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# Heuristic Possibilities and Methodological Significance of The Civilization Approach in The Research of Social Development

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**Abstract:** This article examines the heuristic possibilities of the civilizational approach as a methodology for studying social development. The study focuses on the diversity of civilizational models and explains different interpretations of civilization allow researchers to analyze social systems from various theoretical perspectives. The article argues that the civilizational approach helps move beyond a one dimensional and Eurocentric understanding of history by recognizing the uniqueness of different regions, peoples and cultures. It concludes that civilizational models provide a reliable methodological basis for assessing social progress, modern civilization and future development.

**Keywords:** Civilizational Approach, Civilization, Social Development, Social Philosophy, Heuristic Possibilities, Epistemological Analysis

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## 1. Introduction

The civilizational approach, as a methodology for explaining social development, assumes a pluralism of thought that reflects the diversity of intellectual constructs that analyze the diversity of development paths inherent in social systems. In connection with the different interpretations of the category of “civilization” and the very essence of the civilizational approach, we believe that it is necessary to distinguish between civilizational models that have a number of meanings arising from the analysis of social systems from different positions.[1]

However, it should be noted that this distinction is purely relative and was proposed by the author to sort (classify) the large amount of information about these approaches and to determine their heuristic capabilities. Therefore, none of the proposed models is considered superior or inferior to the other. The concept of “model” (French modele, Latin modulus - norm, sample), in our opinion, means a simplified approximation of the prototype of some thing being modeled. Approach – the principle methodological direction of research, this is the point of view from which to look at the object under study.[2]

In this sense, it can be said that while the civilizational approach reflects generalized views taken together, as a whole, in a holistic way, in the model, the specific characteristics being considered (political, geographical, religious, etc.) are imagined by us as a simplified assumption of this approach.[3]

The research work helps to provide different interpretations within the civilizational approach. Civilizational models also aim to demonstrate their applicability to all types of

social change. The complex of civilizational models allows us to move away from a one dimensional picture of the world, to take into account the uniqueness inherent in different regions, countries, peoples and races. This is explained by the fact that the true heuristic value of the civilizational approach is not in the creation of a single, strictly fixed theory, but in the search for ideas and principles necessary for modern humanitarian knowledge.[4]

## 2. Materials and Methods

To describe the civilizational approach and its heuristic possibilities in its application, local-historical and passionar models within the framework of social philosophy are used. We will try to analyze it in detail.[5]

These models are considered to be an understanding of civilizations in terms of their territorial and natural climatic characteristics. The difference in the models becomes noticeable only when focusing on one of the listed criteria. Then the focus of the local-historical model is on the study of separate, locally closed structures and their emergence, development and extinction, while the passionar model studies the impact of historical processes on the history of human development, and in addition, the ethical aspects of this issue and its place in the world community. However, it should be noted that the authors of these models recommend similar options for solving many problems.[6]

Based on the ideas of N.Ya. Danilevsky's "cultural-historical types", O. Spengler's "theory of culture", A. Toynbee's "Challenge and Response theories", P. Sorokin's concept of large cultural systems and supersystems and also on the widespread use of these ideas by N. Elias and some contemporary scholars, such as S. Eisenstadt the study have revised their ideas in an updated form.[7]

## 3. Results and Discussion

The local-historical model is a model that can serve as a basis for explaining civilizations and studying human history. Let us list the main aspects characteristic of the local-historical model of civilizational studies:

First of all, it is the identification of independent civilizations, cultural-historical types, each of which, throughout the entire period of its existence, goes through a series of stages (emergence, formation, development, obsolescence, decline or extinction). The important thing here, in our opinion, is that these stages are traditional not only for the development of humanity, but also for the whole of nature, which makes it possible to talk about the idea of developing the sciences of nature and society.[8]

