

CULTURAL EVOLUTION: AN ALTERNATIVE TIMELINE OF HUMANITY

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ABSTRACT

Modern humanities scholarship offers a wide range of approaches to the periodization and interpretation of the historical development of humankind. These approaches can generally be divided into two main directions. The first includes theories based on the idea of linear and progressive historical development, reflected in the works of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Karl Marx. The second direction consists of non-linear interpretations of the historical process, presented in the works of Nikolai Yakovlevich Danilevsky, Konstantin Nikolaevich Leontiev, Arnold Joseph Toynbee, and Oswald Spengler. These scholars interpret the development of civilizations as a complex, multi-variant, and often cyclical process. Both approaches possess considerable explanatory potential, yet each also has certain limitations. This article proposes an alternative approach to understanding the historical process based on the theory of human cultural evolution. The proposed framework does not reject earlier theoretical models but rather seeks to integrate and expand upon their key ideas. Within this concept, three successive stages of historical development are identified. The first stage — the two-wave stage — is associated with the formation of oral speech and the dominance of visual perception in the transmission of information. The second stage — the two-dimensional stage — is connected with the emergence of writing and the spread of textual communication. The third stage — the binary-machine stage — is characterized by the development of digital technologies and the emergence of various digital assistants. The article analyzes the key features of each of these stages and compares them according to several criteria, including the political and legal structure of society, the socio-economic system, the sphere of culture and art, and the development of science, education, and enlightenment. In conclusion, it is emphasized that the theory of cultural evolution in human history can serve as a valuable analytical framework for scholars and cultural figures seeking to understand contemporary global transformations and to identify possible ways of addressing the pressing challenges facing humanity.

Key words: Human Cultural Evolution, History of Humanity, Civilization, Imaginative Thinking, External Long-Term Memory, Artificial Intelligence, Historical Education.

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Мәдени эволюция: адамзаттың балама хронологиясы

Аңдатпа. Қазіргі гуманитарлық ғылым адамзат тарихының дамуын кезеңдерге бөлудің және түсіндірудің әртүрлі тәсілдерін ұсынады. Оларды шартты түрде екі негізгі бағытқа бөлуге болады. Бірінші бағыт тарихтың үздіксіз және бірізді дамуы туралы түсінікке негізделген прогресс теорияларына сүйенеді. Мұндай көзқарас Огюст Конт, Герберт Спенсер және Карл Маркс еңбектерінде көрініс тапқан. Екінші бағыт тарихи үдерісті сызықтық емес тұрғыдан түсіндіреді және Николай Яковлевич Данилевский, Константин Николаевич Леонтьев, Арнольд Джозеф Тойнби және Освальд Шпенглердің еңбектерінде ұсынылған. Бұл ғалымдар өркениеттердің дамуын күрделі, көпнұсқалы және кей жағдайда циклдік сипаттағы үдеріс ретінде қарастырады. Аталған екі бағыттың да түсіндіру мүмкіндігі жоғары болғанымен, олардың белгілі бір шектеулері де бар. Осы мақалада адамзат тарихын түсіндірудің балама тәсілі ретінде адамның мәдени эволюциясы теориясына негізделген көзқарас ұсынылады. Ұсынылып отырған тәсіл бұрынғы теорияларды жоққа шығармайды, керісінше олардың негізгі идеяларын біріктіріп, толықтыруды көздейді. Бұл тұжырымдама аясында адамзат дамуының үш кезеңі ажыратылады. Бірінші кезең — екітолқынды кезең — ауызша сөйлеудің қалыптасуымен және ақпаратты қабылдауда көру қабілетінің басымдығымен байланысты. Екінші кезең — екіөлшемді кезең — жазудың пайда болуы және мәтіндік коммуникацияның кең таралуымен сипатталады. Үшінші кезең — бинарлық-машиналық кезең — цифрлық технологиялардың қарқынды дамуы және әртүрлі цифрлық ассистенттердің пайда болуымен ерекшеленеді. Мақалада аталған кезеңдердің әрқайсысының негізгі ерекшеліктері талданып, оларды бірнеше өлшем бойынша салыстырмалы түрде қарастыру жүзеге асырылады: саяси-құқықтық құрылым, әлеуметтік-экономикалық жүйе, мәдениет пен өнер

