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GLOBAL CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

Today's world is entering an era of the "torn threads" of human history, a time of an "evolutionary change unparalleled in human history" (A. A. Zinoviev). The civilization in its spiritual, technological and geopolitical aspects is approaching a dangerous boundary whose crossing is fraught with fundamental changes and irreversible deformation of cultural and anthropological matrices, the architectonics and metaphysics of which were laid down by the great prophets and philosophers of the Axial time – the era when the intellectual and "worldview" turn of history was completed and the human was formed in his spiritual openness to the world (C. Jaspers). In the alarming assessments of humanity's prospects one can detect echoes of an almost religious eschatology which manifests as rapid growth of "existential problems and contradictions" and ultimate aggravation of the confrontation between good and evil: "much, too much testifies that our age is an eve" [6, c. 1135].

The inevitability of change in the civilizational paradigm is evidenced by the rapid growth of global geo-

political, cultural, anthropological and ecological crises, which call into question the model of progress adopted at the previous stage of man-made development (V. Stepin).² The transition to a new civilizational strategy is also associated with the coming "dismantling of capitalism" as a result of the destruction of the model of market production and the depletion of the resources of the so-called non-capitalist zones formed in the process of global expansion of capital.

The driver of civilization's transition to the post-capitalist phase is the *fourth industrial revolution*, which replaces the current information revolution (the third after the agrarian and industrial revolution) and forms a fundamentally new technological structure based on the expansion of artificial intelligence, total automation and robotization of production. In socio-cultural terms, the inevitable transition of civilization to a qualitatively different state is "guaranteed" by the widening chasm between "power" and "wisdom" (A. Nazaretyan), the growing "asymmetry of arms" between good and evil (A. Kuraev), which gives evil an undeniable advantage in the struggle for minds and souls. In the metaphorical sense, the drama of our time is symbolized by Hamlet's formula "The time is out of joint..." The uncertainty of future scenarios reinforces the approach of the "*technological singularity*" – a point on the curve of histor-

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² According to the primary meaning of the word, crisis (*gr.* κρίσις) means "judgment," "verdict"; in a softer meaning it signifies a border, watershed, outcome, turning point, change in the vector of development.

ical time marking the beginning of the “explosive” stage of progress, striving into infinity and giving birth to a potentially wide range of development models with unpredictable consequences.¹

In previous centuries, Europe was the source of global dynamism and the driver of global development. Today, the Western European model of culture, man, state structure and society fits into the “strategy of descent”: the deep metaphysical and existential fractures of the systemic civilizational crisis minimize its chances for recovery, and not only in the logic of frankly destructive postmodern scenarios, but also in the classical modern understanding, which has long ago and systematically exhausted its constructive resources. The prospect of the end of European civilization with its neoliberal global project “appears for the first time in all its drama: The West is leaving the “arena of history” (A. Pelipenko). The “spiritual capitulation” is brought closer by rifts at the metaphysical level: Western civilization has entered a stage of “ultimate fatigue” from an overstretch caused by the pressure of the “Promethean technological rush” (A. S. Panarin).

Increasingly pessimistic conclusions are heard about the dead-end nature of the postmodern era, which bases its present and future on total nihilism toward the great achievements of previous times. The concept of the world order based on freedom “from” as the highest good and the model of the market as an institution independent of state control, ensuring the process of “self-growth of collective wealth,” proved theoretically unsound and in fact destructive to the key institutions and structures of the state and society.

The notions of the constructive possibilities of a “natural order” arising in a situation of uncontrolled self-regulation have proven to be artificial and groundless: outside of state control and restraining energy of the Logos, all complex systems inevitably tend “toward the final state of chaos and death” (A. S. Panarin). Ruthless market selection “dehumanizes” the individual, depriving him of his basic spiritual qualities – shame, conscience, mercy, and responsibility. Market totalitarianism, by destroying the motivation for social participation, deprives the society of the energy of solidarity, turning it into a “dispersed environment” existing under the sign of entropy.

The metaphysical and institutional crisis of the Western civilization is taking on a global scale, triggering destructive reactions that put the world in an extreme state of disequilibrium. The bifurcation point, increasing the uncertainty of tomorrow, suggests two mutually exclusive strategies for the future: 1) regressive, reinforcing the disorganization of the global system and expanding the space of chaos; 2) constructive, ensuring the reproduction of basic cultural universals and blocking the growth of entropy. These strategies are in a constant (and not always visible) struggle for dominance, which takes place not only in geopolitics, but also in the existential depths of world culture and the human soul. In the meantime, the humanity has always had and still has the freedom to choose: to follow the path of “descent”

¹ The process of replacement of evolution with information technology revolution is described by the “Snooks-Panov curve” which captures the growing angle between the horizontal axis and the curve of the civilizational dynamics, which is increasingly approaching the vertical. The moment in which the curve transitions to a vertical line is the singularity point, which denies the previous laws and logic of development and marks the transition of the world into an unknown future.

into destructive elements (including the distant past) or to ascend to new spiritual heights. The confrontation of these dominants in the contemporary civilizational dynamics is becoming global. “The dilemma is simple and cruel: either, at the cost of thorough clearing, a breakthrough to the next round of complexity, or a failure into total simplification, conservation, and a global retardation of evolutionary dynamics” [7, c. 18].

