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Oittinen, Vesa

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FROM SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORMATIONS TO CIVILISATIONS: SEEKING A PARADIGM CHANGE IN LATE SOVIET DISCUSSIONS

BY

VESA OITTINEN

ALEKSANTERI INSTITUTE/UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI¹

ABSTRACT. *In the late 1970s, Soviet philosophers and social scientists started to discuss the usefulness of the Marxian theory of socio-economic formations and how a theory of civilisation might complement it. The “civilisation discussion” of the late 1970s and early 1980s influenced ideas of perestroika such as the well-known term “generally human values” (obshchechelovecheskie chennosti), one of the cornerstones of Gorbachev’s doctrine of foreign policy derived from it. The notion of civilisation was initially conceived of as supplementary to the theory of socio-economic formations. However, following the demise of the Soviet Union its Marxist dimension was totally neglected, and concepts such as “civilisation” and “culture” replaced the Marxist emphasis on material production as the foundation of societies.*

One of the the most influential doctrinal frameworks in the social theory of Soviet Marxism-Leninism was the concept of socio-economic formations, a term coined by Marx himself. The standard work *Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy* (Russian edition of 1979, published in English in 1983), for example, refers to the theory of “social-economic formations” as the “corner-stone of the materialist understanding of history”.² Based on the idea of the determining influence of material production on the rest of society, it explains the course of human history as development and transition from one social formation to another. The Soviet canon differentiated between five socio-economic formations: primitive communism, the ancient slave society, feudalism, capitalism and socialism/communism. There was discussion of a possible “Asiatic mode of production”, and some smaller revisions of the formational succession were proposed now and then, but in the main this five-phase scheme, dubbed by its critics the *piatichlenka*, remained the basic formulation of the theory.

Although proponents of the theory claimed it was built on Marxism, in fact it was a product of Soviet philosophy and historiography. Of course, the term itself (*ökonomische Gesellschaftsformation*) was from Marx. The *locus classicus* in which it occurs is in the Foreword to his *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, published in 1859. He wrote:

In grossen Umrissen können asiatische, antike, feudale und moderne bürgerliche Produktionsweisen als progressive Epochen der ökonomischen Gesellschaftsformation bezeichnet werden.³

(I quote Marx in the German original because the English translations I have consulted are surprisingly inaccurate here.) However, this passage from 1859 is almost a *hapax legomenon* in Marx’s oeuvre. He used the expression *ökonomische Gesellschaftsformation* very rarely and, which is especially intriguing, frequently in the singular form. In

¹ This paper is a slightly modified version of the one presented at a Symposium at the Aleksanteri Institute: “New Analytical Perspectives on Civilisational Paradigms”, 1—2 December 2016.

² *Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy*, Moscow:Progress 1983, p. 240

³ Marx-Engels, *Werke*, Bd.

sum, Marx did not develop the idea of socio-economic formations into a fully-fledged theory, and he used the expression more as a metaphor. In fact, the concept of “formation” was borrowed from geology and paleontology.⁴

THE “CIVILISATION VS. FORMATION DISCUSSION” OF THE 1980S

Although Soviet philosophers and scholars did not question the idea of socio-economic formations in itself, they voiced strong discontent with its overly dogmatic and inflexible application in social sciences and history. One of the main problems seemed to be the reductionism to an economic perspective that followed from the primacy of production forces/production relations inherent in the concept. The bane of vulgar-materialistic or economistic reductionism – which had afflicted Soviet social and humanist sciences since the October revolution – was present already in discussions of the “sociologism” of the 1920s, which purported to reduce the protagonists of culture, art and philosophy of previous centuries to simple marionettes of “class interest”. Indeed, if the main focus of attention in history and culture studies was to be on the contradictions within socio-economic formations and changes from one formation to another, it would result in a one-sided over-emphasis on historical breaks and class struggles. Every formation constituted its own special ruling class, which presented its narrow interests as the only possible values, thus creating the ideological illusion that bourgeois or feudal interests, for example, reflected the only true general human morality. Attempts to ward off such kinds of reductionism made the need for more appropriate categorical tools for analysing the historical process more acute.

