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Studien zur Befreiung und Interkulturalität

**Raúl Fornet-Betancourt (Hrsg./Ed.)**

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**KULTUREN, WELT, ZIVILISATION:  
ZWISCHEN KOLONISIERUNG UND BEFREIUNG**

**CULTURES, WORLD, CIVILIZATION:  
BETWEEN COLONIZATION AND LIBERATION**

**CULTURAS, MUNDO, CIVILIZACIÓN:  
ENTRE LA COLONIZACIÓN Y LA LIBERACIÓN**

**CULTURES, MONDE, CIVILISATION:  
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**RUSSIA AND EUROPE:  
WAR OF CIVILIZATIONS OR PROLOGUE TO THE FUTURE PEACE?**

1

The war in Ukraine that has broken out today is a fact that philosophical and—more broadly—intellectual consciousness is still unwilling to reckon with. Until now, this war seems, at least in Russia, impossible, because it violates the usual order of the totally rationalized world, an order that has long been considered natural. Hence the inability of reflexion to cope with the comprehension of real events. As a result, instead of objective analysis, there appear various interpretations of what is happening—from mythologization to demonization.

Meanwhile, there is nothing unusual about the war that is currently being waged in Ukraine. It should be emphasized that this war did not begin in 2022, when Russia announced a special military operation in Donbass, or even in 2014, when a military coup d'état took place in Kiev, as a result of which extremist Ukrainian nationalists came to power and began to pursue a policy of open terror in order to kill those people in Ukraine (and they were and still are the vast majority) who did not agree to recognize the coup d'état and were against the ideology of aggressive nationalism and Russophobia. When in 2014 the Kiev authorities launched their so-called “anti-terrorist operation”, sending armed punishers to kill civilians in the southern regions of Ukraine, who were declared pro-Russian, i.e. inferior, having lost the purity of the Ukrainian nation and therefore subject to extermination, then the civil war began, but it cannot be considered the beginning of the war in question.

A more acceptable date is 1991, when the Soviet Union was destroyed. But even this date should be considered conditional: it marks only the beginning of a new, active phase of the war that began much ear-

lier. The war itself lasts for centuries. And it is, of course, not a war between Russia and Ukraine, but a war between Russia and Europe—or, to use S. Huntington's term—between Russia and Western civilization. To understand the essence of the current conflict in Ukraine, it is necessary to realize the causes of this “war of civilizations”.

## 2

In modern Russia, the question has arisen again: why is Europe—or, more precisely, Western civilization—hostile to Russia? This hostility cannot be explained by the Ukrainian conflict, because this conflict is the result of the original hostility, its expression. The conflict in Ukraine was created artificially, it is a natural result of the work of Western political technologists, and this conflict is supported deliberately, first of all, through the infusion of huge monetary resources and providing a favorable information background for the war. Without the intervention and direct interest of the West in this conflict, the war in Ukraine would have ended as soon as it began, or, more precisely, it would never have begun at all<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See a very high quality and detailed description of the events that led to the military conflict in Ukraine in an article by Edward Demenchonok [1]. The article is characterized by a deep knowledge of the material and understanding of the essence of social and geopolitical trends, and the author achieves the greatest possible convincing of his conclusions and assessments by analyzing documents and quoting the works of primarily Western researchers. The facts collected and systematized by Edward Demenchonok make it possible to trace the chronology and logic of the development of tragic events, steadily leading to the unleashing of the Third World War, as well as to understand who was the original initiator of this conflict and who is still interested in its continuation. Special attention in the article is paid to exposing the modern mythology created by American political technologists, namely the concept of global struggle of “democracies” against “autocracies” in the 21st century. According to this mythology, Ukraine is a vivid example of “spreading democracy”, it is a democratic country fighting against “autocratic Russia” in order to protect not only its own democracy, but also the entire democratic West. E. Demenchonok convincingly shows that this lofty narrative actually acts as a means of destroying Ukraine, as it encourages the Ukrainian people to make endless sacrifices, presenting them as a heroic superman and “savior of the West” in a global soap opera. This same narrative is used by Western propaganda to justify the confrontational policies of the U.S. and EU, as well as the hundreds of billions of dollars and euros spent on this war in the form of military and financial aid to support the Kiev terrorist regime.