The first option, relieving the tension of upward movement, inevitably entails degradation and rolling back to “recessive” cultural and civilizational forms. The metaphysical context for the emergence and growing popularity of downward strategies is the postmodern era, whose institutions expand the space of regression, increasing entropy in culture and society. The scenarios of the future within this trend profess anthropological nihilism – destruction of the customary criteria of identity.

1. The strategy of cultural and anthropological regression of the world fits into the pessimistic scenarios reflecting the descending logic of history. For example, Nassim Taleb’s version of a catastrophic future, which does not exclude final self-destruction of a large part of the human kind (e.g. as a result of a global military conflict) [8]. Or the theory of an *escape from culture into nature*, a return to the generic elements, to the naïve age. It found its logical completion in the concept of *cultural nihilism* with its total criticism of culture as “anti-nature,” progressive domination of the artificial over the spontaneous, natural, living. A provoking version of cultural nihilism was the scenario of a total rejection of culture and a return to a “new unity with nature” by the American anthropologist J. Zerzan, who believed that the emergence of the *primitive man of the future* was inevitable [2].

2. A pronounced vector of “anthropological nihilism” is present in the concept of “*guided evolution*,” conceived and performed by the intellectually and ideologically integrated groups of transnational elites who: a) understand the logic of historical processes and build scenarios for an “optimal future” on this basis; b) have the resources to implement them (A. Fursov). The project of “guided evolution” pursues two strategic goals: first, total power over the world – control over resources, spiritual factors of human evolution (including the structures of production and distribution of knowledge), consciousness and behavior of people; second, a soft “anthropological genocide of the world” – creating the conditions for natural self-destruction of a large part of humanity, which becomes redundant in the coming world of digital economy and artificial intelligence.

3. The “*transhumanist project*” of the future fits into the scenario of “anthropological regression.” The logic of its adherents stems from the understanding of global exhaustion of the “energy of ascent,” inter alia, due to the “incredible rise in complexity at the end of the last and the beginning of this century.” Today the world is rapidly falling into a “process of secondary simplification,” whose forces are “desperately advancing on all fronts” [3]. The main arguments in favor of the transhumanist scenario are related to the obvious intensification of two vectors in the mankind’s degradation: metaphysical and biological.

First, humanitarians are critical of the intellectual resources and opportunities to develop the “humanistic” qualities of the mind, which are limited by the “ineradicable properties of the natural substrate”: destructive energies

found in the psychophysical matrices of mentality are embedded in the strata of the collective unconscious. This is the source of ambivalence of the emotional sphere, with its unconscious craving for acute conflict situations and the need to be regularly “fed” with intense negative experiences. In the postmodern phase, the return to corporeality and “unbridled sensuality” that sets free the instincts of eros and thanatos threatens to plunge the humanity into a “cattle-like state,” depriving it of an optimistic future (A. P. Nazaretyan).

Second, the pessimistic assessment of prospects is due to the biological degradation of the humanity, whose gene pool, primarily under the influence of civilizational factors, is accumulating more and more material that threatens its survival in an increasingly complex anthropocenos. Therefore, the decisive condition for the preservation of civilization, from the point of view of the adherents of transhumanism, is “shedding of the biological shell” and “denaturalization of the intelligence medium” (e.g. by designing “man-machine interfaces”). Artificial production of the man, through depreciating his “genetic belonging” and eliminating inherently destructive “generic” bases of identity, will enable the man “to feel himself a carrier of universal and even cosmic history,” opening the prospects of control of metagalactic processes and “noospherization of the cosmos” [5, c. 324].

The “*optimistic*” group of scenarios is the result of the intellectual activity of the humanitarian elite, which has not lost its sense of duty to the fate of the world and has retained faith in the ontological status of the Logos as the conception that generates reality. In this frame of reference, at least three civilizational futures are possible.

1. The *ascension strategy* is offered by an alternative to the waning Western neoliberalism – the *Eurasian project*, a persuasive and significant option in the context of acute problems of state and social development for a vast geographic and cultural space. The Eurasian world rejects the capitalist path of development in its neoliberal version; it does not accept the unidimensional model of market world order that has spread throughout the world, striking the “blossoming complexity” of peoples, cultures and civilizations with “the ailment of the flat-bourgeois end of history” [1, c. 647]. The spiritual code of Eurasia, which could not be completely destroyed by the informational intervention of the West and the comprador groups within the country, rejects the dictatorship of the power of capital, and categorically rejects the Western model of cultural policy which turned the biological practices into a norm of self-expression, the result of which was the spiritual and moral degradation of man.