As a reaction against the reductionism of the “formation approach”, Soviet scholars began to develop an alternative “civilisational” approach in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The idea in these attempts was not that the concept of civilisation would replace that of formation, but that it would complement it. The first results of the discussions came to light in 1980 when Miran Mchedlov published a book on socialism as a “new type of civilisation”⁵, and a little later the Academy of Sciences of the USSR initiated an extensive research project involving dozens of Soviet scholars from different fields of the humanities. The results of this project were disseminated in reports delivered by members of the Soviet delegation at the 17th World Congress of Philosophy in Montreal in 1983, for example.⁶ A preliminary balance sheet of the theoretical discussions on this subject was then published at the “round table” discussion in *Voprosy Filosofii* in Autumn 1989.⁷ This publication came out at the height of perestroika, and it was already marked by the abandonment of initial Marxist positions.

The Soviet discussion was not the only one of its kind. A similar evaluation of the Marxist concept of socio-economic formations was attempted in the German Democratic Republic when a group of researchers led by Ernst Engelberg and Wolfgang Küttler published a massive volume entitled *Formationstheorie und Geschichte*.⁸ Unlike the Soviet researchers, however, the East German scholars focused exclusively on analysing the socio-economic formation and did not reflect on its relationship with the concept of “civilisation” (the word *Zivilisation* occurs only three times in this 747-page volume!).

⁴ This is not the place for a detailed discussion of Marx’s ideas on socio-economic formations. For a succinct survey of the occurrences of the term in Marx’s works, see: *Teoriya obshchestvenno-ekonomicheskoy formatsii*, Moskva: “Nauka” 1982, p. 8 sqq.

⁵ M. Mchedlov, *Sotsializm—stanovlenie novogo tipa tsivilizatsii*, Moskva 1980; a German translation was published three years later in the GDR: Miran Mtschedlov, *Der Sozialismus – ein neuer Zivilisationstyp*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1983

⁶ See the brochures published by the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of USSR, *Tsivilizatsiya kak problema istoricheskogo materializma*, chast’ 1, 2, Moskva 1983. Ja. G. Shemjakina gave an early comprehensive survey in his article, *Problema tsivilizatsii v sovetskoj nauchnoy literature 60—80-kh godov*, in: *Istorija SSSR* 9/1991, p. 86—103.

⁷ *Formatsiya ili tsivilizatsiya? (Materialy “kruglogo stola”)*, in: *Voprosy Filosofii* 10/1989, pp. 34 – 59.

⁸ Ernst Engelberg, Wolfgang Küttler (Hg.), *Formationstheorie und Geschichte. Studien zur historischen Untersuchung von Gesellschaftsformationen im Werk von Marx, Engels und Lenin*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1978

Before perestroika, the quintessential discussions of the 1980s could be characterised as an attempt to find a balance between the traditional Marxist concept of a socio-economic formation on the one hand, and the idea of culture/civilisation on the other. Miran Mchedlov formulated the sought-after balance in his above-mentioned book from 1980, *Sotsializm – stanovlenie novogo tipa tsivilizatsii*, as follows:

In examining the relationship between the concepts of “civilisation” and “formation”, we point out that the concept of “civilisation” – in all its applications – always focuses directly on the level of material and spiritual culture that has been reached in a certain society [*obshchestvo*] as the primary factor of the nature and level of social progress. Accordingly, it constates the results of social and cultural activity, bringing them together with generally human values [*s obshchechelovecheskimi tsennostjami*], with their position in the united and progressive movement of world history. Despite the fact that it is as yet somewhat disputable, one could nevertheless assert that whereas the theory of formation largely focuses on the discrete, interruptive [*prerivnyj*] side of a united world-historical process, the theory of civilisation emphasises its continuity, the unity of humankind, the problem of how what are generally human achievements are inherited, preserved and enriched.⁹

The synthesis thus seems clear enough. On the one hand, the concept of a socio-economic formation describes human societies as constituting material production forces and production relationships. Given the ongoing tension between these constituents, which tends to break up into revolutionary convulsions, the progression from a socio-economic to another formation is *disjointed and non-continuous* in character. History is seen as a series of “breaks”, revolutions or at least severe social upheavals, in which one ruling class is replaced with another that rejects the values and ideologies of the ruling classes in the previous formation. Thus, for example, the bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries that led to the capitalist socio-economic formation brought about the negation not only of the economic basis but also of the values and the culture of the feudal society.

