time their influence was protracted to an audio-visual form as well, but why was it so crucial to re-release the concert as a cinematic feature film? The answer is not something to be formulated easily, but it may be theorized that Queen's international appeal transcends well through a certain universal code of movies – certain components of audiovisual media which could be comprehended and de-ciphered regardless of language or cultural background. Such a *quasi-concept* may be combined well with universal values, itself a concept which feels underformulated.

The purpose of this article is to show how reflection of universal values in movies influences international political communication (including through the means of universal code of movies), but it also has a goal to show how universal values could be structural elements of such a code, as well.

While the term *universal code of movies* was coined by author of this article as a temporary quasi-concept to illustrate the formulated axioms, including those of the article «Universality of movies in the international political communication»[14], universal values, on the other hand is a term that has been around for decades, and yet seems to thoroughly lack quite a few key defining moments, sparking a wide discussion in academic circles, usually used in philosophy and psychology. Political studies, while acknowledging

existence of the term are visibly reluctant to use it, perhaps due to a severe lack of unified theoretical approach, which is much more tolerated in the afore-mentioned disciplines, because it is usually connected with concepts of morals and morality. Never the less, in his lecture on global ethics delivered on December 12, 2003 in Tübingen University, Germany and named «Do We Still Have Universal Values?» then-Secretary-General of UN Kofi Annan stated that «values of peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights and human dignity, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are no less valid today than when, over half a century ago, those documents were drafted by representatives of many different nations and cultures» [1]. The same year a second, paperback print of Francis Fukuyama's book «Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution» was published. It also argued that inability of isolation of any part of a human society in a modern world makes a certain set of universal values crucially needed for normal functioning [6]. What was stated by two key figures in the world of international politics in 2003 is still relevant thirteen years later. Certain concepts of political theories such as multiculturalism are trying to preserve variety of cultural and social systems by also reaching some universal elements. In other words they're attempting to combine humanity through the means of complex values which should be understood anywhere.

The most common and complex attempt at classification of such values was created by Shalom Schwartz [7]. Series of studies he had conducted in 1992 (which included surveys of more than 25,000 people in 44 countries) narrowed a number of specific values in the countries with different cultural types down to fifty-six, which were further narrowed down to ten types of universal values. Those included *power*, *achievement*, *hedonism*, *stimulation*, *self-direction*, *universalism*, *benevolence*, *tradition*, *conformity* and *security* [12]. Eleventh possible universal value tested by Schwartz, titled «*spirituality*» or «*the goal of finding meaning of life*» was considered not recognizable in all cultures [10].

If popular culture headlined by audiovisual media may propose its own eleventh universal value, which could be more or less understood in any country of the world it may be, paradoxically enough, *death*. While usually values are classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic [15], death may be classified as both because of how complex the concept is and how much meanings it may have in the field of culture. Death may be perceived as an unavoidable tragedy and may be, as well perceived as a logical ending and maxima of life itself, a crucial moment which signifies whether human being did anything important in his/her life or not. In this way death is connected to both *achievement* and *security*, but universal values are pretty much all connected to one another in some way, so that's not the point. The reason why movies of all genres often feature death as some sort of plot-driving narrative point could be theorized such way: death, if not having a universal complex meaning for any human being, still holds a lot of universal aspects which are easily connected to emotions. And emotions are used by movies to start a dialog with the audience, a dialog which is not held in any language, but is, instead, held in thoughts and emotions, with the emphasis on the latter provoking the former. The fact that 2008 concert by Queen was a charity concert to spread awareness and attract people's minds to the problem of AIDS may also be connected to *death* as a universal value: preventing death from HIV virus is impossible as it will, after all strengthen natural conditions which will lead to the death anyway; but giving a needed treatment to HIV-positive may prolong his/her life substantially and this prolongation will be of much value. Moreover, person can give a meaning to his death as HIV-positive late lead singer of Queen Freddie Mercury did, establishing spreading the awareness of AIDS as one of the key points of his diverse legacy.