саласы, сондай-ақ ғылым, білім беру және ағартушылықтың дамуы. Қорытынды бөлімде адамзат тарихының мәдени эволюциясы теориясы қазіргі жаһандық өзгерістерді түсіндіруде және адамзат алдында тұрған өзекті мәселелерді шешу жолдарын анықтауда зерттеушілер мен мәдениет қайраткерлері үшін маңызды талдау құралы бола алатыны атап өтіледі.

Түйін сөздер: мәдени эволюция, адамзат тарихы, өркениет, бейнелі ойлау, сыртқы ұзақ мерзімді жады, жасанды интеллект, тарихи білім беру.

Культурная эволюция: альтернативная хронология человечества

Аннотация. Современная гуманитарная наука предлагает различные подходы к периодизации и объяснению исторического развития человечества. Условно их можно разделить на два основных направления. Первое объединяет концепции, основанные на представлении о поступательном и последовательном развитии истории, характерном для теорий прогресса, сформулированных в трудах Отгуста Конта, Герберта Спенсера и Карла Маркса. Второе направление включает нелинейные интерпретации исторического процесса, представленные в работах Николая Яковлевича Данилевского, Константина Николаевича Леонтьева, Арнольда Джозефа Тойнби и Освальда Шпенглера, которые рассматривают развитие цивилизаций как сложный, многовариантный и нередко циклический процесс. Оба подхода обладают значительным объяснительным потенциалом, однако имеют и определённые ограничения. В данной статье предлагается альтернативный способ интерпретации исторического процесса, основанный на концепции культурной эволюции человека. Предложенный подход не отвергает существующие теоретические модели, а стремится объединить и дополнить их ключевые положения. В рамках данной концепции выделяются три последовательных этапа исторического развития. Первый этап — двухволновой — связан с формированием устной речи и доминированием зрительного восприятия в процессе передачи информации. Второй этап — двухмерный — обусловлен возникновением письменности и распространением текстовой формы коммуникации. Третий этап — бинарно-машинный — характеризуется развитием цифровых технологий и появлением различных цифровых ассистентов. В статье рассматриваются основные характеристики каждого из указанных этапов, а также проводится их сравнительный анализ по ряду критериев: политико-правовая организация общества, социально-экономическая система, сфера культуры и искусства, а также развитие науки, образования и просвещения. В заключении подчеркивается, что теория культурной эволюции истории человечества может выступать полезным аналитическим инструментом для исследователей и деятелей культуры при осмыслении современных глобальных трансформаций и поиске путей решения актуальных проблем человечества.

Ключевые слова: культурная эволюция, история человечества, цивилизация, образное мышление, внешняя долговременная память, искусственный интеллект, историческое образование.

Introduction

A view of the history of humankind from the standpoint of cultural studies and the challenges of the present day requires a certain rethinking of generally accepted concepts. The entire history of humanity is inseparably connected with anthropogenesis (evolution) - both the evolution of *Homo sapiens* as such, and the evolution of his principal organ, the brain, along with figurative thinking (the fundamental human capacity, the instrument that impels action). This history begins at the moment when the human being, alongside instincts, began to employ in his conscious, figurative activity for the achievement of goals an external long-term memory - one not connected with instincts and not characteristic of the animal world.

This memory originated with the emergence of oral speech, enabling the description of images, their transmission among people, the stimulation of actions, their coordination and planning, including the determination of the timing of actions (man began to plan for the

future). Long-term memory began to take shape within the tribe, clan, and community - through traditions, legends, cave paintings, the making and use of objects and tools of daily life, and so forth. This, in turn, became the basis for the emergence of peoples with their own languages, cultures, and worldviews. Later, with the advent of writing, the preservation of images became systematic and enduring, which constituted the next foundation for the rise of social institutions, including institutions of culture (libraries, museums, archives, theaters, and others). In this process, the human being became the summit of evolution and began actively transforming nature. A manifold increase of population took place, and the history of humanity began to form.