On the other hand, the concept of civilisation stresses the *continuity* of the progress of human culture. Not all ideas and cultural values of previous epochs are negated in revolutions, and there is a cultural “substance” that remains and becomes enriched in the course of history. Greek art and Roman law, for example, which were civilising achievements of the ancient mode of production, do not lose their importance despite revolutionary changes in modes of production: they rather prevail as constituents of civilisation (in this case, Western civilisation). Marx noted this problem of continuity as early as in 1857/58 in *Grundrisse*, in which he discusses the question of why Greek and Roman art still had the capacity to please even though the socio-economic presuppositions that prevailed when it was produced had disappeared for good.

This synthesis from the 1980s of the formational and civilisational approaches in Soviet Marxism seemed plausible, it being rather easy to find support for it in the texts of Marx and Engels. It is true that the “classics of Marxism” never purported to deliver an exact definition of what “civilisation” was supposed to mean.¹⁰ Nevertheless, there were other concepts in Marx that could be connected to the idea of a “civilisational substance” in human societies, such as the concept of “social wealth” (*gesellschaftliches Reichtum*). As Marx made clear in *Grundrisse*, the bourgeois form of wealth, namely capital and

⁹ M. P. Mchedlov, *Sotsializm – stanovlenie novogo tipa tsivilizatsii*, M. 1980, pp. 58 – 59

¹⁰ In her important article from 1982, *Tsivilizatsija i kul'tura v istoritseskom protsesse*, Lidija Novikova counts as many as six different meanings in which the word “civilisation” might be used in Marxist theory (*Voprosy Filosofii* 10, 1982, p. 56).

commodities, should not be seen as the definitive form of human wealth: in fact, wealth is “nothing other but the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange”.¹¹ In sum, it is something “universally human” beyond bourgeois, feudal and other forms of culture.

IDEAS OF CIVILISATION AND THE IDEOLOGY OF PERESTROIKA

The synthesis of formational and civilisational approaches that was created in the 1980s by writers such as M. Mchedlov and L. I. Novikova resulted, above all, from academic discussion. It is nevertheless obvious that it responded to the growing need of the socialist society to define itself in a more sophisticated manner than with reference only to its socio-economic and class base. The question of how socialist societies should relate to their historical and cultural heritage in respective countries had assumed importance since the end of the 1960s, and it is by no means accidental that Mchedlov’s book was soon translated into German in the GDR, where the discussion on so-called *Erbeaneignung* had been especially intensive.¹² The idea that a cultural heritage worth preserving in socialism would consist of all that was “generally human” (in Russian: *общечеловеческий*; in German: *allgemeinmenschlich* – there does not, as yet, seem to be an established English equivalent of this important term) was a very appropriate solution to the problem.

However, events soon took a different turn. The seemingly abstract ideas of Soviet philosophers unexpectedly assumed strong political relevance. When Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Politbureau of the CPSU in 1985 he soon set in motion the political processes that led to perestroika and, ultimately, the demise of the Soviet Union. One of the areas in which fundamental changes began to take shape was that of Soviet foreign policy. Since the birth of the USSR, and especially during the Cold war, international politics were essentially characterised by confrontation between the West and the socialist countries – and on the socio-economic level this was generally interpreted as a confrontation of two socio-economic formations, the capitalist and the socialist. For Gorbachev and his staff, it was vital to find theoretical justifications for a new kind of foreign policy that would overthrow the old view of history as a series of breaks and conflicts, and instead lay stress on continuity and the general interests of humanity instead of the logic of bloc thinking.

Gorbachev’s staff re-visited the civilisation discussion of Soviet scholars and found the arguments they needed. As later memoirs of Gorbachev’s assistants (e.g. Fyodor Burlatskij) reveal, this adoption was very superficial and *ad hoc*, but it seemed to work for a while. The “new thinking” in foreign policy, the famous *novoe myshlenie*, which was intended to change the face of the whole world, was essentially grounded upon the results of the civilisation discussion of the 80s. In 1986, for example, Gorbachev formulated its principles thus:

The real dialectics of the present development lies in the strengthening tendency towards a mutual interdependence of the states forming the world community. Just in this way – by the struggle of

¹¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, English transl., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1973, p. 488