The reasons for the hostility to Russia on the part of Europe and the entire “civilized world” should obviously be sought not in some random circumstances, be it authoritarian rulers, struggle for spheres of influence, lack of democratic (of course, exclusively in the European sense) institutions, etc. One can recall that when in the 1990s Russia suddenly went from authoritarian-communist to free-democratic, when all the demands of the West, which had won the Cold War, were met, this had no effect on the attitude of the “civilized world” to Russia; moreover, this attitude became even more hostile, and the war continued with renewed vigor.

Rather, the reasons for the West's hostility to Russia are historiosophic, or even metaphysical. At least, it is now quite obvious that this is a war that cannot be explained by any private interests or self-serving motives. Perhaps Samuel Huntington wanted to emphasize this particular feature of the war when he wrote in *The Clash of Civilizations?* (1993): “It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase of the evolution of conflict in the modern world” [2, p. 22]. The same hypothesis was then more thoroughly substantiated by him in a monograph on the same subject.

### 3

The question arises: is war a constant companion of human history, which does not disappear even when humanity reaches the stage of “civilization” in its development? According to the American political scientist, it is. Military conflicts will always arise, no matter how advanced nations are. If earlier wars were fought between nation-states, then between ideologies, now they will be fought, according to Huntington, between cultures, or civilizations.

But is this so? I would hate to think that mankind, as it develops, will never be able to reach a state of lasting peace, which would be based not

on forced compromise or equality of opposing hostile forces, but on “the maturity of reason” and “good will.” I would not like to think that the idea of an “eternal world” dreamed of by I. Kant is just a utopia, the conclusion of an idle philosophical mind. And shouldn't such a world be called a state of civilization?

Thus, there is a kind of “civilizational” dilemma.

On the one hand, the achievement of “civilization” excludes enmity between peoples, because it is assumed that civilized communities will never harm each other, never fight against each other, because they are guided in their actions by reason and the idea of humanity; among other things, it means that to be reasonable is to respect the other as a similarly reasonable being, to recognize his right to be different, his right to be human. The consistent development of this view leads to the creation, for example, of the concept of “new cosmopolitanism”, with distinctive characteristics such as being reflective, critical, rooted, democratic, dialogical, and transformative. “The core of the new cosmopolitanism,” writes Edward Demenchonok, “is its *dialogical* character, which embraces its rootedness, openness to cultural diversity, recognition of the Other, and the normativity of dialogical relationships with the Other—engaging in dialogue with individuals, social groups, nations, and cultures. It shows the possibility for reconciling differences through dialogical relationships without diminishing the voice and uniqueness of the Other: ‘unity in diversity’” [3, p. 412].

On the other hand, if we consider enmity and war to be an essential feature of human life, it must be admitted that even in the state of “civilization” wars will not disappear, but will only take a new form. Further, it should be recognized that the very fact of war between civilizations makes it impossible to consider these civilizations as equal, having the right to be unique and to defend their uniqueness: since war presupposes the victory of one side, it therefore leads to the assertion of the superiority of one civilization over the other and, as a result, to its subjugation, the elimination of its identity and, as a consequence, the leveling of cultural diversity in the world, the establishment of uniform and binding standards of life and thought. From this point of view, the achieved civilizational peace is always a hidden war.



A good illustration of such a peace is, for example, Francis Fukuyama's concept of "the end of history." Welcoming the triumphant victory of Western liberalism in the ideological war with alternative views, and above all with Soviet Marxism, Fukuyama argued that this victory marks "not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" [4, p. 85].

One should not think, however, that the "end of history" guarantees "eternal peace." First, there remain a large number of "historical" peoples in the world, and the first task of the victorious "posthistorical" civilization, which is a commonwealth of liberal democracies, is to help these peoples to escape from history, which implies active ideological, economic and military influence on these peoples and their states. In Fukuyama's view, the posthistorical world is a state in which humanity will find itself only in the distant future; at present, there is, and must be, a brutal war to achieve that peace.

Second, the posthistorical world, even if it is achieved, is too fragile an entity. First of all, there is a danger that history may resume at any moment, that is, the established norms of right living will be violated. Moreover, in the Western liberal-democratic world, there is already a tendency toward the "great rupture," when the efforts aimed at maintaining social order and standards of good life lead to the opposite result—the growth of anomie, the loss of meaning and value of life, and the transformation of society into a crowd of loners. Thus, Fukuyama concludes that it is possible to resist these processes and preserve the state of posthistory only if there is a "strong state," that is, predominantly by force.

