

“AXIAL AGE” OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION: CHANGE OF CIVILIZATION MATRICES

Recently, comprehension of the alarming fact is becoming the nerve center of published works and scientific conferences: the world is going through the “fateful moments” – the approaching peak of the global crisis exceeds the “Axial Age” in the history of human civilization in its scales and consequences². The European crisis is the vanguard of the world crisis, in which the catastrophe expansion vector is manifested more acutely and more openly.

“Rescue projects” worked out in the positivist knowledge system lose their feasibility in the established socio-psychological and spiritual context, at the same time the discourse of religious character and following the esoteric tradition, combining rational arguments and irrational ways to penetrate the logic of metahistory (like “The Revelation of St. John the Divine”), demonstrates more and more opportunities to comprehend what’s going on and understand prospects of the things to come. And this is natural and in conformity with certain laws – if the rationalistic method of obtaining knowledge corresponded to the periods of “linear” historical development, understanding the “catastrophe time” requires different methods. The “historical optimism” of the humans of the modern times is an obstacle to understanding the tragedy of the experienced moment – belief in progress,

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² The following certifies intensification of trends threatening the existence of mankind: terrorism expansion and armed conflicts in the Middle East; new stage of the Cold War waged by the West against Russia; “Voelkerwanderung”, or the great migration of people and failure of the multiculturalism policy; political and economic integration crisis within the EU borders, strengthening economic inequality of the common European market and pushing aside the countries of the South-Eastern and Central Europe; weakening of nation states; liberal democracy crisis.

inviolability of the habitual world's existence³. Global catastrophe is made closer not only by objective factors but also by catastrophic conscience – mass apocalyptic moods which provoke the “catastrophilia complex” (as a rule, preceding global upheavals – A. Nazaretyan). “In all times humans were badly adapted to prospects of their cultural system's death. The horror here is not physical but metaphysical. ... Psychological and existential attachment to one's culture is too great. But it will be required to drain this cup of life”⁴. Really, national (“native”) culture for a man is similar to his parents' house in which not only the first birth but also the second, the most important in its essence – metaphysical birth of an individual take place (N. Berdyaev). This house provides primary socialization and inter-generation transition of socio-cultural experience, gives lessons in love, kindness and understanding, generates the feeling of being protected which helps individual to sustain strokes of misfortune. “Culture at the level of deep psychological mindsets blocks comprehension of one's mortality in historical time, answering vague metaphysic individual's anxiety by various formulas like: everything will be OK, everything will get well, everything will return back to normal, etc. These suggestions and infusions are so strong that even the thought of one's own death is more bearable for an individual than the thought about the death of culture, which he pushes away exerting all efforts and as a rule at the price of losing adequate perception of the reality”⁵.

The issues of the European civilization's crisis are especially drastically presented in recently published humanitarian texts which become a kind of prophecies of the “end of history”. The ideas and practices of “negative anthropologism” become more and more popular, postmodernism discourse, run through by energies of negativism and pessimism, is gaining momentum. The pathos of anxiety, negativism, perplexity or militant nihilism dominate in the contemporary

³ On the other hand, the humanitarian knowledge of the “spiritual revolutions” era becomes not only the means for cognizing the world but also a way to construct reality – the created in the humanitarian thought space images of the world and projects for its improvement become “self-realized prophecy”.

⁴ Pelipenko A. The Russian Matrix: the Final Journey // Ostrog (almanac). February, 2017. P.5. URL: https://vk.com/doc354704131_441745887.

⁵ Pelipenko A. Op. cit., P.6

humanitarian discourse (metaphorical constructions, fixing anthropological crisis, self-identity crisis, existential vacuum, exhaustiveness of energies, “Auschwitz situation” have become typical for philosophical discourse). The central idea of such forecasts is that today’s European civilization is entering a new stage – the *post-modern age* which rejects the key characteristics of the previous modern age.

In our opinion, this forecast does not fully reflect the whole range and deepness of the approaching changes. The matter is that “linear” methodology of analysis (and respective thinking that views every next stage as negation or development of the previous one) does not explain the essence of everything taking place in this case. One can say, judging by the aggregate global trends and common civilization processes that the world is entering (to be more exact, returning to) the cultural epoch which the mankind overcame with difficulties and pains approximately 2–3 thousand years ago. It was the historical period (Karl Jaspers named it the Axial Age) when outstanding thinkers (philosophers, poets from Ancient Greece, Biblical prophets) managed to make a fundamental metaphysical revolution in human conscience: they challenged the impious and senseless pagan world immersed in “delusions”; they severed the things in existence and the due demonstrating sinfulness and imperfection of the man and the world which required transformation. The “Axial Age” on global scales forms the cultural matrix which in relation to the pagan world serves as an “anti-system” – “comprehending the fallaciousness of the ontology”, it strives to blow it up, “change it in a revolutionary way”⁶. Outstanding religious and ethical doctrines of that time devaluated the archaic consciousness, establishing the cult of Logos (Word, Book), which become the main tool to fight “pagan chaos”. The great achievement of the “Axial Age” is establishment of rationalism principles in the mentality structure which later become the foundation of thinking techniques based on formalized rules, development of reflection as a way to self-test the rightfulness of