¹² The East German discussions focused on concrete problems including how the “worker’s and the peasant’s state” should relate to figures of German history such as Luther and Frederick II, and whether historical buildings should be restored. In fact, the leading party bosses of the GDR in the 1960s ordered the royal castle of the Hohenzollerns in Berlin to be demolished on the grounds that it was nothing other than a symbol of Prussian reactionism and the oppression of ordinary working people.

opposites, overcoming difficulties, by trial and error – does a world emerge which is contradictory, but nevertheless unified by several mutual interdependences, a world which in many respects forms a totality.¹³

If one were to point out the principle concept of Gorbachevian perestroika, its “core idea” so to say, it would undoubtedly relate to “general human values”. However spectacular Gorbachev’s new initiatives and proposals were – they were much more radical than Khrushchev’s concept of “peaceful coexistence” twenty-five years earlier – he did retain enough Marxism in his evocation to seek in such supra-national politics *a common basis of interest* in humanity in general. The basic objective was material existence (thereby satisfying the demands of Marxist analysis), and it could only have become dominant at the current stage in the development of productive forces (even this demand was fully in accordance with the prerequisites of Marxist analysis). This common basis of interest would unite men irrespective of the socio-economic formation in which they happened to exist: the unity was civilisational rather than “formational”.

According to Gorbachov, the new “world situation” in itself meant that it would no longer be utopian and un-Marxist (read: “idealistic”, ignoring analyses of the material interests of the people) to speak about the survival of humanity as a “species question” (*a Gattungsfrage*), disregarding class differences. He compared the current situation with the situation during the Second World War, when the socialist Soviet Union and arch-capitalist countries such as the USA and Great Britain were allied in order to overthrow German fascism:

If in the past an alliance of the first Socialist country with Capitalist states in order to combat the fascist menace was possible, so does not from that fact flow a certain lesson for the present, when the whole world is facing the danger of a nuclear catastrophe, the necessity to guarantee the security of nuclear energy and to overcome the ecological threat?¹⁴

It is obvious that, as such, the theory of civilisation and *obshechelovecheskie chennosti* is not incompatible with Marxism. Viktor Il’in and Aleksandr Razumov angrily pointed this out during the heyday of perestroika in an article entitled *Dogmatizm teorii – defitsit otvestvennosti* about the state of Soviet philosophy (the very title succinctly summarises its contents!), which was published in the main theoretical organ of the CPSU, *Kommunist* in August 1988. According to them, Marx’s famous sixth *Thesis on Feuerbach*, stating that Man is not an isolated individual but a social being, in no way implied that the idea of a general human essence – Man as a *Gattungswesen*, to use the phrase of the young Marx – was obsolete.¹⁵ In fact, the discussion on civilisation theory in the first half of the 1980s could also be interpreted as either a further development of Marxism or its dissolution – it all depends on one’s viewpoint. In any case, it seems to me to be too hasty to announce that the inglorious end of Gorbachevian perestroika simultaneously demonstrated the incapacity of Marxist theory to renew itself. There were other, more practical reasons why the concept of *obshechelovechestnost’* disappeared from the public discourse so quickly after 1991: even at the height of the perestroika process there were indications of the difficulties to come.

When Soviet politicians and analysts of current events began to speak about “general human values” and “civilisation”, they began at the same time – *nolens volens* – to cement ties with a tradition that had been supplanted by Marxism-Leninism, namely the Kantian tradition. Kant was an Enlightenment thinker who, although opposed to feudalism, defended the same ideas of a “general humanity” as the civilisation theoreticians of the 1980s. It seems to me no accident that Gorbachev, in a speech from 1988,¹⁶ characterised the demand of the new epoch as a “categorical imperative”, using a Kantian phrase. The whole concept of “new thinking” and *obshechelovechestnost’*, in the form used by the reformists led by Gorbachev, indeed has something Kantian in it. For example, the idea that the new developmental stage of humanity had made wars obsolete echoes Kant’s famous passages in *Zum ewigen Frieden*, in which international co-operation and interdependence (in Kant:

¹³ M. S. Gorbachëv, *Report at the 27th Party Congress of the CPSU*, 25 February 1986

¹⁴ M. S. Gorbachëv, *Semdesjat’ let Oktjabrskoj Revoljutsii*, a speech delivered in Moscow, 2 February 1987