#### 4

It is obvious that the concepts of eternal peace and new cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and the war of civilizations and the end of history, on the other hand, are substantively opposed to each other. In the first case, the necessity of a multipolar world is justified, in which the dialogue between cultures and civilizations is a structuring principle of the world order. In the second case, we see an attempt to prove the advantage

of a monopolar world, where social order is ensured by the hegemon state, which, having declared itself the pinnacle of socio-political progress of mankind, assumes the obligation to fulfill the function of the universal arbitrator and guarantor of universal justice.

However, both concepts have something in common. One can notice that both the theory of new cosmopolitanism and the ideology of hegemonism are based on excessive rationalization of man. Namely, in both cases it is assumed that man, as a subject of social relations, will act predominantly rationally, as a result of which all his actions can be understood and foreseen. From the point of view of the theory of new cosmopolitanism, sooner or later man will come to the conclusion that the solution to all problems is achieved exclusively through dialogue, which will be conducted in conditions of equality and mutual respect. According to the concept of hegemonism, the optimal form of social order has already been found and put into practice in liberal-democratic states; therefore, absolutely all people, as rational beings, should strive to establish a liberal-democratic order, and if someone does not do so, it is enough to explain the advantages of Western civilization to him, and he will definitely take the path of truth (in case the explanation does not work, it is acceptable to use force to make the person happy, because the end, as we know, justifies the means).

The theory of a new cosmopolitanism is certainly preferable to that of hegemonism, but it nevertheless cannot be opposed to the latter as truth to falsehood. The fact is that the rationalization of man makes it a bit *utopian*. Indeed, this theory works only if one assumes that a person voluntarily agrees to limit himself in his claims to dominance and recognizes in another person the same full-fledged and unconditionally valuable being as himself. Besides, this theory interprets dialogue exclusively in a positive way—as a constructive dialogue between equal subjects, trying to find a solution to a problem acceptable to both of them by means of reasoned discourse. Meanwhile, it is obvious that a person in his striving to realize his “will to power” is not obliged to act rationally and recognize other people as equals: theoretical justification of everyone's equality is not a sufficient condition for action (as Mikhail Bakhtin once put it, in order for a theoretically proven truth to become a guide to action, one

must necessarily put one's "signature" under it [5]). As for dialogue, there is obviously no reason to exclude such forms of human communication as conflict and war from the sphere of consideration. Although conflicts and wars are something that should be eliminated from social life, they are real modes of intercultural dialogue that cannot be disregarded.

But if the concept of a new cosmopolitanism seems utopian, the ideology of hegemonism is frankly cynical: it presupposes the *dehumanization* of the world as the ultimate goal of social development. For what is a world that fully corresponds to the absolute idea but a world in which there is no place for man? Indeed, man, with his free will and the factual imperfection that accounts for his being unique, is always the cause of disorder, he is a "consciousness-endowed misprint" in the verified text of creation, to use Søren Kierkegaard's term [6, p. 304]. The total rationalization of the world provides a place for the abstract, but not for the living human being. The abstract man is a being devoid of distinctions, not only cultural-historical, but even biological. Such a person needs neither philosophy nor culture. It is not by chance that Fukuyama, describing post-history as the logical conclusion of Hegelian idealism and presenting Alexandre Kojève, a popular interpreter of Hegel who influenced the intellectuals of Europe in the 1930s, as a prophet and pioneer of posthistorical life, emphasizes that he had to cease to be a philosopher: "And indeed, Kojève's life was consistent with his teaching. Believing that there was no more work for philosophers as well, since Hegel (correctly understood) had already achieved absolute knowledge, Kojève left teaching after the war and spent the remainder of his life working as a bureaucrat in the European Economic Community, until his death in 1968" [4, p. 88].

The events of recent years have clearly shown that the concept of the end of history is erroneous, and the hope that liberal democracy can give humanity a lasting peace and ensure a just social order has proved to be futile. Everything that European liberalism fought against—authoritarianism, intolerance of dissent, censorship, discrimination, corruption, etc.—has revived and gained unprecedented support, but within liberalism itself. Today, under the guise of defending liberal democratic values, the worst crimes are committed, from the destruction of cultures to genocide.