Secondly, researchers explain not only the differences between civilizations, but also the reasons for their emergence, flourishing and extinction, which makes it possible to analyze the past and predict the future. For example, N.Ya. Danilevsky expresses the main principles governing these processes by distinguishing between "positive" and "negative" general laws inherent in the creators of history, and schematically outlines a number of laws. These laws can be schematically presented as follows: according to the first law, "a certain tribe or ethnic unity of peoples, characterized by a separate language or group of languages, forms a specific form of a cultural-historical type." Thus, for the emergence of civilization, along with spatial proximity, spiritual proximity is also a necessary condition. The second law explains the ability of a people to develop: "For the creation and development of a potential civilization of a people, a people must have political independence" [9]. According to the third law, "the beginning of a civilization of any cultural-historical type cannot be transferred to peoples of other types." Expressing this law, N.Ya. Danilevsky denies the possibility of the transition of any cultural-historical types into each other, recognizing that any manifestations of the transition from one culture to another necessarily entail a crisis. In addition, N.Ya. Danilevsky, expressing the fourth law, emphasizes that "a variety of ethnographic material is necessary for the

realization of a truly high culture.” [10] . The fifth law, in our opinion, contains a very important idea and reflects the main content of this concept: “The course of development of cultural-historical types resembles the life of perennial plants, which consists of three stages: a long period of growth, a period of cultural and political self-awareness, and then a period of flowering and fruiting. Having reached the period of flowering, civilization can spend its strength and begins to harden like stone.” [11] .

Thirdly, considering civilization as a separate structure is not an analysis of its constituent elements, but rather a comprehensive system reflecting all spheres of social existence, some aspects of which are isolated. It consists in creating some new general structure. Accordingly, the priority of which areas will reveal the uniqueness of the development of civilization, its contribution to the treasury of all human culture. N.Y. Danilevsky distinguishes four spheres or types of activity: religious, cultural (science, industry, art), political and socio-economic. And the author claims that if these four elements are combined, it is precisely this synthesis that makes it possible to move along “all directions of the historical field” and achieve the predicted goal of history.

Fourth, it is very difficult to divide the entire history of Europe into “ancient”, “medieval” and “modern” periods within the framework of the local-historical model, since “only within one type can one divide historical movements into periods called ancient, medieval and modern history.” In our opinion, this statement is correct from the point of view of the multivariate development of human society. The dissimilarity of the development of individual regions, countries, ethnic groups and the differences in the timing of their occurrence indicate the impossibility of using such a division. The existence of traditional and primitive societies currently experiencing the period of tribalism also confirms the impossibility of using such a division applied to world history.

Fifth, the local-historical model allows us to see a complex, rather than a linear, pattern of development in society. This allows us to objectively explain the history of Russian society and the countries of the East, which is not found in the universal European concept of history. The study of local civilizations is currently: “Increasingly moving beyond the realm of theoretical sociology and history into practical political science” and is taking on a political relevance [12] . In general, the study of cultural-historical types and systems that actually exist in the local-historical model and that are manifested in a unique and inimitable way is relatively more important.

The disadvantage of the local-historical model can be seen in its strict biologization, which implies a kind of strict control over the successive periods of human development. In our opinion, the exaggeration of the mutual isolation of civilizations, which denies the idea of a global historical process, also belongs to the dangers of this model. We will consider other aspects of the development of civilization in the Passionar model . It should be noted that it is based on the analysis of V.I. Vernadsky's fundamental doctrine of the biosphere. This, in our opinion, very convincingly and evidence-based explains the causes of the problems of globalization, which, in addition to the changes taking place in modern civilizations, are considered relevant for all types of societies in this period of time .

