

## THE POSTMODERN ERA: CULTURAL REGRESSION PROJECT

### 1. *“The time is out of joint”*.

The modern civilization in its spiritual, technological and geopolitical hypostases is approaching a dangerous border, crossing which is fraught with fundamental changes and irreversible deformation of cultural and anthropological matrices of the being formed by the “Axial Age” (Karl Jaspers) – the age making the metaphysical revolution, freeing the man from “his clan chains” and giving him freedom to acquire the essence of being in the spiritual sphere. Rapid growth of global crises of geopolitical, cultural and anthropological, and environmental nature certifies that change of the civilization paradigm is inevitable, they challenge the progress model realized at the previous stage of technology-related development (V. Styopin)<sup>1</sup>. Transfer to a new type of civilization development is related to the forthcoming “capitalism dismantling” as a result of the *Industry 4.0*, or the fourth industrial revolution that forms a principally new technological pattern based on expansion of artificial intelligence, total automation and computer-robotics of industry. Indefiniteness of the future scenarios accelerated approach of “technological singularity” – the point on the historical time curve, fixing the start of the “spurt” progress stage, tending to infinity, generating a potentially wide range of development models with unpredictable consequences. The widening gap between “force” and “wisdom” (A. Nazaretyan), and strengthening “asymmetry of armaments” of the good and the evil (A. Kuraev) providing the evil with unquestionable advantages in fighting for human minds and souls, “guarantee” inevitability of civilization’s transfer into a qualitatively different state, the images of which more and more often acquire the eschatological hue.

### 2. *Entropy of European humanism*.

The Western world performs as the “locomotive” of the movement to crisis borders. It has been going through the systemic deformation of cultural institutions

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<sup>1</sup> The original meaning of the Greek word *ἡ κρίσις* is “trial”, “sentence”, and its softer version means border, divide, outcome, turning point, development vector’s change.

and worldview constants not for the first decade already, and in their time they provided the wholeness and achievements of the European civilization. The West is experiencing the eschatological “Zero Hour”, fixing the cultural dominant’s “plus-minus sign changing”. The European culture’s spirit is exhausted by devaluation of Christian values, determining the meaning-forming dominants and normative space of human and societal vital activities for nearly two millennia. The common logic of changes taking place is as follows: decline of the logocentric “*Culture of Prophets*” pushed out by cultural and anthropologic scenarios of distant heathen past – the “*Culture of Priests*” (G. Jemal). The modern European civilization enters a new stage – the Postmodern era that in its key characteristics rejects the previous eras and is a cultural regression model.

First of all, the European humanism crisis certifies that the Modern project is exhausted. This humanism was distorted by insurmountable “will to global dominance”, affected by “rust” of aggression and deeply embedded in mental matrices by the racist model of attitude to other nations and cultures. Humanism is the product of the Western Catholic world that corrects Christian anthropology – it originates as a result of establishing the principle “Man is the measure of all things”, excessive preoccupation with arrangement of real life in this world<sup>2</sup>. It’s not accidental that already at the early stages of acquiring the “cultural legitimacy”, humanism demonstrates the trend for devaluation of Christian values of the good and gratefulness, solidarity, mercy and compassion, pushed out by “Mephistopheles arrogance and conceit” and repressive energies of attitude to the world. Europe dropped humanistic and democratic camouflage many times, showing itself to the world as a cruel and merciless aggressor (especially during the period of the Crusades and two World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century). European humanities scholars not once drew attention to the chronic contempt of the West to the “non-civilized world”, lower races and rights of other nations, fixed the “superior capability to kill” that not rarely played the decisive role in the course of European expansion (Göran Therborn). Even

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<sup>2</sup> The East-West Schism that destroyed the “maternal” unity of the Christian world, can be considered the source of the future European humanism inversion. As a result of this break, the image of the “Holy Roman Empire” (declared in 962) acquires its spiritual definiteness based on Catholicism and becomes the “primary symbol” of the whole Western civilization.