The aim of our research is to delineate the contours of a new classification of the history of humanity in the context of the theory of Human Cultural Evolution - a classification based on key changes exerting a profound influence on the development of society. It is assumed that precisely the cumulative, creative activity of the

human being, involving all the senses and drawing upon the entirety of humanity's accumulated knowledge, is the driving force behind radical transformations in humanity history. The application of the proposed theory of Human Cultural Evolution in historical education, as well as in diverse fields of science and technology, will enable humanity to respond more adequately to the challenges of the present day.

Methodology

The methodological foundation of this research is based on an interdisciplinary synthesis of philosophy of history, cultural studies, evolutionary anthropology, communication theory, and systems analysis. The central objective of the study is to substantiate the classification of humanity history within the framework of the Theory of Human Cultural Evolution and to demonstrate its explanatory and integrative potential in comparison with existing linear and nonlinear models.

General Theoretical Framework

The research proceeds from the premise that any classification of humanity history must rely on a fundamental and universal criterion capable of explaining large-scale transformations across political, socioeconomic, cultural, and intellectual spheres. Existing approaches often emphasize one dominant factor—economic (Marxist theory), spiritual (Jaspers' Axial Age), civilizational identity (Danilevsky, Toynbee), or technological communication (McLuhan). While analytically valuable, such approaches tend to remain partial.

The present study adopts as its core analytical principle the concept of external long-term memory as the key driver of human cultural development. External long-term memory is understood as socially organized mechanisms for preserving, transmitting, and accumulating knowledge beyond the limits of individual biological memory. This concept allows us to identify structural shifts that reshape not only communication systems but also institutional, political, and economic formations. Thus, the methodology is built upon the assumption that qualitative transformations in the forms of external memory constitute turning points in humanity history.

Comparative-Historical Analysis

A comparative-historical method is employed to examine major theories of historical development and to position the proposed classification within the broader intellectual tradition. Linear models (theories of progress, socio-economic formations) are analyzed in terms of their explanatory logic and their understanding of causality. Nonlinear and civilizational models are examined with regard to their treatment of plurality, cycles, and cultural uniqueness.

Through systematic comparison, the research identifies both the strengths and the limitations of these approaches. The comparative analysis does not aim at refutation but at integration. It demonstrates that linear models successfully describe internal structural evolution within particular stages, while nonlinear models capture diversity and civilizational specificity. However, neither type sufficiently explains the fundamental transitions that redefine the overall architecture of human society. This comparative stage of research serves as a methodological justification for introducing a new classification principle grounded in communicative and cognitive transformations.

Evolutionary and Anthropological Perspective

The methodology incorporates insights from evolutionary anthropology and cognitive science. Human development is considered not solely as biological evolution but as a process of cultural accumulation facilitated by symbolic systems.

The emergence of oral speech represents a radical transformation in human cognitive capacity, enabling abstract representation, collective planning, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Writing further expands memory capacity by detaching information from immediate presence and enabling institutionalized knowledge storage. The digital-binary system marks a new threshold, where memory becomes machinic, exponentially scalable, and globally networked. This evolutionary perspective allows us to interpret historical epochs as stages in the expansion of cognitive and communicative infrastructure rather than merely as economic or political formations.

Structural-Functional Analysis

Structural-functional analysis is applied to

examine how each stage of Human Cultural Evolution affects: political-legal organization; socioeconomic systems; cultural production and artistic forms; science, education, and enlightenment institutions.

At each stage, dominant forms of external memory generate corresponding institutional structures. For example, oral cultures rely on kinship-based authority and customary law; literate societies develop bureaucratic states and codified legal systems; digital societies foster network governance, transnational corporations, and algorithmic regulation. This approach allows the research to trace systemic correlations between communicative technologies and social organization without reducing one sphere to another.