Under such conditions, the idea of a multipolar world regarded as a polylogue of civilizations becomes more and more attractive and receives thorough theoretical justification. The Russian philosophical tradition also contributes to this endeavor.

5

In Russia, already in the 18th century, issues related to the struggle of civilizations—European on the one hand and Russian on the other—began to be widely discussed. In the process of this polemic, fundamental positions of both philosophical and political-ideological nature were elaborated, which firmly became the basis of Russia's “cultural code”.

The reason why the attention of Russian thinkers was constantly focused on the problem of the struggle of civilizations was that, starting from the 18th century, Russia pursued an intensive state policy of Europeanization of all spheres of social life. Solving the problems of technical modernization of the country and borrowing from Europe not only technologies, but also entire social institutions, as well as cultural values and norms, Peter the Great created favorable conditions for Russian society to form such important questions for the subsequent development of public thought as “Who are we?”, “Where are we going?”, “Who is to blame?”, and “What is to be done?”. The Russian intelligentsia that emerged as a result of Peter's reforms (initially it was the so-called “Peter the Great's scholarly retinue”, formed on the basis of Theophan Prokopovich's circle) actively promoted the spread of European education in Russian society and initiated further reforms. It should be emphasized that the success of the reforms resulted from the way they managed to interpret the relevant innovation from the point of view of tradition, i.e. to harmonize the new, European values with the traditional values of Russian culture. Thus, already in the 18th century the creative comprehension of the dialogue between the two civilizations became an important factor in the development of Russia.

A vivid example of an active dialogue between the two civilizations—European and Russian—in the intellectual history of Russia in the 18th century is Vasily Tatishchev's work *Conversation of Two Friends About the Benefits of Science and Schools* (1733). In form, it is a dialogue be-

tween two “friends”, one of whom, an adherent of pre-Petrine Russia, asks questions, and the other, a supporter of the Europeanization of Russia, answers them. Thus, the content of the book is a lively discussion between the two systems of views and values—European and traditionally Russian, and Tatishchev, being a propagandist of Peter's reforms, does not try to present his opponent as uneducated or stupid, but, on the contrary, thoroughly considers his arguments and respects his values. Proving that “we, having borrowed sciences and arts from European nations, have acquired great glory and benefit” [7, p. 111], he tries to reconcile “the good of civilization” and the foundations of tradition. The conflict of civilizations, according to Tatishchev, can and should be resolved by peaceful means, through reasoned reflection. From this point of view, the Europeanization of Russian culture is not its negation, but its further development through the clarification of positive values originally formed in the tradition.

## 6

In the 19th century, the core of Russia's socio-political and philosophical life was the debate between Slavophiles and Westerners, and both, each in their own way, insisted that Russia was a special, distinctive type of civilization. The discussions began after the publication of Pyotr Chaadaev's first *Philosophical Letter* in the journal “Telescope” (1836). Comparing Russia and Europe, Chaadaev fully favored the latter. In his opinion, Europe is a realm of objective reason, where there is true Christianity (Catholicism), sciences and arts are successfully developing, while Russia is “thrown out of history” and seems to be a tabula rasa. The cause of Russia's backwardness, argued Chaadaev, is adherence to Orthodoxy—the originally distorted Christianity, which does not allow Russia to join the spiritual unity of civilized, European nations. “Driven by evil fate,” wrote Chaadaev, “we borrowed the first seeds of moral and mental enlightenment from the corrupted, despised by all peoples Byzantium,” and at that time when “Byzantium was cut off from the world brotherhood,” and therefore we “took from it the idea distorted by human passion” [8, p. 331]. As a result, “in spite of being called Christians, we did not move from our place, while Western Christianity majestically fol-

lowed the path mapped out by its divine founder” [8, p. 326]. Characterizing his contemporary Russia, Chaadaev did not spare black colors: “...we have never walked together with the other nations; we do not belong to any of the great families of mankind, neither to the West nor to the East, we have no traditions of either. We exist as if out of time, and the universal formation of the human race has not touched us... We belong to the nations that do not seem to be a necessary part of humanity yet, but exist in order to teach the world some great lesson” [8, p. 326].