during the Middle Ages, Western Christianity was the apologia of aggression and violence, acquiring the institutional status in the form of numerous monastic military orders, it justified frank militarism and hatred not only to Moslem nations but also to the Christian world under the “Crusades” brand<sup>3</sup>. Finally, humanism discredited itself by the antihuman spirit and atrocities during World Wars in the previous century as well as today’s geopolitical strategy of shameless dictating its will to other countries and nations. The Western society is affected by metastases of the archaic ethos, with its “psychology of racial contempt to barbarian encirclement”, and today it readily accepts the message from liberal idols of the “golden billion” to subjugate, enslave and rule the “barbarian world” inhabited by “subhumans” (A. Panarin). This is certified by expansion of the social basis of those following Social Darwinism and Neo-Nazism ideas, threatening with another violence expansion wave capable to make the 21<sup>st</sup> century even bloodier than the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The significant symptom of the European humanism decline is exhaustion and devaluation of the essence nucleus of the main concepts forming the basis of a man’s and world’s image. European humanism is presented in today’s information and communication space as a set of empty words that lost their connection with original meanings and manipulatively hide deception, falsity and double standards of contemporary political and cultural life. Primitive “Manichaeic contrasting” of triumphant liberalism (democracy – totalitarianism, traditionalism – modern times, despotism – human rights, open society – closed society, nationalism – globalism) becomes the source of racial hatred and contempt to cultures and nations, personifying “civil inferiority” and “primitive origin” (A. Panarin).

The fundamental for the Christian world phenomenon of freedom ends its “triumphal journey” in the image of moral unruliness, lack of restraint and consumerism. The real meaning of freedom was exchanged by the West into hedonistic ecstasy and pseudofreedom of consumerism on supermarket premises. Erosion of the cultural system’s wholeness turns freedom into its opposite, it becomes

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<sup>3</sup> Negative attitude of the West to Orthodox Byzantium was typical not only to Church hierarchs – it was shared by the European humanitarian elite as well. This is certified by Byzantium civilization assessments by J.G. Herder, who thought that it confused the human mind, and A.J. Toynbee, who said that its nature was perverted and sinful.

the basis for mass infecting with social and psychic energies of aggression and deviation, plunges the society into the period of conflicts and catastrophes. Liberal “tribunes” and mass culture idols have exhausted its sacred commandments and “innermost secrets” required to justify the meaning of life, realization of individual potentials and establishment of personal dignity. If freedom was the means for cognizing the truth, condition to free from slavery, from “poisoning and senseless existence” (I. Popovich) in Christian anthropology, freedom in Postmodern culture is regressing to impudence and “creative” scoffing at everything sacred, it turns into orgies of shamelessness and decay, or falls “into hell of exhausted desires” (G. Pomerants). Contemporary Western art is in decline, it consciously ignores aesthetic principles of Truth, Harmony and Good and frankly crosses to the side of chaos forces and moral degradation, turning into a kind of “pop culture” that lost its national roots and is focused on pleasures and entertainments.

### *3. Sources and factors of Western civilization's “spiritual inversion”.*

The ideology of “European superman” freed from the ethic ideal of the Sermon on the Mount becomes “spiritual bricks” for the Western civilization model with its everyday racism and “educational” contempt for other nations and cultures, “imperial one-dimensionality” (A. Panarin) establishes institutional perfection of earthly order as a detriment to Christian spirituality. Starting from the Renaissance, the European civilization has been consistently and inevitably destroying the Christian spirit, pushing it out by “Faustian energy” of individualism and rationalism, utilitarian purposefulness and spatial expansion – the energy frankly neglecting moral and religious norms. “The split culture of the Renaissance”, making an “isolated subject” absolute, gradually deforms the complete space of Medieval culture (P. Florensky). Rationalism of the New Times “strengthens antagonism of the mind and life” (Georg Simmel) still more, as a result destroying metaphysical foundations of the being, expanding the kingdom of chaos and undermining creative powers of the European continent nations.

Purpose-oriented deformation of the Christian essence of the European civilization is related to realization of the global project – capitalism, origination of

which is difficult to explain and justify by natural development logic inside the Christian system of values. In essence, the “capitalism project” has become the catalyst for the process of formation of a predatory historical subject of the new European West that “turned out to be ‘alien’ in relation not only to non-European civilizations but also the very European culture” (A. Fursov). Freedom inside the capitalist body generated the private property institution that became the source of the most disgusting forms of exploitation. The capitalist model devaluated the spiritual meaning of freedom turning it into freedom of exploitation and maximization of profits at any price, making freedom of conscience freedom from conscience. The dictatorship of private interest in relation to the common good atomized the society, destroying the idea and value of serving the society.