Systems and Stage Modeling

The classification is constructed through stage modeling. A stage is defined not simply as a chronological period but as a relatively stable configuration of communicative, cognitive, and institutional structures.

The criteria for distinguishing stages include: The dominant form of external long-term memory; The scale and speed of information transmission; The degree of institutional complexity; The global demographic and geopolitical configuration; The level of interaction with the natural environment.

On this basis, three stages are identified: The Two-wave Stage (oral speech and sensory communication); The Two-dimensional Stage (writing and planar inscription); The Binary-machinery Stage (digital computation and binary encoding).

The transitions between stages are conceptualized as nonlinear accelerations triggered by technological-cognitive breakthroughs.

Interdisciplinary Synthesis

The research methodology deliberately transcends disciplinary boundaries. Philosophical reflection provides conceptual clarity; historical analysis offers empirical grounding; communication theory explains media transformations; systems theory ensures structural coherence; and cultural studies interpret symbolic production.

Such synthesis is necessary because the phenomenon under investigation—humanity

history as cultural evolution—cannot be adequately explained within a single disciplinary framework.

Analytical Principles

Several analytical principles guide the research: Principle of integration: The new classification supplements rather than rejects existing models. Principle of universality: The chosen criterion must apply across civilizations and cultural contexts. Principle of structural causality: Transformations are explained through systemic reconfiguration rather than isolated events. Principle of continuity and coexistence: Stages do not completely replace one another; elements of earlier stages persist and interact within later ones.

Limitations and Scope

The methodology recognizes certain limitations. The proposed classification simplifies complex historical realities in order to construct a coherent explanatory model. It does not deny regional diversity or civilizational plurality. Instead, it seeks to identify macro-structural patterns underlying this diversity. Moreover, chronological boundaries between stages are approximate rather than rigid. The emphasis is placed on qualitative transformations rather than precise dating.

Practical Applicability

Finally, the methodology is oriented toward practical applicability. By conceptualizing contemporary global transformations as part of the Binary-machinery Stage, the research provides a framework for interpreting digitalization, artificial intelligence, globalization, and polycentric geopolitics as structurally interconnected phenomena. This methodological approach allows scholars, educators, and policymakers to better understand long-term trajectories and to formulate strategies responsive to current civilizational challenges.

In summary, the methodology of this study is grounded in interdisciplinary synthesis, comparative-historical analysis, evolutionary anthropology, structural-functional examination, and stage modeling. By identifying transformations in external long-term memory as the primary criterion of historical classification, the research establishes a universal explanatory framework capable of integrating technological,

cultural, political, and socioeconomic dimensions of humanity history.

Review of Major Existing Classifications

Let us consider the commonly accepted and well-established approaches to the classification of stages in human development, noting their intersections and contradictions. At present, a significant number of classifications of the historical process have been developed, which may be conventionally divided into two categories - linear and nonlinear.

In the first case, human society is viewed as moving forward sequentially, through the increasing complexity of social and state institutions. One example of such a classification is the theory of progress developed in the 19th century by A. Comte [1] and H. Spencer [2]. According to them, humanity is constantly advancing, reaching ever-greater heights of civilization. The theory of progress is closely tied to the Eurocentric worldview characteristic of that era. Its shortcomings include neglect of the uneven nature of human development, as well as the existence of periods of regression and stagnation.

Perhaps the most thoroughly elaborated linear interpretation of human history is the theory of class struggle and the materialist conception of history advanced by K. Marx and F. Engels [3]. This theory is based on the idea that society develops through successive socio-economic stages, each defined by specific relations of production and modes of production. The transition to a new stage occurs when existing relations of production begin to obstruct the development of productive forces. The theory emphasizes the economy as the foundation while overlooking the significance of other spheres of human life - the superstructure. Although influential, this framework was developed in the mid-19th century, and today the structures of modern economies and societies no longer fully correspond to it.