The status of the spiritual center of the Eurasian continent rightfully belongs to Russia as a civilization established in the socio-cultural and spiritual sense, which provided the synthesis of European and Asian principles based on the primacy of the law of cooperation over the law of competition in previous stages of history, the triumph of truth, goodness, beauty, justice, and the advantage of altruism over egoism.

2. The updated *communist project* is also considered a promising scenario for tomorrow, whose humanistic basis is the image of man in his constructive, creative, spiritual essence. The main argument in favor of this option is that even the socialist model of communism implemented in the

USSR, being humanistically truncated, developed in the direction of ascent, which ensured its victory over Nazi ideology plunging the world into the abyss of racism. European civilization of the 1930s was on the brink of a precipice of descent (S. Kurginyan).

The structure of bourgeois liberalism and humanism had by then been shaken by mass atheism and scorched by hatred on the battlefields of World War I. Nihilism, which destroyed the Christian matrix of the European world and blocked the religious ascent, opened the way for the Nazi “blond beast” to trample on all moral principles. In the end, the energy of the *communist future* saved the world from a total descent into the abominable elements of a pagan past, ensuring the Soviet Union’s victory over the Nazi plague [3]. “The communist system in Russia has not outlived itself, it was young, just beginning to mature, and it was killed. Artificially destroyed. Being a sociologist, I argue that in terms of social organization it is higher than anything in the West... with the defeat of Russian communism, Russia lost the prospect of becoming a great, leading power. I think that the Soviet period was the pinnacle of Russian history, and Russia will not rise to such a height again” [4, c. 323].

The scenario of a communist future becomes realistic, first of all, in the context of the decline of the capitalist system of production. Second, against the background of the expansion of global problems comes the understanding of the futility of the neoliberal model of the world order, which completes its triumphal path with the collapse of the systemic institutions and theoretical framework, including such categories as humanism, freedom, democracy, and human rights. Third, the communist vector is consistent with the humanistic direction of the New Age European thought. It is no coincidence that humanitarians even qualified communism in its Soviet incarnation “as an adapted model of the European Enlightenment” (A. Panarin).

3. The optimistic options for the global future also include the *Noospheric Breakthrough* – a movement toward the paradigm of universal evolutionism and sustainable development, toward planetary cooperation of ethnic groups, toward a world without wars and violence. The basis of the paradigm is V. I. Vernadsky’s doctrine of the noosphere and P. A. Florensky’s ideas of the pneumatosphere, which reproduces the unconditional values of humanity, bringing it closer to the Ideal. The geopolitical subject of the “noospheric socialist transformations” translating the dynamics of the global rifts and collisions “into a continuum of coevolutionary development of peoples and states” could be “Greater Eurasia” (A. I. Subetto), consolidated by the civilizational power and spiritual experience of Russia – an important link in the modern world order, largely determining “the vector of global development and security” (V. N. Kupin).

The project of a *new social state*, whose historical contours “emerge in the coming post-liberal phase of global historic development,” fits into the concept of universal evolutionism. The social state gets rid of fragments of the “Faustian culture” that gave birth to “technological imperialism,” which is murderous for man and nature, rejecting the “spiritual value motivation underlying such progress,” the “utilitarian and anti-human projects to ‘save the world’” initiated by the “Malthusian social Darwinist elite” ruling the world.

The scenario for such a future is built on the rehabilitation of the basic values of the European Enlightenment, which centered on the human creator. “The Enlightenment picture of the world is an open, exoteric one that trusts in the ethnically neutral universals of Progress.” The pedagogy of the Enlightenment was highly humanistic: it optimistically assesses the constructive potential of peoples and cultures to “join the peaks of development” (A. S. Panarin). The metaphysical foundation of the project of a new social state could be a *cosmocentric dominant*, fitting human intentions and goals “into the structure of general cosmic harmony whose meaning by far exceeds our arbitrary selfish claims and expectations” (A. S. Panarin). Its humanistic mission is to rehabilitate the “moral and religious foundations” of a world in which the disadvantaged and the “poor in spirit” are the bearers of higher meaning – the saviors of a “savaged humanity” that has learned the law of the jungle.

The optimistic scenarios described above can be seen as options for the future, presented in the status of the potential, which precedes the real and existing and is “concealed” in its depths (A. Bergson). The limitless creativity of man, who has always found a constructive response to the tragic challenges of time, makes these scenarios probable (C. Jaspers). The implementation of one or other option depends not only on objective circumstances and availability of necessary resources, but also on the moral responsibility of the intellectual elite, capable of reviving and transforming the ideas of the future into the energy of creation, integrating on a synergistic basis the spiritual experience of the past and the constructive potential of the present.

The contemporary philosophical and cultural thought should consider the search for new strategies and scenarios of development alternative to neoliberal ideologies not only as a scientific duty, but also as a spiritual and moral responsibility to the future of the humankind. The image of the future is formed by the element of the Logos and then becomes a “self-fulfilling prophecy” that constructs the reality.

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