It should be emphasized that Chaadaev does not criticize Russia in order to show its insignificance in comparison with Europe and thus contribute to the further Europeanization of Russian culture. On the contrary, by comparing Russia with the “civilized mankind” he sought to prove Russia's originality, its special way. For Chaadaev, as a Christian thinker, history is the realization of Divine Providence, and he raises the question of Russia to clarify its predestination in God's creation. If everything that happens in the world is conditioned by the will of God, and Russia is a *tabula rasa* and exists, being “thrown out” of history, it means that it is God's will. To understand what Russia is and why it exists as it does, that is, fundamentally different from Europe, is to understand what God thinks of Russia in eternity. Chaadaev seeks to reveal this thought and as a result creates an original historiosophic concept, according to which Russia is the key to the salvation of all mankind.

The conversation about Russia started by Chaadaev was continued by Slavophiles and Westerners. Throughout the 19th century, the opposition between Russia and Europe allowed Russian philosophers to justify, on the one hand, the originality and importance of the “Russian view” and, on the other hand, to admire the achievements of “European civilization.”

## 7

Of particular importance in this regard is Nikolai Danilevsky's treatise *Russia and Europe* (1869). Reflecting on the causes of Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856), Danilevsky came to the conclusion that one of the reasons was that the Russian Emperor Nicholas I regarded this war as a war of civilizations. Namely, he seriously believed that Rus-

sia's main task in the war against the Ottoman Empire was to solve the so-called "Eastern Question", i.e. to liberate the Christian peoples (Greeks, Bulgarians, Wallachians, Serbs, Montenegrins) subjugated by the Turks. Thus, Russia's war against the Ottoman Empire was interpreted by him as a war between the Christian world, on the one hand, and the world of Islam, on the other. Like Huntington later, Nicholas I mistakenly believed that civilizations, not states, were at war, and that the goals of the warring parties were determined by civilizational (religious) rather than political or economic interests. When it turned out that the Christian European states entered the war against Russia on the side of Turkey, i.e. began to fight for Islam and against Christianity, the myth of civilizational unity was quickly dispelled.

Danilevsky asks what "civilization" is and what it means to be "civilized. He begins by trying to find out the reasons for Europe's hatred of Russia, a hatred that often proves to be a stronger argument in international relations than economic gains or political considerations. He asks: "Why is Europe hostile to Russia?". And he answers: "Russia, they never tire of shouting at every turn, is a colossal conquering state, ceaselessly extending its limits, and consequently threatens the tranquility and independence of Europe. This is one accusation. Another is that Russia seems to be a kind of political Ahriman, some dark force hostile to progress and freedom" [9, p. 24].

Thus, Danilevsky identifies two main reasons why Europe has traditionally hated Russia: 1) Russia is a threat to Europe because it seeks to conquer it; 2) Russia is the embodiment of evil, there is neither freedom nor progress. Of course, Danilevsky shows that both of these accusations are false, that they were deliberately created in the West in order to cultivate the corresponding negative image of Russia and with its help to solve their own, in no way related to Russia, problems. But at the same time, he is well aware that mythological perceptions of Russia are ineradicable in the West and cannot be refuted or corrected, because myth is not something different from reality, but the foundation of reality itself. It is easy to see that the accusations mentioned by Danilevsky are stereotypical and still exist today; they are actively used in the modern political rhetoric of the Western world.

Next, Danilevsky asks the question of what Europe is. And he answers: “The meaning of ‘Europe’ is not geographical, but cultural-historical... Europe is the field of German-Roman civilization... Europe is the German-Roman civilization itself” [9, p. 58]. By means of the analysis of the concept of civilization as it was used in the West, Danilevsky shows that it is a concept of Eurocentric historiography. According to this historiography, which emerged in Europe, primarily in France, as early as the second half of the 18th century, there may exist only one—universal—civilization, and it is the one that is currently achieved in Europe. All other cultures are ranked based on the recognition of the superiority of European civilization and structured through such concepts as “savagery” and “barbarism”.

Danilevsky tries to find the grounds by virtue of which European civilization could be considered the optimal form of human existence, and finds nothing else but a deliberate tendentious interpretation of human history and the desire to level the diversity of cultures. Danilevsky's conclusion is as follows: the German-Roman civilization does not coincide with “universal civilization” and is not its heyday.

Justifying this thesis, Danilevsky creates the theory of local civilizations, or “cultural-historical types”. According to this theory, all cultural-historical types are equivalent, they cannot be considered in the context of development from primitive to higher cultures.

