

# Tribute to Oswald Spengler: Big Truth and Small Mistakes. The Psychological Scheme of Metahistory and the Theoretical Foundations of Historical Psychology Alexander Zelitchenko \*

**Abstract.** The article analyses some difficulties of Spengler's metahistorical model and proposes the ways in which they may be overcome. The analysis starts from two observations: (a) the Spengler's cultures live almost twice longer than Spengler proposed, and (b) the several cultures may coexist in the same geographical region and even in the same individual mind – and leads further to the discovery of some cultures that were un-noticed by Spengler. The comparative analysis of cultures from the points of view, how they change a mentality and what new mental formations they bring, results in the introduction of scale of mental-spiritual brightness of both consciousness and things of world. This scale allows comparing different cultures through average breadth of consciousness of the people of these cultures as well as introducing the notion “rank of culture” as a measure of culture's average breadth of consciousness. The breadth of consciousness rises in course of history when the new cultures replace the old ones. Thus, the rise of breadth of consciousness constitutes the psychological content of historical progress. The metahistorical model in form of pyramid, in which the smaller number of cultures of higher rank replaces the bigger number of cultures of lower rank, is described. This model raises the questions of great ontological importance, what the forces motivate the historical progress and, in particular, are responsible for the “explosions”, which result in the births of new cultures.

**Key words:** metahistory, historiosophy, Oswald Spengler, progress, culture, historical psychology

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## Introduction: Two Main Spengler's Discoveries

The significance of Spengler in the philosophy of history and in the metahistory is so big, that tribute to him cannot be limited by praising only. The real tribute to Spengler must include the development of his ideas. However, such development is possible only on the base of understanding what was omitted by Spengler, what was misunderstood in his legacy, and what was not noticed. This article provides just such “critical tribute” following some main ideas of the book *Light of Life, History and Developmental Psychology of Nations* (Zelitchenko, 2006). I do believe that such criticism is the only instant tribute to Spengler and in no way it can shade his achievements. However, before exposing my critical comments, I want to say first about the most important from those achievements.

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\* Alexander Zelitchenko is a psychologist, a philosopher and a historian devoted his writings to the wide scope of problems of spiritual development of the human beings and humankind as a whole. He is the author of three books, *Psychology of Dukhovnost (or Psychology of Spiritual Experience, or Higher Psychology)* in 2 volumes (in Russian, 1996); *The scientist's Conversation with the Teacher, Science and Esoterics* (in Russian, 2000; English translation – 2001, German translation, 2004) and *Light of Life, the History of Humankind in Psychosphere of Earth (or History and Developmental Psychology of Nations)* in 3 volumes (in Russian, 2006). Before he devoted himself to writing exclusively in 1994, he was professor at Moscow State University and wrote some tens of published pieces of scientific writings and approximately same amount of unpublished ones.

Often Spengler (1918–1923/1991) is praised for his analysis of modern state of Western culture as well as for his predictions of future of this culture (for example, *The Decline of the West*, n.d.). However, he made another two fundamental discoveries — or one discovery with two sides — which seems to be much more fundamental and much more important for historical science.

### *Living Cultures*

The first Spengler's discovery (or the first side of it) is the discovery of existence of super-personal, trans-personal, and perhaps even trans-social organisms, which he named cultures. The cultures are the real "units" of historical process, which Spengler opposed to the scholar divisions of history into either ancient, medieval and modern histories or in primitive communism, slave society, feudalism and capitalism as social-political formations of Marxist philosophy of history (historical materialism).

Spengler demonstrates the great internal unity, which characterizes the cultures and which was not noticed by the contemporary to him schools of philosophy of history. This unity bases on the similarity of many mental traits of people of one culture, which distinguishes them from the people of other cultures. This set of traits determines the basic mechanisms of perception, thinking and behavior, which may be called 'mental constitution.'

However, perhaps what is even more important in the Spengler's book is the demonstration that the cultures are alive. Spengler describes in significant details the processes of origination, of maturing, of aging and of dying of cultures. True, he never says directly about living cultures as well as he avoids discussing the ontological issues at all. Nevertheless, the images of cultures that he created are the images of living organisms. In accordance with Spengler, these organisms live about one thousand years coming through all stages of live, from conception to death.

### *Culture Creates Mind. Spengler, Jung, Vygotsky*

The second side of the main Spengler's discovery is the discovery of the impact of a culture on the mind of humans belonging to culture. This impact is much more powerful than it seemed (and perhaps continue to seem even today) for most of psychologists and other scholars. Behind the obvious differences in the content of mind of humans belonging to different cultures, there is much deeper difference in the ways, in which these minds operate. In other words, behind the obvious differences between "what" (knowledge, opinions and so on) there is invisible difference between "how" (mental mechanisms, feelings and so on). On the examples of Apollonian (Antic) and especially of Faustian (Western) cultures Spengler disclosed this mental specific — mental constitution of corresponding cultures. And may be just a little less convincing he did the same in respect to Egyptian culture and to Magian one.