The inversion of spiritual foundations of the European culture is completed by the anti-Christian spirit of the Modern era that has become a kind of screen or shield, where the secular intellectual elite under the secularism mask realizes a “new religious project” for formation of a global “countersystem”, positioning itself as a “traditional clerical hierarchy antipode” (V. Bagdasaryan). Abdication from Christianity, “being vain of progress” and running after material well-being inevitably lead Western civilization to a dead-end, plunge it into the times of “new barbarianism, killing the ability to see and appreciate spiritual depth”, bring about bitterness and “irremediable desolation” in souls and irreversible degradation of the human essence (S. Frank).

The acute phase of the European civilization’s spiritual nucleus corrosion falls on the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked by the end of the *Modern* project and Western civilization’s transfer to the *Postmodern* stage, accompanied by the cardinal change of anthropologic matrices of the European world. The Postmodern era considerably deformed the foundations of the civilizational and confessional identity of the European world, drew the line under the “Prometheus-type” of civilization borne by creative views and ideas, and energy of social production. Anthropocentrism brought to the limit as well as “overwhelming oppression” by tolerance and Euro-multiculturalism (V. Rastorguev) deprive the European world of the energy of

spiritual unity, deficit of which is compensated by ultra-nationalist moods, ethno-racial identities and ethnic nationalism recurrences. The West European civilization is rapidly falling into chaos of anomy and deviation, and returning to the time preceding the “Axial Age”, when the heathen world appeared on the edge of self-destruction, losing the ability to restrain destructive impulses coming from the depths of human existence by cultural norms and traditions.

#### 4. “*The fatal hour*” of twilight in the West.

The “hour hand” of the world history fixed the process of the great European culture dying already in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, triumphant civilization, with no soul and no God, ends its history (Oswald Spengler). By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after horrors of the two World Wars, the Modern project was finally exhausted, and the European civilization era is leaving the stage of the world history. The Postmodern era is the final stage of cultural development – the creative impulse of the “culture of will” is becoming lifeless and fades away. And in its time it determined the West’s striving for global dominance and provided expansion of rational views and ideas that created the magnificent edifice of science and the most competitive in the world economy. Spiritual breakdown of the European civilization certifies that its idea, this project is completed and exhausted, its “soul” is dying – that “primary symbol” that “inspires” culture, determining the richness of its meanings, forms, achievements (O. Spengler). Exhaustion of the “Faustian spirit” of the European “culture of will” is accompanied by chaos and anomy, dysfunction of social institutions and deformation of ethical norms, change of world perception ways and essence-forming scenarios. Political and economic institutions’, the international law system’s destabilization processes acquire the nature of global threats. The heathen dominant of the coming era blocks the fundamental elements of morals – feelings of *guilt*, *shame*, *conscience* performing as the main features of a “cultural individual” and condition of cohabitation in the society.

In the environment of spiritual crisis and loss of elite’s ability for outrunning reflexive self-transformation, hopes for the European world’s return to the bosom of Christian tradition are connected by humanities scholars with inflow of the “external

spiritual impulse”, and, first of all, from the Russian Orthodox world (A. Panarin). However, the reality of such “spiritual rehabilitation” is minimal. The European civilization has fulfilled its historical purpose. The Western civilization is spiritually exhausted by “viruses” of religious countersystems, capitalist way of life drying up the soul, rehabilitating avarice as the basic survival resource, unending wars and malignant tumor of Nazism, it is disarmed by amoral policy of today’s “global hegemony”, liberal strategy of discrediting morals, nation-state’s institutions, law, family, it is spiritually bankrupt by total mass media lying, mass culture and destructive symbols of “modern art”, and it lost its ability for a constructive answer to fundamental challenges of the time. Initiated by liberal ideologists “saving scenarios” (including the multiculturalism concept or the tolerance project that humanities scholars qualify as “camouflaging self-extermination by human civilization”) paradoxically bring nearer “the fatal hour, the hour of coming twilight when it’s high time to switch on lights and get ready for the night” (N. Berdyaev).