The Russian thinker contrasts Eurocentric historiography with the natural system of historical development of local civilizations. He likens cultural-historical types to living organisms, which in their time are born, develop, experience a period of flowering, and then wither and die. The life span of local civilizations, according to Danilevsky, is about 1000 years. He distinguishes local civilizations by means of five laws of cultural-historical types: 1) unity of language; 2) political independence; 3) uniqueness of the foundations of the cultural-historical type and impossibility of their transfer to another cultural-historical type; 4) diversity of ethnographic elements that make up the content of the cultural-historical type and condition its federative structure; 5) long development of the cultural-historical type and short duration of its “flowering”. He identifies 10 cultural-historical types: 1) Egyptian, 2) Chinese, 3) Old Semitic, 4)



Indian, 5) Iranian, 6) Jewish, 7) Greek, 8) Roman, 9) New Semitic, or Arabian, and 10) Germanic-Romanic, or European. To these he adds two American types: Mexican and Peruvian, which died a violent death and did not have time to accomplish their development.

It is interesting to note that Danilevsky, insisting on the uniqueness of local civilizations, opposes isolationism. He develops peculiar forms of intercultural communication, to which he gives biological names: transplantation, or weeding; grafting; fertilization. Progress, according to Danilevsky, is not that all peoples develop in one direction, but that humanity realizes as many variants of its historical existence as possible, having experienced the maximum number of its various forms.

Danilevsky's work had a great impact on the development of civilizational thinking in Russia (Fyodor Dostoevsky, Konstantin Leontiev, Nikolai Strakhov, Konstantin Bestuzhev-Ryumin, etc. were under the direct influence of Danilevsky's ideas), as well as in Europe. For example, Oswald Spengler, based on the key provisions of Danilevsky's theory, wrote his *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, analyzing the terrible experience of the First World War. The concept of multiple civilizations was also presented in Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* [10].

## 8

In the 20th century, the criticism of Eurocentrism and the idea of a single civilization was continued in Russia in the works of Eurasianists. The founder of Eurasianism, Nikolai Trubetskoy, in his treatise *Europe and Mankind*, conducted a meticulous analysis of the thesis of European exceptionalism and showed that Romano-German egocentrism skillfully disguises itself by opposing such concepts as “chauvinism” and “cosmopolitanism,” while these concepts are absolute synonyms.

Trubetskoy published his treatise in 1920 and presented in it an analysis of the causes and consequences of the First World War unleashed by “civilized mankind”. This war, Trubetskoy notes, opened many eyes to the fact that under the guise of European civilization lies insatiable greed, unscrupulousness, cruelty and aggression. In general, hypocrisy, or, as it is commonly said today, double standards, is one of the most important features of European civilization. Trubetskoy demon-

strates this hypocrisy by analyzing two contrasting concepts: chauvinism and cosmopolitanism.

Chauvinism, as an ideology of national superiority that aims to justify the right to discriminate, exploit and oppress other peoples of the world, is known to be frowned upon in Europe because it violates human rights and stimulates national conflicts. Chauvinism is opposed to cosmopolitanism, which seems to affirm quite different values. However, as Trubetskoy shows, there is no fundamental difference between chauvinism and cosmopolitanism. “When regarding European cosmopolitanism, one should always remember that the words ‘humanity,’ ‘universal civilization,’ and others are extremely imprecise expressions and that they conceal very definite ethnographic concepts. For when advocating human rights as such, European cosmopolitans understand humanity as European, with European customs and values. This means that all other cultures that differ from the European culture are to be eliminated. The cosmopolitan, like the chauvinist, sows hatred between peoples and demands the destruction of all those who do not resemble him” [11, p. 59].

But European culture, concludes Trubetskoy, is not the culture of all humanity. It is a product of the history of a certain ethnic group. Consequently, “‘European cosmopolitanism’ would be more correctly called *all-Roman-German chauvinism*... The psychological basis of cosmopolitanism is the same as the basis of chauvinism. It is a form of that unconscious prejudice, that special psychology which can best be called *egocentrism*. A person with a pronounced egocentric psychology unconsciously considers himself the center of the universe, the crown of creation, the best, the most perfect of all beings. Of the other two beings, the one that is closer to him, more like him, is better, and the one that is farther away from him is worse. Therefore, any natural group of beings to which this man belongs is recognized by him as the most perfect” [11, p. 60].