¹⁵ V. Il’in, A. Razumov, *Dogmatizm teorii – defitsit otvestvennosti*, in: *Kommunist* 12/1988, p. 66

¹⁶ M. S. Gorbachëv, Speech on the Occasion of Nicolae Ceausescu’s Visit to Moscow, *Pravda* 6 October 1988

the “spirit of commerce”, *der Handelsgeist*) are expressly perceived as the way in which Nature “guarantees by the mechanism of human passions a perpetual peace”.¹⁷

Some Russian philosophers have noted the affinities between Gorbachev’s politics and Kant’s moral philosophy. As Erikh Solov’ev, speaking at a symposium in Germany in 1991, stated, the political turn initiated by Gorbachev “can without efforts be interpreted in the sense of Kant’s philosophy”.¹⁸ Indeed, when one reads the speeches of leading perestroika protagonists one sometimes has the impression that the “ethical”, neo-Kantian Socialism of the late 1800s and early 1900s had suddenly been resurrected, demanding revenge for the decades-long ban by means of which official Marxist-Leninist ideology had suppressed it.

Finally, Gorbachev himself seemed to affirm suspicions about the affinity of his political philosophy to Kant in the speech he made upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo at the end of the year 1990:

In his time Immanuel Kant prophetically showed the dilemma before which the humanity sooner or later would stand: either the mankind will unite on the basis of a true international union of nations, or it will come to a destructive war, which will lead to a “perpetual peace” on the cemetery of the mankind. The moment of such an “either—or” has now arrived on the threshold of the third millennium.¹⁹

“CIVILISATION” OVERRUNS THE “FORMATION”

However, simultaneously with the adoption of this “Kantian” position, the difficulties inherent in the *obshchechelovechnost’* concept gradually became visible, initially in a seemingly purely theoretical form. Eduard Shevardnadze’s statement in a speech to representatives of UNESCO in October 1988 that “Man, his life, his dignity and the development of society stay higher than everything else, just as the general human values have to be put higher than all other values [...] These general human values are formed in the intellectual sphere.” gave West German Marxist Wolfgang Haug good reason to comment: “What here is insisted is that the ‘general humanity’ has a superior position and spiritual character; not that it should stand in a dialectical relation to the destruction of community in a class society”.²⁰ In other words, talk about *obshchechelovechnost’* had begun to present itself as a deviation from Marxism in general, and not only from dogmatic Marxism-Leninism.

As Haug continues, these deviations became discernible in the speeches and statements of other politicians such as Aleksandr Jakovlev and Shevardnadze, and not so much in what Gorbachev said. It now seems, with the benefit of hindsight, that one of the reasons for this was the tendency in substantial parts of the Russian political élite to lose faith in the “socialist option”, to which Gorbachev still obstinately clung.

This is a problem that can be expressed in purely Kantian terms, however, without needing to resort to questionable expressions such as “deviation”. One could say that the “Kantianism” of perestroika ideology was

¹⁷ “Es ist der *Handelsgeist*, der mit dem Kriege nicht zusammen bestehen kann, und der früher oder später sich jedes Volks bemächtigt. Weil nämlich unter allen der Staatsmacht untergeordneten Mächten (Mitteln) die *Geldmacht* wohl die zuverlässigste sein möchte, so sehen sich Staaten [...] gedrungen, den edlen Frieden zu befördern [...] Auf die Art garantiert die Natur durch den Mechanismus der menschlichen Neigungen selbst den ewigen Frieden” (Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden*, 2. Abschn., Zusatz 1; in: *Kants Werke*, Akademie-Ausgabe, Bd. VIII, Berlin: De Gruyter 1968, S. 368).

¹⁸ Erich J. Solowjew, *Sowjetische Kantforschung gestern und heute*, in: Ostsee-Akademie (Hrsg.), *Kant und der Frieden in Europa. Bericht über eine Tagung der Ostsee-Akademie [...] in Travemünde vom 12. bis 15. Mai 1991*, Baden-Baden: Nomos-Verlagsgesellschaft 1992, p. 99: “Ungeachtet der Frage, ob Gorbatschow jemals etwas von Kant gelesen hat, ist der von ihm im geistigen Leben herbeigeführte Umschwung mit seiner Absage an den Dogmatismus und ‘Titanismus’ unschwer im Sinne der Philosophie Kants zu interpretieren”.