5. *“The Russian world” as an alternative to the Postmodern project.*

The European civilization loses the status of “a City upon a Hill” as a referent for global nations. Spiritual “sickness” of the Western civilization is more and more frankly found out in the environment of growing rivalry with new civilization projects. In particular, the state of affairs in the spiritual crisis of the West is aggravated by geopolitical factors, first of all, the growing power of the Moslem proto-civilization project, the resource of which is «common universal religious values and norms of the “divine Revelation”, historical memory about the great Moslem past and rising level of “live piety”» (Sh. Sultanov). Exhaustion of the spiritual project of the European civilization brings nearer “demographic” death of Europe, which the multi-million refugee wave threatens to bury already by the middle of the century. The main threat to the West in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is related to “the great transmigration of nations”, the source of which is the so-called “youth bubble” in the Near East and Africa, growing with the “elderly bubble” as a background in Japan and Europe as well as increase of people “of employable age” in

East Asia and Latin America (Gunnar Heinsohn)<sup>4</sup>.

“The Russian world” is becoming an alternative to the today’s spiritually desolated and “parasitic” Western civilization going through the stage of “decaying sensuality” (P. Sorokin). The image of “the Russian world” brings hope to non-adapted to the modernity outcast countries and nations from the “fourth world”, marked by the “stamp of contemptuous singling out” (A. Panarin). The special civilizational mission of Russia, rooted in the depths of national ethos and mentality, is protection of the humankind from destructive impact of global anti-systems. Exactly the Russian civilization accumulates the richest experience of practical opposition to anti-systemic projects, threatening not only Russia but the European civilization as a whole (Napoleonic Wars, Third Reich, etc.)<sup>5</sup>. With “European twilight” as a background, Russian culture is capable to compensate the loss of spiritual dimension of being by human spirit’s striving for “eternal” truths and values – to what is higher than an individual, what justifies his deprivations and determines the meanings of life.

But this life-asserting and vital role of the Russian civilization supposes fundamental correction of the “capitalist totalitarianism” ideology, it demands radical replacement of “spiritual idols” of recent decades, “cleansing” national spirit from scabs and sores of “liberal racism”, which declared war to the poor and unsuccessful, return and preservation of the deep essence and soul of the “Russian Orthodox Kingdom”: to serve as the support and guardian of the weak. As soon as authorities betray this spiritual calling, Holy Russia goes underground and keeps silent, and it is replaced by a power that foredooms itself to decay and death by its repudiation and imperial arrogance, substituting the truth for force (A. Panarin). Exactly that is the main reason of today’s loss of “spiritual legitimacy” by authorities, exhaustion of the “force of gravity” both outside and inside the Russian world, which can be returned by the “live energy of action” of the Russian civilization, abiding in metaphysical

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<sup>4</sup> Apocalyptic forecasts as to the Old World prospects are becoming more and more realistic in the context of these statistical trends: according to surveys conducted by Gallup, Inc. (formerly the American Institute of Public Opinion), nearly 900 million of hungry and destitute people from Africa and the Near East, without education and prospects, will flow into Europe by 2050 for a better life, thus finally changing the “civilization” code of the West.

<sup>5</sup> See: URL: <http://izborsk-club.ru/14417>.



depths of the “Holy Russia” image (V. Averyanov).

“Universal responsiveness and sympathy” of the Russian people “embracing all mankind” can become an alternative to Western individualism, which is destructive for the human soul. They are the basis of the national idea and the determining focus of Russian culture on the absolute feeling of universality, “Messianic soul” (W. Schubart). The tried and tested by the Russian history solidarity project is a constructive and important for the people of the world resource for the future. It is an alternative to the West European society model of dissociation and “permanent conflict”. The spiritual experience of cohabitation of various nations and cultures, “Slavic and Turkic synthesis” being for many centuries “the core of united Eurasia” (A. Panarin) and civilization platform for the Eurasian identity, could become the answer to the achieved through suffering “order” by the global community tired of endless wars and hatred, which is burning the soul. “The Russian world” on the Eurasian space scale, with its keen feeling of the common human history, excluding selfishness of national self-isolation, is the embodiment of collegiality and solidarity of various ethnocultural groups and religions, practical establishment of the brotherhood of nations and cooperation of civilizations.