⁶ “The difference of spirit from the reality is that ‘the spirit carries in itself the thought of the other’. The other is what is not experienced (in contrast to reality), this is what is given in zero experience. Thus, the spirit in its essence is focused on the beyond-reality”. See: Jemal G. Orientation – the North. http://www.metakultura.ru/vgora/nord/nord_1.htm

thought turned not only to the thinking process (logic) but also its results in words (poetry, rhetoric).

The great philosophers and prophets of the “Axial Age” formed the spiritual human contours by their texts and preaching – that “indivisible atom”, which provided the world’s stability and “vertical” striving of humans “to heaven” for more than two thousand years. The world coming out of ancient civilizations is different. The man for the first time begins to comprehend the scales of being, understand himself and his limits, transcendental worlds and depths of self-consciousness, he is now able to take good from evil, viewing these energies as a projection into the earthly dimension of the universal world antipodes – God and the Devil. There originates the phenomenon of “conversion” into a religion, belief or philosophical doctrine, with the proceeding from that meanings of life and behavioral standards. Religious morals acquire a personal character – the human is for the first time granted a great freedom of choice of the meaning of being in the spiritual sphere that gives him a chance to get out of the “clan bondage”.

Today we witness nearly a mystic inevitability of the “evolution spiral” when the rejected returns its rights and winners are defeated. To say it differently, the logocentric “Culture of Prophets”, which in those far-off times made a metaphysical revolution and rejected the “Culture of Priests”⁷, has systemically exhausted its potential by today (and first of all in the spiritual sphere and objective creativity), and the metaphysical vacuum that formed in its place attracts the “Culture of Priests”, the powerful life-asserting elements of which have waited for their hour to come for thousands of years. Heathenry is Space of its kind, which was arranged and adjusted by the harmony of relations of man and nature, the instinct for preservation of the “set forth ontology”, with its order and hierarchy, “natural religion” and tradition,

⁷ The concept of two metaphysics dichotomy in the history of mankind was substantiated by Geidar Jemal. – See: Zharinov S. The Herald of the Radically Different. URL:<http://poistine.org/qlashatay-radikalno-inogo>.

myth and ritual (G. Jemal), forms of ways of intuitive comprehension of the macro- and micro-world laws⁸.

The pendulum-like change of anthropologic and cultural matrices in big historical time is preconditioned by the phenomenon of “cultural and field induction” that acts as an “unseen channel” for storage and transmission of the “quintessence of historical experience” of the mankind (A. Pelipenko). In the environment of “involutional rolling-back”, the dominating cultural programs start “losing” their energy potential and become outdated, not demanded. But they do not disappear fully from the dramatic arena of history – under the pressure of reviving matrices of the rival system they “are pushed aside” – they go into “the shade of collective subconscious” and wait for their time there. The leading role in the basis of mechanisms of other cultural paradigms’ being in demand is played by mental matrices of the subject of culture: intentions (impulses) emanated from the “field space of culture” can be “here” read by structures of certain ontological order and level of complexity of “receiving devices and adjustments”. Only those potential characteristics of the phenomenon that are “relevant” to the ontological nature of the “communications agent” are objectified (expressed) “here and now” – their “revival” takes place as a result of resonance with the intentional and empathic impulse of the “call”⁹. Really, “Call, call the night darkness, and the darkness will come” (V. Shalamov) – we’re capable to call from the potential world only that which is in accordance with existential layers of our mentality and nature of our domineering view of life (good calling good, love to the world and people is returned with increased energy of love, and hatred and evil are capable to bring about only similar energies).

Today, like in the times of the Old Testament, the world is going through a period of *theogony*: change of civilization paradigm. The previous historical and

⁸ It’s not accidental that many artists and thinkers of the 20th century demonstrated evident interest in esoteric teachings, they tried to master the wisdom of the East, the essence of religious and mythological images, understand the sources and nature of astrology and alchemy.