On the other hand, within the framework of this model, the main emphasis is placed on the idea of Gumilev, the author of the concept of the ethnic history of our planet, which assumes the emergence, development and extinction of peoples inhabiting a certain natural area [13] . The basis of this theory is the concepts of “passion” (the desire for activity) and “complimentarity” (complimentarnost), introduced into scientific circulation by L.N. Gumilev. The term “passion” was first defined as an independent psychophysiological sign in the article “Biosphere and Impulses of Consciousness” by L.N. Gumilev, published in the 12th issue of the journal “Priroda” in 1978. It is emphasized that passionarity is “a dominant state of character directed towards the realization of a certain goal. Achieving this goal is more valuable to this person than his own life” [14] . At the same time, passionarity is considered as a person’s ability to be active, passionate, and in

this case, extremely passionate individuals are interpreted as the driving forces of any military actions, revolutions, and migrations (according to L.N. Gumilev, passionars) in the context of a key that can open the way to studying the main events of the past.

The main idea of the Passionar model can be expressed as follows: cosmic rays begin to interact with the biosphere in a certain part of the Earth's surface, giving an impetus to the emergence of an ethnos. A Passionar impulse is a micromutation that leads to the emergence of ethnic systems in a particular region. The establishment of a single, unified harmony: space - a certain territory of the Earth - an ethnos inhabiting this territory. Having passed these phases of development (similar to the life cycles of a person), an ethnos dies. The duration of the life of an ethnos is noted by Gumilev as 1200-1500 years, although this idea is generally confirmed by ethnographic and demographic data.

The principle of the unity of life and nature, put forward by V.I. Vernadsky and developed by L.N. Gumilev, states that man and society (as a whole, like life) are inseparable from nature - the biosphere, and man is its part, its function. Violation of this principle of integrity could lead to the extinction of life itself, and for the same reason our planet itself creates complex communities, ecological systems. For this, in order to prevent the negative consequences of changes in the biosphere by society, it is necessary to "redirect the technical process to another path, to change the geochemical work of humanity in relation to the chemistry of the Earth's core."

The history of the development of civilizations is considered in accordance with their direct and inverse relationship with the external environment and its energy. The fate of each ethnos (or civilization in general) lies in its interaction with the biosphere. The ethnos is considered as a natural phenomenon within which social historical events occur. It should also be noted that the passionar model put forward in the works of L.N. Gumilev is often criticized by experts. For example, we will cite some of them.

I.M. Saveleva and A.V. Poletaev in their work "Past and Present. In search of the richly given" assess L.N. Gumilev's theory as follows: "Without taking into account the original naming of some phases of historical development and the use of the category "ethnos" instead of the concepts of "civilization" or "culture", L.N. Gumilev's concept is a modification of the traditional scheme of "life cycles" (youth - adolescence - old age - withering). The main difference of L.N. Gumilev is in its biocosmic determination: he emphasizes that the reason for the beginning of the life cycle of ethnos is a "passionate impulse" associated with cosmic radiation" [15].

In addition to some of the critical opinions about the Passionary model, we would like to emphasize that, while recognizing that not all of them can be considered true, and some are controversial, these views cannot seriously affect the overall value of the concept of the Passionary model.

Thus, we imagine that the civilizational approach explained by the civilizational models analyzed above is a reliable description in assessing modern civilization and social progress and allows us to look at the problems of its future development.[16]

#### 4. Conclusion

Concluding the analysis of the heuristic possibilities of applying the methodology of the civilizational approach in the study of social development, we should emphasize that the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The civilizational approach as a methodology of social development consists of a wide range of intellectual constructs. Different interpretations of the category of "civilization" and the very essence of the civilizational approach allow us to distinguish some different aspects of the content of the civilizational model in it.
2. We have considered the local-historical, passionar and Russian models that exist within the civilizational approach. The local-historical model of civilization, which is independent, closed and not connected with the general historical process of the

phenomenon, provides heuristic opportunities for a comprehensive and comprehensive study of the real diversity of various cultural-historical types that coexist with it. The passionar model involves studying the analysis of the development of social systems in direct connection with the energy of the planet Earth and the natural-climatic conditions prevailing on it.

3. The civilizational approach that we have tried to demonstrate based on the analysis of civilizational models serves as a reliable basis for assessing social progress in studying the problems of modern civilization and its future development. The second chapter of the dissertation is devoted to this.

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