This discovery, perhaps, was in the air of the first third of twentieth century. The gleams of this idea may be found in the works of early French sociologists (Durkheim, 1895/1938, Le Bon, 1896/1982, Tarde, 1899/2000, 1903/1963). But its full flourishing was reached in the works of Spengler, Jung (1934–1954) and Vygotsky (1931/1997). Jung first

paid attention on those invariants of the unconscious, which exist in individual minds, which he named archetypes, whereas Vygotsky in his cultural-historical psychology first initiated empiric study of the modes in which a culture forms individual mind.

### **Psychohistory and Historical Psychology**

The works of Spengler, Jung and Vygotsky created the prerequisite for development of new scientific field, which may be named historical psychology. The first and only established today 'border science' between history and psychology, psychohistory is occupied with the main question, how the individual mind of historical actors influences the historical process, what their individual features are responsible for their historically significant behavior. In contrast to this, the main question of historical psychology is one about how the history influences (and even forms) a human mind.

This is absolutely different problem. A person's mind is determined by this person's culture, and the understanding that the culture is a product of historical process results in the understanding that the history is not only made by men, but itself does make men's mind. How the history makes a mind is the central problem of historical psychology.

The historical psychology is not only the subfield of psychology. The historical psychology is the subdiscipline of philosophy of history because it discloses the essence itself of historical process. Together with Jung and Vygotsky, Spengler was one of the forerunners of historical psychology, and here I see both his greatest service for the history of metahistory and the request to the followers for further developing his theory and correcting some its omissions.

### **Age and Phases of Metacultures' Lives**

My initial correction of the Spengler's theory would be the terminological one. The concept of culture is overloaded semantically. For example, Merriam-Webster provides 10 meanings of noun "culture" (Culture, n.d.). Some of them like *"the characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time"* or *"the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations"* are close (but not equivalent) to Spengler's meaning as well as the close term "civilization" is not equivalent to Spengler's "culture" also. In traditional usage, the term "culture" accents external, i.e. observable in behavior (or at least in self-observing), common features of behavior, perception of world or thinking. But Spengler's cultures influence much deeper mental structures. This is why I chose other term, "metaculture" to speak about Spengler's historical organisms. Metaculture is a cluster of closely related cultures with common generic attributes that cover some region, nations and time. Apollonian and Faustian Spengler's cultures are examples of what metacultures are. In some meaning metaculture is 'bigger' than culture. This is a family of cultures in narrow meaning of term. Say Faustian metaculture includes French culture, German culture, Italian culture etc. Each such family determines specific mental constitution including the mental pattern of unconscious psyche, which are much deeper than common behavioral or intellectual patterns of bearers of same cultures.

My second correction of Spengler's views concerns with the period that metacultures live. Spengler wrote about approximately 1000 years as their period of culture's life. However, the simplest observations disclose that the total time of metacultures' lives is about 2000 years. For example, the traces of Egyptian metaculture are seen even in "Roman Egypt" in the first centuries of Common Era, that is, in accordance with most commonly accepted chronology, 2000 years later after the metaculture emerged in the times, which are called today Middle Kingdom. Similarly, the traces of Antiquity's culture may be seen in Byzantium even in eleven century, 2000 years after Homer. The same picture may be seen within any other metaculture.

The reason of this Spengler's mistake is that he paid attention only active phases of metacultures' lives, which he called 'spring,' 'summer,' 'autumn,' and 'winter.' However, after Spengler's 'winter,' which completes the first, creative phase of a metaculture's life, the second half of its life begins. In that final phase, a metaculture disseminates that novelty, which it created, among the 'foreign' nations, which did not participate in the active phase of its life.

Both an active phase and a final one may be subdivided in the several sub-phases, which may be determined more or less arbitrary, for example, as four Spengler's 'seasons.' However, the more meaningful metaphor here could be a phase transition of states of matter rather than a change of seasons: the last three sub-phases of active phase could be represented as a vapor transforming into a water, and a water transforming into an ice. In this physical metaphor, I named the second sub-phase a light (thus, joining thermodynamic phenomenology with quantum-physical one) and the first one – gleams. Gleams are an especially interesting (and important for the understanding of the current state of modernity) phase, when there is no yet that explosion of creativity, which begin the creation of all metacultures, but the presentiment of this future explosion is in the air. Spengler partially recognized this sub-phase but did not separate it from the explosion itself. For this reason, he starts, for example, the European culture in 900, although its gleams are obvious from Carolingian times, and may be even early. Figure 1 and/or Table 5 below (please see Annex) show the phase structure of some metacultures.