¹⁹ M. S. Gorbachev, Speech delivered on the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo, 11 December 1990

²⁰ Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Gorbatschow. Versuch über den Zusammenhang seiner Gedanken*, Hamburg: Argument-Verlag 1989, p. 83 (even the citation from Shevardnadze according to Haug; the original text published in *Pravda*, 13 October 1988).

spontaneous and un-reflected in a way, and in this respect open to different interpretations, even to manipulation according to the political needs of the day. Kant's concept of Man was more sophisticated than the simple idea of *obsbchebelovechnost'* used by perestroika ideologists. According to him, it is necessary to distinguish between Man as an empirical, sensual being of the phenomenal world (*homo phaenomenon*) and Man as a rational being in the intelligible world (*homo noumenon*).²¹ I will not go into philosophical subtleties here: suffice it to say that "general humanity", *obsbchebelovechnost'*, is only represented in Kant by noumenal man, whereas man living in the empirical world pursues his singular interests and is thus very well comparable to the representant of exclusive class interests in Marxist theory (exclusive in the sense that these interests are non-general from the viewpoint of the human *Gattungswesen*).

Be that as it may, around the year 1989 the concepts of "Man in general" and "civilisation" began to attract more and more so-to-say "undialectical" interpretations, in other words interpretations one-sidedly accentuating one horn of the Kantian dilemma, *homo noumenon*, at the cost of empirical Man and his real interests.

As early as in 1989 the well-known and much respected ex-dissident Andrej Sakharov spoke in favour of convergence between capitalism and socialism: "The convergence is a real historical process, in which the capitalist and socialist world systems are drawn nearer each other; it is a result of coinciding changes towards pluralism in the spheres of economics, politics, social life and ideology. The convergence is a necessary condition for solving the global problems of peace, ecology, social and geopolitical justice".²² Beautiful words, of course, but it strikes the mind that the abstract concept of "convergence" that will produce a new united social system seems here, in fact, to have the role of the acting subject of world history – not of the empirical people!

Hand in hand with the increasing abstractness and even emptiness of the concepts "civilisation" and *obsbchebelovechnost'*, Marxian positions in general (not only Marxist-Leninist) were abandoned in the discussion in favour of Western-style capitalism as the only "adequate" form of human civilisation. As Juri Burtin wrote in 1989, the "Achilles' heel" of Marx's concept of history was that he underestimated the ability of capitalism to renew itself and change, a fact that was clearly visible, as it is nowadays.²³

Such an assessment might have seemed provocative in 1989, but the general discussion climate changed rapidly in 1990/1991 from the scientific to the ideological, as heralded in some seminal papers published at that time. In 1990, politologist Aleksandr Tsipko published an article in the prestigious journal *Novyj mir* with the evocative title *Khorshi li nashi printsipy?* (Are Our Principles Indeed Good?). He declared that the entire Soviet period of Russian history was nothing other than a hopeless cul-de-sac, producing during the 70 years of the socialist experiment "much more horrible things than the old civilisation based on private property could produce in three centuries".²⁴ It is difficult to imagine a more clear rebuttal of Gorbachev's "socialist option". In addition, from Tsipko's position it would logically follow that the "old (i.e. capitalist) civilisation" should be seen as the general paradigm of mankind's progress.

A little later, in early Autumn 1991, politologist A. S. Panarin published an article in the journal *Filosofskie nauki* entitled *Vozvrashchenie v tsivilizatsiju ili "formatsionnoe odinochestvo"?* in which he asserted, *inter alia*: "All the failures of perestroika in the socio-economic field have their origin in the formation dogmatism promoting home-spun self-sufficiency [*formatsionno-samobytycheskij dogmatizm*] in an attempt to deviate from the general path of civilisation that universal experience has proved is the right one".²⁵ As V. N. Shevchenko wryly notes in the same issue of *Filosofskie nauki*, Panarin's thesis of a "general road of civilisation" echoed Francis Fukuyama's famous "end of history"

²¹ The passages in which Kant discusses this distinction between *homo phaenomenon* and *homo noumenon* are to be found e.g. in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B 574 et seqq. (Bk. 2 on dialectical judgements of pure reason, Sect. 9) and in *Metaphysik der Sitten* (Rechtslehre, Eintheilung, § II).