⁹ Pelipenko A.A. *Psychosphere //Seven Arts*. 2011, No. 1. URL:<http://7iskusstv.com/2011/Nomer1/Pelipenko1.php>

cultural model exhausted itself, and this exhaustion is taken (both in humanitarian knowledge and mass conscience) as a spiritual crisis, “metaphysical void” (Oswald Spengler). The main verification of the crisis of 1.5-thousand-year-old European world is the increasing urgency of cultural and anthropological problems. Humanitarian knowledge fixes at least five problematic zones: threat to national cultures as value-and-standard systems arranging the life of individuals and the society; deformation of cultural and anthropological matrices formed on the basis of Christian values; deep-laid crisis of natural and cultural identity; expansion of pagan elements, energies and practices; deformation of fundamental sense-bearing key concepts forming the intellectual European space. Basic reasons of spiritual agony of the European world are connected with the loss of system-forming status of Christian anthropology which traditionally defined the value and sense space of the European culture, providing spiritual priorities of personal development and bases for solidarity of ethnic groups. Serious challenges to the present and the future of the European culture come from the deep-laid crisis of national and cultural identity. The essence of the crisis on the anthropologic layer consists in destroying that indivisible substance which determined historical sustainability of culture and development vector for “anthropos” as a creature striving to heaven, in the spiritual sphere.

Deformation of fundamental sense-bearing concepts, which in the past provided the integrity of intellectual European space, is an evidence of the deep-laid crisis of spiritual foundation of the European culture. The ideal of humanism, going through considerable deformations in the context of European culture, found itself face to face with serious challenges, this ideal is pushed away by post-modernist human projects and actively strengthening ideas of trans-humanism. Treatment of freedom as an inalienable component of humanistic ideal requires new accents. Scientists are speaking about the necessity of human image’s comprehension and strengthening within the limits of humanitarian knowledge, corresponding to present day’s realities (V.A. Lektorsky). Deficit of life meanings is recently becoming a

global existential problem. All that certifies that the modern period project is exhausted and European culture is transforming into the new post-modern phase.

Expansion of pagan civilization matrices within the limits of the European world is accompanied by radical breaking of fundamental attributes of human and society's being: the picture of the world, ethic ideal, sense-forming scenarios, identity criteria, ideas of good and evil, things in existence and the due are changing. Expansion of affective energies space and zone of archaic conscience manifestation go on with the "sign inversion" of key mental characteristics and worldview dominants as a background. The "fan" social basis of magic practices and mystic beliefs that in those ancient times made the repertoire of priests is expanding. Ethnic and cultural trends are strengthening – as a gloomy prototype of the total inclusion of the ancient man in the clan structure, excluding the free choice of other identity criteria.

Strengthening the neo-pagan cultural model in its final variant requires inversion of the cult foundations, including supposed rehabilitation (and respective cultural legitimization) of the "deific pantheon" of the ancient man. And that process in the bowels of the European culture has been viewed for several centuries already: history (especially from the early modern period) is abound in examples of "cultural rehabilitation" of demonic pagan figures – Apollo, Dionysus, Helios, Lucifer, Hermes, Mercury, etc. The period of Christian matrix's strengthening in Europe was accompanied by upsurge of anti-systems – religious sects of predominantly Satan character¹⁰.

The neo-pagan anthropology of the post-modern period, with its amoral romantics and demonstrative profanation of moral taboos, destroys the spiritual and moral matrix of the European culture and makes the whole civilization's collapse

¹⁰ In particular, well-known "anti-systems" of the Ophites and the Gnostics operated in the European cultural space (these sects were formed in the ancient world, at the time of heathenry – in the area of the Old Testament's contact with the Hellenic mythology). The Ophites (snake worshippers) established the cult of knowledge and Satan as its source in contrast to Biblical God who announced another truth through His prophet: "in much wisdom is much grief", because of that "he who increases knowledge increases sorrow". The cult of secret knowledge was also characteristic of the Gnostics ("*gnosis*" in Greek means "knowledge"; "Gnostic" is "knowledgeable" or "striving for knowledge").