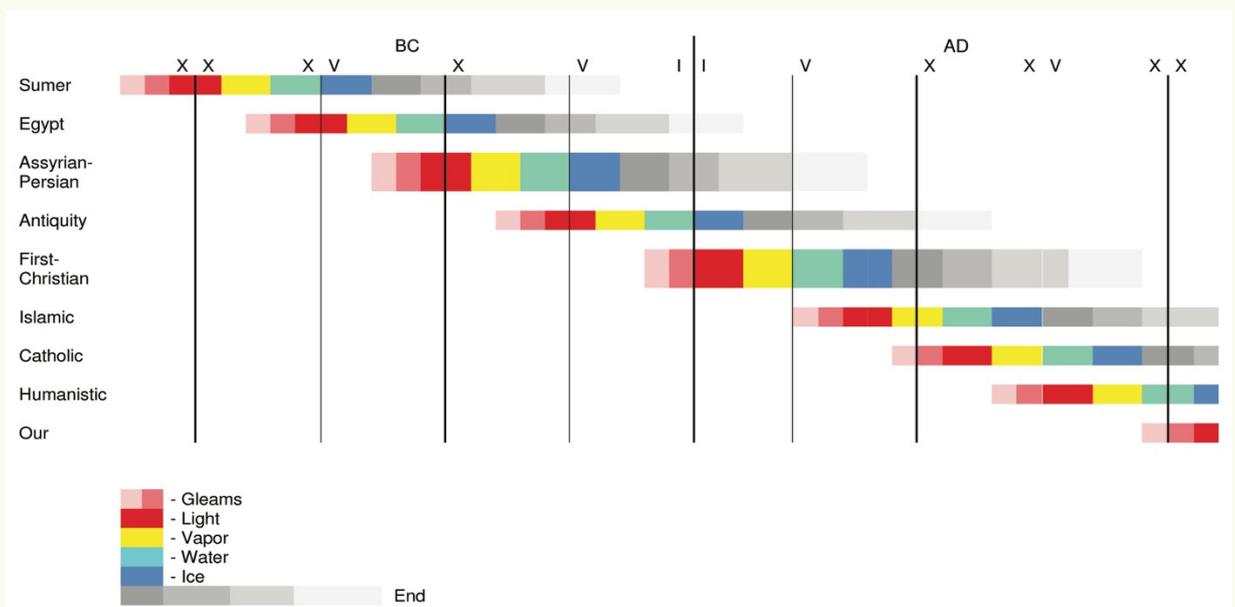


Figure 1. Phases of Lives of Metacultures in Central World

## Coexistence of Metacultures

Among the other preliminary corrections, which Light of Life introduces in the Spengler's picture of the history, there is the observation that metacultures do not simply replace one another, but for a long time coexist in the same individual mind. Spengler considered each person as a representative of his/her own culture. The reality, however, is more complex: each person represents a set of metacultures, which coexist in his mind. Ones of them are youth, others are mature, and the rests are old. For example, in the region, which is called in Light of Life a 'Central World' and which includes Europe and Western Asia (Muslim world up to India and Russia), there have been 3-4 concurrent metacultures most part of the known history (see Table 5). Thus, Spengler's implicit proposition that simultaneous metacultures cannot overlap one other geographically is not valid: two and more metacultures may co-exist not only in the same geographical region, but also in the same individual mind.

Such parallelism is seen in all known history, but perhaps one of the most evident and most dramatic episodes of such coexistence is the Roman Empire, where Antiquity (Spengler's Apollonian) and First Christian (Spengler's 'Magian') metacultures met one another. Spengler justly sees in Rome the beginning of a new metaculture, but this observation forces him to deny not less evident connection between the culture of Rome and the Antiquity culture. (The attentive observer is able to note in Roman cult of Mithras and the one of Isis the presence of Persian and Egyptian metacultures also.)

The interesting psychological manifestation of metacultural parallelism consists in the phenomenon when, in course of his development, an individual crosses the stages, when s/he belongs to the cultures that do not exist in present. For example, a young person of the modern Western (Faustian) culture in the age 10-13 belongs to the Apollonian culture rather than to the Faustian one. The role, which a body plays in his life and in his mentality, is the same as this role in the life and mentality of Apollonian man. This is why young teenagers so like Greek myths and sport competitions. Later these 'young Hellenes' will form the Faustian mentality also, but now Euclid geometry is accessible for them while mathematical analysis is not yet.