Among non-linear theories, civilizational approaches hold a special place. They reject the notion of a single path of development for humanity and instead focus on the trajectories of distinct local civilizations. Representatives

of this perspective include N. Danilevsky [4], K. Leontiev [5], O. Spengler [6] and A. Toynbee [7]. With certain qualifications, L. Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis can also be placed in this category [8]. These theories identify a number of civilizations, each passing through a cycle from emergence to flourishing and eventual decline - hence, the absence of "eternal civilizations." A key achievement of this group of theories is the overcoming of Eurocentric bias in historical analysis (especially evident in Danilevsky's theory of cultural-historical types), along with their emphasis on the specific features of various cultures (technological, spiritual, socio-economic, and others). A. Toynbee's concept of the "challenge-and-response" dynamic also deserves special mention: in his view, a civilization endures only as long as it can adequately respond to challenges - whether historical or environmental.

Another significant nonlinear framework is K. Jaspers' theory of the Axial Age [9]. He identifies several stages in humanity history: the prehistoric era; the rise of the great cultures of antiquity (Sumerian-Babylonian, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese); and the age of technology. His main emphasis, however, is on the "Axial Age" - the period between 800 and 200 BCE, when philosophy emerged and spiritual movements developed. According to Jaspers, this marked the transition from irrational to rational thought, which shaped the worldview of modern humanity. Yet the historical process was far more complex than Jaspers' concept allows, and his framework focuses exclusively on the spiritual dimension while giving little attention to material factors.

Postmodernist theories also deserve mention. They reject the possibility of identifying universal laws of development, emphasizing instead the multiplicity of historical trajectories, subjective interpretations, and personal evaluations of the past.

Similar ideas appear in ethnographic and cultural studies. In the 19th century, the ethnologist A. Bastian [10], consistent with the Eurocentric worldview, distinguished three types of cultures - primitive, intermediate, and advanced - depending on the level of technological and social development. In the 1920s, the relativist school began to take shape, with its foundations laid by F. Boas [11]. He developed the concept

of cultural relativity, asserting that each culture is unique, must be understood within its own context, and achieves excellence in specific areas of human activity.

Cultural studies also offer stage-based approaches. According to one such model, human culture passed through the following stages: the primitive (the emergence of culture); the archaic (the cultures of ancient societies up to the 5th century CE); the pre-industrial (the culture of the Middle Ages, 6th–14th centuries); the industrial (the cultures of the Renaissance and Reformation of the 15th–16th centuries and the Early Modern period of the 17th–early 20th centuries); and the post-industrial (the contemporary culture of the 20th–21st centuries) [12]. However, this scheme does not explain the causes of transition between stages, but merely registers milestones. An original contribution was made by D. K. Feibleman [13], who distinguished the following types of culture: pre-primitive, primitive, military, religious, civilizational, scientific, and post-scientific. He classified the first four as “initial” and the latter three as “advanced.” Within his framework, cultural types do not necessarily follow a strict sequence and may appear in different orders. In practice, however, cultures are more complex, combining elements of several types simultaneously.

Attention should also be given to M. McLuhan’s theory [14], which bases cultural classification on modes of communication that shape human perception of the world. He identifies four stages: oral culture; writing; print; and the emergence of radio and television. McLuhan emphasizes the formation of civilizations only with the advent of writing, the shaping of national consciousness through print, and the acceleration of globalization with the appearance of radio and television.

Finally, some scholars today distinguish three global cultural types (sometimes referred to as cultural codes): the pre-literate, sometimes called traditional; the literate, based on book culture; and the screen-based, currently in formation [15]. This scheme, however, does not address the underlying reasons for transitions between types.

Almost all existing systems share certain shortcomings. They are either insufficiently universal, or they neglect periods of regression

and stagnation. Moreover, explanations for transitions between stages are often absent or are reduced to narrower economic, social, political, or technological causes, rather than grounded in fundamental principles of human and societal development.