“The Romano-Germans,” continues Trubetskoy, “were always so naively sure that they alone were human beings that they called themselves ‘humanity,’ their culture ‘universal civilization,’ and, finally, their chauvinism ‘cosmopolitanism’” [11, p. 64].

It is interesting that Trubetskoy sees the extremism of European civilization as a threat not only to Russia, but to all humanity. Obviously,

people living in Europe are also part of humanity, which means that the extremism of European civilization poses a great danger to them as well. Thus, Trubetskoy separates the ideology of European exceptionalism from European culture. The latter has always been valuable to Russia, and it was in dialogue with European culture that Russian culture developed, borrowing the best and rightfully considering itself its successor.

The conclusions to which both Danilevsky and Trubetskoy, as well as many other Russian thinkers of the 19th–20th centuries, came, are as follows: there is not one, but many civilizations; all civilizations are equally valuable, self-sufficient and equal; the essential feature of civilization is its ability to recognize all other civilizations as equal, entering into dialogue with them, and not seeking to subjugate them; therefore, the “war of civilizations” is impossible, it is an empty concept, or, more precisely, an ideologeme, the meaning of which is precisely to prevent the emergence of multiple civilizations.

## 9

Contemporary events, including the war in Ukraine, as well as numerous actual and potential military conflicts around the world, which today are interpreted as “clashes of civilizations”, require closer attention, including on the part of philosophers. The starting point here should be the proof of the impossibility of war between civilizations, however we understand them—in a religious, cultural or even ideological sense. Wars always arise when people begin to consider their own civilization as the only true or the best, exceptional civilization, and therefore begin to deny the value of other cultures. This means that any war is now an attempt to prevent the emergence of other civilizations, an attempt to destroy the diversity of cultures and reduce them to an abstract unity, declaring the latter to be the expression of absolute truth. Indeed, in the name of the defense of human rights as such, the concrete rights of specific people, and not only their rights, but also their lives, have always been and are being destroyed.

The war in Ukraine now allows us to understand the main thing. This is not a war of Russians against Ukrainians and not even a war of Russia against Europe, or—more broadly—against the Western world as a

whole. Both Russia, Ukraine and Europe are victims in this war. The war is not between states, and certainly not between civilizations, but between capitalist corporations claiming world domination, on the one hand, and all of humanity, on the other. This is a war against the idea of humanity, and thus against culture, philosophy, religions. The goal of this war is the *dehumanization of man and the world*.

Recently, one often hears that as the conflict in Ukraine escalates, the stakes are getting higher, and thus humanity is on the threshold of World War III. This is partly true. But we must realize that even if humanity manages to avoid a nuclear catastrophe, it could still be exterminated—in the sense that it would become an easily controllable mass. A world in which man is reduced to the level of a creature whose actions are predictable and simulated cannot be considered human. This is the world of mechanistic civilization, where there is no place for anything human.

In his time, Dostoevsky in *Notes from Underground* proved that a man would never be able to turn into a “piano key” or a “pin”. “Shower upon him every earthly blessing”, he wrote, “drown him in a sea of happiness, so that nothing but bubbles of bliss can be seen on the surface; give him economic prosperity, such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes and busy himself with the continuation of his species, and even then out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man would play you some nasty trick” [12, p. 116]. However, the modern architects of the monopolar world seem to be close to proving otherwise. A dehumanized world is almost a reality.

There should be stressed another important point in the concept of the “war of civilizations”: namely, an attempt to preserve and actualize metaphysical thinking. Philosophy, understood as metaphysics, is known to have determined the fate of Europe, its flourishing and decline, as well as the total crisis of European culture, which began to manifest itself already in the second half of the 19th century. At present, metaphysical discourse, having been discredited in terms of philosophical cognition and having formally given way to other, alternative practices of philosophizing, still asserts itself in real life—as a regulator of the politics of globalism. Obviously, the idea of a unified civilization is as much a concept of metaphysics as the notion of a single, eternal truth. What is now being

presented as a clash of civilizations is the agony of metaphysics, a very real and dangerous threat to all of humanity.

The only way to counter this threat is to develop non-metaphysical thinking, overcoming the temptations of both traditional Eurocentrism and all its modern modifications. This is best achieved through intercultural dialogue. This is where the basis for peace in the future lies.

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