In the *universal code of movies* death may have a lot of meanings, but if it lacks one it definitely shows. James Douglas's review of 2015 big budget British-American-Icelandic-Nepali co-production «Everest» (dir. Baltasar Kormákur, written by William Nicholson and Simon Beaufoy, Working Title Films, RVK Studios, Walden Media, Universal Pictures, Cross Creek Pictures, 2015) makes an interesting point that as the movie based on true events «struggles to say anything meaningful about those deaths, the film becomes a surprising reminder that death itself resists meaning», also noting that «death has an absurdity that can't always be reified in story. But this is not to say that such events couldn't be dramatized at all» [4]. On another end of spectrum is British-American-Israeli co-production made thirty years before – «Death Wish 3» (dir. Michael Winner, written by Don Jakoby, based on characters by Brian Garfield, Cannon Group, Golan-Globus Productions, 1985) which, being an action movie with a rather ridiculous, unrealistically violent body count was initially panned by critics but then became a cult movie, quite often praised for its satirical overtones, that may or may not be intentional. Mark Tinta's 2015 review mentions that movie is highly quotable (immediately giving the example), a crucial thing for a cult film, which often signifies audience's emotional involvement in the film, quotes themselves being some kind of emotional code using which people

may attract new audience to it, or recognize another people who had seen it and share the emotion [13]. It is of note that values themselves were proclaimed by S. Schwartz to be «tied inextricably to emotion» [11].

But quote, usually, is derived from movie's textual basis, something that may change drastically upon the translation. What should be noted in both cases of «Everest» and «Death Wish 3» is the fact that, as different as they are, they share a few things in common – co-production between a few different countries, multiple death scenes and a plot which could be comprehended rather easily without lines at all, relying on audiovisual sublingual components. Considering that movies were made in an international co-production they are examples of international communication themselves, but the question is – whether they're suitable examples to talk about as examples of international political communication? As a matter of fact, at least «Death Wish 3» may be, because of how drastically it changes a portrait of the protagonist, Paul Kersey, who was politically liberal in the very different and much more serious first movie of a franchise, «Death Wish» (dir. Michael Winner, written by Wendell Mayes, based on the novel by Brian Garfield, Dino De Laurentiis Company, Paramount Pictures, 1974) which was produced and filmed solely in the United States of America [3]. It may be argued that international nature of «Death Wish 3» production values may have directly or indirectly changed and/or influenced its approach at handling political overtones of the film. And if that was the case with «Death Wish 3», «Everest» may have been in similar situation due to international co-production. The point is that it is hard to tell, because political science at this point in time had never really tried to research movies systematically as something that may be cause, reason or both for the international political communication. Nor is it ready to answer the question how much universal values influence such a communication, being fueled by popular culture to begin with. And such concepts as «death» which could be viewed as a universal value are featured hard in our popular culture, including media mostly aimed for children, which, as known director Tim Burton pointed, is not necessarily a bad thing [5] – it depends as well on the basis of what values the appeal has been made to the public.

Such questions may not seem crucial and in terrible need for an answer right now, but nor anybody publically suspected thirty years later that «Death Wish 3» will be viewed as a political satire and not just an action movie. The same fate may await the new evolutionary state of audiovisual media in our time, where new media and internet have suddenly become incredibly popular outlets and are channeling both information and cultural content to millions, spreading the awareness of any situation, including political one, in mere hours on a global scale. And global scales require global ethics, for which universal values are crucial, as they were when Kofi Annan noted this in 2003. The question is that until we put a lot of time and effort in the research of how exactly popular culture influences global ethics through such post-modern outlets as the universal code of movies we can only catch glimpses of that influence, usually when it had already occurred. And it may have caused a lot of harm on international scale as well, one we cannot perceive due to lack of research and determination to do one. Such harm could be prevented in the future, if popular culture and mainly audiovisual media would be regarded as a serious matter, influencing international political communication.

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Ерёмин Н. Б. *Как отражение универсальных ценностей в кинематографе влияет на международную коммуникацию*

В статье идет речь о том, как отражение универсальных ценностей в аудиовизуальном медиа (например, фильмах) влияет на международную коммуникацию в качестве как причины, так и следствия. Примеры такого влияния преподносятся в статье, будучи связанными с главной её целью – подчеркнуть растущую необходимость комплексного изучения влияния популярной культуры на глобальную этику через эмоциональное апеллирование к универсальным ценностям.

Ключевые слова: *международная коммуникация, универсальные ценности, универсальный код кинематографа, аудиовизуальный контент, кинематограф.*

Yeromin M.B. *How Reflection of Universal Values in the Movies Influences International Communication*

Article dwells upon how reflection of universal values in the audiovisual media (eg. movies) influences international communication as both cause and a result of such. Examples of such an influence are presented in the article sharing a certain connection to the main purpose of the article – to emphasize the growing need of a complex research of influence of the popular culture on global ethics through emotional appeal of universal values.

Key words: *international communication, universal code of movies, universal values, audiovisual content, movies.*