²² A. Sakharov, *Konvergentsija. Mirnoje sosushchestvovanie*, in: *Opyt slovarja novogo myshlenija* 50/50, Moskva 1989, p. 17 (cited here according to: L. I. Novikova, *Tsivilizatsija pered vyborom*)

²³ Ju. Burtin, *Akhillesova pjata istoricheskoi teorii Marksa*, in: *Oktjabr'* 11/1981

²⁴ A. Tsipko, *Khorshi li nashi printipy*, in: *Novyj Mir* 4/1990

²⁵ *Filosofskie nauki* 8/1991, pp. 11 – 12

paradigm, presented during those very days. Fukuyama could see only one possible direction in which human societies could develop, namely in line with the Western liberal-capitalist model. Attempts to create alternative forms of sociability (which Russia, for example, tried by experimenting with socialism) are doomed to fail sooner or later. For Panarin and other critics of the Marxist theory of formation, Soviet socialism, the result of a pitiable “formational dogmatism”, was but a parenthesis, a deviation from Russia’s path towards the one and only civilisation.

Coincident with this trend of turning the concepts “civilisation” and “Man” into abstract and increasingly ideological (in the pejorative, Marxist sense, not in the Leninist sense!) clichés, a seemingly contra-current but in fact as much of an ideologizing tendency was discernible in the emerging camp of conservative “patriots”. They, too, used the concept of “civilisation”, but in a sense it was diametrically opposed to that of the “liberals” who saw in Western civilisation the universal goal for all mankind. Sergei Kara-Murza typically represents the position of the conservatives, stressing the uniqueness of Russia’s own civilisation based on Orthodox Christianity. This implies, of course, that the concept of “humanity in general” and *obshchechelovechie chennosti* must be ruled out, and in fact Kara-Murza does not leave any room for ambiguities in this respect: “Values cannot be generally human [*tsennosti obshchechelovecheskim byt’ ne moguť*] because they are historically determined products of culture. What is common for Man as a biological species is only instinct”.²⁶

One could thus say that concepts such as “general human values” and “civilisation”, initially so promisingly employed in theory by Soviet social scientists in the early 1980s and then by Gorbachev and his staff in practice, echoing Kantian perspectives of a “perpetual peace”, were turned into ideological concepts in the course of perestroika.

However, later development soon showed that adherents of a civilisational approach were split between two camps. Those in the “liberal” camp continued to interpret these concepts very much in the spirit of Francis Fukuyama’s *End of History*, seeing the model of *obshchechelovechnost’* in Western civilisation, Western man and Western values. The conservative-patriotic camp of the latter-day *pochvenniki*, in turn, clung on to an interpretation that closely resembled the one given in Samuel Huntington’s book *The Clash of Civilisations*, according to which humanity is irreparably divided among different cultures and all talk of “Man in general” is sheer nonsense. In both of these cases, the concepts “civilisation” and “Man” have turned into ideologemes, which played the same role in the subsequent demolition of the Soviet Union and the creation of a new, Jeltsinian Russia of oligarchs as the “heroic illusions” in previous historical revolutions. As Marx put it in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, when the protagonists of a new social order

seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before [...], they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language [...] Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, St. Just, Napoleon, the heroes as well as the parties and the masses of the old French Revolution, performed the task of their time [...] in Roman costumes and with Roman phrases [...] Once the new social formation was established, the antediluvian colossi disappeared and with them also the resurrected Romanism – the Brutuses, the Gracchi, the publicolas, the tribunes, the senators, and Caesar himself. Bourgeois society in its sober reality bred its own true interpreters and spokesmen in the Says, Cousins, Royer-Collards, Benjamin Constants, and Guizots.

In the same manner, perestroika conjured up the spirit of Kant, only to abandon it when the contours of a new – and in no way idyllic – social formation became discernible in the years 1989–1991.

²⁶ S. Kara-Murza, *Sovetskaja tsivilizatsija*, II, ch. 5., footnote 22

Vesa Oittinen
Professor, Ph. D., Docent
Aleksanteri Institute
P.O.Box 42 (Unioninkatu 33)
FIN - 00014 UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
vesa.oittinen@helsinki.fi
<http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/>