Outlines of a New Classification and the Characteristics of Stages of Human Cultural Evolution

Taking into account the shortcomings of existing theoretical approaches, we propose an original classification of humanity history, intended to serve as a foundation for the further structuring and systematization of diverse fields of knowledge. Such a framework will make it possible to respond to the challenges of the modern era in a timely and adequate manner. This classification was first presented by the author during the discussion “*Cultural Exchange as a Factor of International Stability*”, held at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum on June 20, 2025, under the auspices of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation [16]. The proposed approach received both support and lively discussion among the participants and the wider audience.

Our classification is based on distinguishing of three Stages of Human Cultural Evolution:

The First Stage began more than 50,000 years ago (its precise point of origin remains unknown) with the emergence of oral speech. Since interaction at this stage was primarily mediated by two senses — vision and hearing — necessary for the perception of two types of waves, light and sound, we will conditionally refer to this stage as the “Two-wave Stage”.

The Second Stage began approximately 6,000 years ago. Because writing always appears on a flat medium—papyrus, birch bark, paper, and so forth—and a plane has two dimensions, we will conditionally call this stage the “Two-dimensional Stage”.

The Third Stage began around 200 years ago with the invention of the electromagnetic telegraph in the early 1830s by the Russian scientist P. I. Schilling, followed by S. Morse’s development of the telegraph code and the application of these discoveries for the instantaneous transmission of

information over long distances in the mid-19th century. With the adoption of the binary numeral system (an ideal mathematical language capable of describing any process and perfectly suited to machine processing) in human activity, humanity

entered a new stage. We will conditionally call this the "Binary-machinery Stage".

The proposed by the author classification can be presented in the form of the following table:

Table 1 - Humanity history classification in the context of the theory of Human Cultural Evolution

HUMANITY HISTORY		
First Epoch – The Epoch of Oral Speech	Second Epoch – The Epoch of Written Speech	Third Epoch – The Epoch of the Digital Assistant
		Binary-machinery Stage: Digital Assistant
	Two-dimensional Stage: Writing	
Two-wave Stage: Spoken Language		
HUMAN CULTURAL EVOLUTION STAGES USING EXTERNAL LONG-TERM MEMORY		

Extended characteristics of cultural stages may also be presented in the following table:

Table 02 - Stages of Human Cultural Evolution and their characteristics

Types of Characteristics	Stages of Human Cultural Evolution		
	First Stage — Two-Wave Stage	Second Stage — Two-Dimensional Stage	Third Stage — Binary-Machinery Stage
Characteristics of the first significant event (trigger) of the Human Cultural Evolution Stage	Exchange of information among people through the senses (primarily vision and hearing) by means of oral speech; thus, languages emerged.	In addition to oral speech, writing on surfaces began to be used, including numerical signs of the sexagesimal and decimal systems for agricultural and trade purposes, as well as alphabets of languages.	In addition to oral and written speech, the use of computing machines began (the transmission of binary code over distance) — digital assistants.
	The beginning of settlement and the mastering of continents.	The appearance of numerical systems in Sumerian, Egyptian, and Indus civilizations.	The invention of Morse code, the telegraph, and the teletype; large-scale migration between continents.
Quantitative and other global characteristics of humanity at the Human Cultural Evolution Stage	It started more than 50,000 years ago.	It started about 6,000 years ago.	It started about 200 years ago.
	Initial population: about 2 million people.	Initial population: up to 20 million people.	Initial population: about 2 billion people.
	Population growth during the stage: tenfold	.Population growth during the stage: hundredfold.	Population growth during the stage: fourfold.
	The emergence of society. The Earth was inhabited primarily by isolated groups (hundreds of small societies).	The establishment of society. The emergence of numerous states, the formation of global colonial empires (dozens of civilizations).	The globalization of society. Multiplicity of states, the rise of global industrial and financial corporations, and the emergence of a polycentric world (a handful of civilizations).