inevitable. It's not accidental that the global project for formation of "the new pagan" is symbolically named "*anthropological euthanasia*" of the European culture. The danger of heathenry is in the ability of its worldview and "ritual" component to corrupt human souls and seduce human hearts. Pagan energies, repressed by two thousands of years of the "Culture of Prophets" triumph and thrown into the "basement", today break into the culture beyond their mystic context that gave them the highest meaning as a way to communicate with deities. As a result of "spiritual abuse" of adapted pagan practices, humans sink into the lower circles of being, deprived of motivation and energy to move up along the steps of spiritual revival. The spiritual atmosphere of heathenry provokes the worst human qualities and energies – avarice, envy, aggressiveness, revengefulness¹¹. Persons that provided their material well-being and social status by open amorality and debauchery become idols and icons in the public space of contemporary mass culture (in some sense their way of life reminds the way of life of the "chosen bad guys" in the societies of the ancient world). Raging of pagan elements in the European cultural space becomes a condition for restoration of the Nazi ideology, which becomes the natural answer of West European civilization to the agony of culture of the post-modern period (and to a considerable extent performs a compensatory function, substituting the lost foundations of national and cultural solidarity). The tragic experience of the 20th century shows that nature, soil, the fact of birth cannot be eliminated or overcome – they are waiting for their time, bursting in the environment of the identity crisis. West European civilization has covered a long and dramatic way to exaltation along the identity steps: from nature and clan to spirit, idea, the common. Today's trend for return to identity according to the criteria of "jus solis and jus sanguinis" certifies the evident regression of the Western world. At the same time falling out of the "root system" at the level of commonplace conscience is not perceived as a catastrophe or

¹¹ Shakespeare's Hamlet serves an image and metaphor for the present period, suffering deep splitting of conscience between the call of the dying out clan and demands of Christian spirit, between the spirit of the past and the new truth being born, inevitability of pagan revenge and Christian forgiveness. "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right!" All those formulas fix the break of traditions in morals area, catastrophic experience of sudden turn of the tide, cataclysm.

even a problem: increasing “existential emptiness” of a modern man requires changes, with which hopes to get new meanings and illusions are connected.

Heathenry’s strengthening that’s taking place in combating Christian traditions, was preceded by the not simple and long period of triumphant chaos – both external and internal that helped human soul’s disintegration. The today’s European post-modern stage is the last stage of the modern period tradition’s and socio-cultural institution’s disintegration – the final stage of the “Culture of Prophets”.

Russian civilization on the “universal battle” field, where two anthropological and cultural matrices are struggling, is still on the side of Christian Logos traditions (according to Florensky, being the key condition to oppose chaos – the thinker examined the world history from the eschatological point of view: as a field of battle where two opposite cosmic principles are fighting one another: *Logos* and *chaos*. The culture in this battle is seen as a specific human manifestation of *Logos* opposing the powers of “world equaling” and death)¹². The dramatic nature of today’s situation is strengthened by total incompatibility (and even irreconcilability) of metaphysical focuses of opposing anthropologies of Logos and chaos: the worldviews in their basis, sacred areas, spiritual referents, sense-forming scenarios, etc. European civilization entered the pagan elements several hundreds of years earlier (starting from the Renaissance), because of that hostility and irreconcilability of the Western elite to the Russian world is of deep-laid, metaphysical (and to a considerable extent religious, mystic) character. And this struggle of anthropological and cultural matrices going on for several centuries excludes the possibilities to compromise. Modification of Christian anthropology became the result of multi-century action in space of West European culture of “humanitarian” elements opposing Christian energies of justness, mercy, kindness, truth.

Russia still has a chance to get out of the catastrophic for the European culture historical trend, to wit: stay within the limits of the historically grounded and

¹² Culture as means used by Logos to fight Chaos is “conscientious struggle against world equaling”, its mission is “holding back the equaling process in the Universe, increasing the difference of potentials in all fields as a condition to live, in contrast to equality – death”. – See: Florensky P. Works in 4 volumes. Moscow: Mysl, 1994. V. 1. P. 39.

achieved by the people through suffering spiritual space of Russian civilization (and when possible not take part in the initiatives and projects of the Western world that personify the agony of the European culture's Christian spirit)¹³. The cultural and anthropological dimension of today's crisis, manifested in deep-laid transformation of civilization matrices, allows to characterize the real humanitarian scales of the approaching catastrophe and develop the methodology for working out prevention measures. Trans-border challenges and threats to spiritual security require not only consolidated efforts of state institutions but also a high level of national identity of the people, they add increasing importance to the priority of the spiritual and moral component in working out scenarios for minimization of global problems.

Fundamental challenges of the time, dictated by the change of the civilization paradigm, require an adequate answer, the condition of which is systemic understanding of the essence of Russian civilization (its soul, mentality, national idea) as a subject of world history, in the stream of which it is included. Domestic humanitarian thought has always tried to "call" an individual by a word, to help him turn to himself and the world "by his most important essence, his enlightened part, face illuminated by his heart's light", awaking spirituality that rushes the man over the horizons of human being. Only in this movement up a human can realize himself ultimately and justify his name – with his forehead turned to eternity.

¹³ In particular, the ruinous factor, killing the soul of Russia in recent decades, is moral degradation of people as a result of thoughtless (and in essence criminal) attempts to enter alien for us mentally and spiritually "European house".