Characteristics of external long-term memory	Existed in unstable form through legends, myths, oral traditions, and cave paintings.	Relatively stable, but the speed and scale of information transfer were limited.	Long-term storage of vast volumes of information and their instantaneous transmission.
Characteristics in terms of interaction with the environment and humanitarian values	Utilization of the natural environment.	Industrial exploitation of the environment.	Transformation of the environment. The weight of human-made objects has surpassed the biomass of the planet.
	Mutual assistance within kin, tribe, or people.	Development of social institutions within states.	Development of international social institutions.

It should be noted that the classification based on the Theory of Human Cultural Evolution does not contradict any of the existing models, which in one way or another are more particular in scope and describe narrower aspects of human development (technological, informational, socio-economic, and so forth). On the contrary, in the author's view, it may serve as a foundational framework, one that confirms and complements each one of them.

Conclusion

The developed theory of Human Cultural Evolution and the Classification of Humanity History based upon it possesses a certain potential in the field of historical education. On the one hand, it offers simplicity of perception and exposition; on the other, it provides a universal framework for explaining causal relationships across various spheres of human activity. It can be applied in educational and outreach processes at different levels, for people of all ages and categories.

This Classification enables the stage of a new knowledge within an interdisciplinary approach - at the intersection of philosophy, cultural studies, history, biology, physics, and other disciplines. It makes it possible to present the development of humanity in a convenient and illustrative scheme, which, first, establishes basic ideas and concepts, and second, on this foundation, allows individuals to uncover their own potential.

In the second half of the twentieth century, a bipolar world system took shape, with each pole representing its own civilizational values. After its collapse, there was an attempt to form a unipolar system - and some political theorists hastily proclaimed the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 2004). Today, however, one observes the emergence of

a polycentric world. At the same time, attempts are being made to preserve the colonial system in a new format, which provokes conflicts between peoples and states.

This leads to the conclusion that, in the middle of the Third Stage, we are witnessing a kind of "civilizational review" - an assessment of what different civilizations can offer the world and what developmental goals they pursue. Those civilizations will endure which are the most culturally developed and which are capable of creating and embedding proper images based on universal human values. With each successive Stage, humanity has advanced in the humanization of society as the basis for cohesion and survival in the face of any challenges. Overcoming neocolonialism and the ability to build a harmonious society founded upon the recognition of mutual interests are indispensable qualities for a civilization that will demonstrate a new level of humanization and lead the movement toward the next Human Cultural Evolution Stage.

The greatest prospects for successful development belong to those civilizations which have not only mastered the competent use of knowledge but also, earlier than other cultures, learned to apply it for the common good, to show tolerance and understanding, and at the same time to defend their own values. Institutions of culture (archives, libraries, museums, and theaters), which safeguard cultural images, provide access to them, and disseminate knowledge, play a special role in the development of local civilizations and humanity as a whole. Today, efforts continue to construct negative images of various countries in the context of economic competition, which contributes to international instability. Counteraction to this requires, among other things, raising the level of cultural literacy in working with information sources, improving

the quality of public education, and cultivating constructive images in consciousness aimed at preserving the traditional spiritual and moral values of peoples.

The Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Historical Education, approved by Presidential Decree No. 314 of May 8, 2024, states: *"Russia is a great country with a centuries-long history, a civilization-state that has united the Russian and many other peoples of Eurasia into a single cultural and historical community and has made an enormous contribution to global development."* Respect for one's own history, its glorification and exaltation, is a distinctive feature of all mature states.

All three Human Cultural Evolution Stages continue to co-exist, to interact, to evolve, and to influence all spheres of social life and culture. Analyzing the historical process through the lens of the proposed theory of Human Cultural Evolution, one may reasonably suppose that humanity today finds itself somewhere in the middle of the Third Stage. It was precisely in the middle of earlier epochs that turning points occurred, affecting all spheres of society and laying the foundations for a new spiral of rapid development. Understanding and adopting the Theory of Human Cultural Evolution and the classification of humanity history based on it will allow scholars and cultural figures to address their tasks more effectively, including those in the field of historical education.

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