If a person knows about the constitutional traits of different metacultures, the simplest self-observation discovers to him into himself the representatives of very different metacultures, including ones rather unexpected. For example, he may discover in himself representatives of pre-Columbian metacultures, or representative of Muslim metaculture.

## Boundaries of Metacultures. Metacultures, Which Spengler did not Notice – 1

The problems with time boundaries of Spengler's metacultures are more or less common, in fact for all metacultures that were introduced by him. One metaculture (for example, the Arab) continued to flourish at the time, when in accordance with Spengler, it had to die. Another metaculture (for example, the Apollonian) did not leave any traces from its 'spring' times (in accordance with Spengler, 1100 – 800 BC), which must be characterized by the highest rise of creative work. The history constantly turns out to be insufficiently fit to the theory: The history constantly turns out to be insufficiently fit to the theory: the history seems to be 'bigger' than Spengler's theory with its eight metacultures, which failed to cover 4000 years of cultural history in three regions of the planet, which until recently had

almost no connections among themselves. This is why I conclude that the number of metacultures must be bigger and/or the metacultures themselves must live longer.

The fact of parallel existence of many metacultures in the same region as well as the fact of 2000-years duration of metacultures' lives helps to overcome some of the difficulties of his theory, for example, to see some metacultures, which Spengler did not notice. One of the most noticeable such difficulties is the "problem of Renaissance". In accordance with Spengler, the time of Renaissance is the "summer" of Faustian culture, when the greatest pikes of its creative activity (for example, construction of the Gothic cathedrals) are passed some centuries ago. To follow this theory, Spengler tried to explain the phenomena of Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo as artifacts. Moreover, he even concludes that there was no Renaissance as the phenomenon in the history of European culture at all. Indeed, his theory is able to explain more or less consistently the transition from the Gothic period to the Baroque one, but it cannot place between them Renaissance.

However, no matter how pity this is for Spengler's theory, Renaissance did exist. Moreover, this fact does demand correcting the theory because a theory cannot deny a fact. In given case, correction is rather simple: In 14-15th centuries in Europe together with continuation of the metaculture, which began in 9-10th centuries and which may be called Catholic, the new metaculture, which may be called Humanistic, began. Thus, the last 500-700 years coexistence and interaction of two metacultures creates what Spengler called "Faustian culture".

Humanistic metaculture is characterized by its specific feeling of world, which is quite different from the feeling of world of Catholic metaculture. Correspondingly, Spengler's pessimism in respect of Western civilization is overstated: although, indeed, the Catholic metaculture now is in the late winter, the Humanistic one just enters in the autumn (in "Indian summer") and still keeps enough creative potential. (Although, the more complete understanding of the present state of Western civilization demands taking into consideration the interaction of more metacultures as well as the action of some other forces; I am providing some elements of such analysis below.)

The similar situation is with the metaculture, which Spengler called Magian or Arabian. Indeed, the history of early Islam continued the history of early Christianity and Spengler's comparison Muhammad with Luther has a very deep ground. Nevertheless, the independence of two histories – the history of early Christianity and the history of Islam, which kept the significant creative potential until 15th century and kept the political power even later, 500 years after the time, when, in accordance with Spengler's model, the Arabian culture had to be ended – shows that there was one more metaculture, which was not noticed by Spengler. This is why I renamed Spengler's Magian metaculture into First-Christian and introduced one more metaculture, Islamic.

The biggest omissions in Spengler's "portrait of history" may be found in the cultures, which he knew just superficially, especially in those, which he called Chinese and Mexican. However, to speak about these omissions, the general cause of all these problems must be clarified first.

### **Morphology of History Against the Physiology of History**

The evident paradox of Spengler's theory consists in the contradiction between the consideration of cultures as living organisms, on the one hand, and the declaration of

“morphology of history” as his main method, on the other. Ironically, Spengler names the method to study living things by the name of studying death ones (morpho-logy). Of course, to understand some thing of world usually is important to study its composition, structure, relationships between their parts. However, this is not enough: after investigation of the structure, a researcher has to come to the study of the dynamics that is, to the study of processes of movement, and, in particular, the processes of both growth of object of his study and its development. The declaration of cultures to be living organisms proposes the shift of researcher’s attention from the morphological point of view to the “physiological” one. Such shift discloses the picture of history that although includes the Spengler’s theory, but places it into the much broader context.

In this picture, the tree of history grows by the branches of metacultures and blossoms by the new minds of new human beings. In other words, the history creates the new and new men that possess the new mental traits, which forms the more complex minds. Moreover, the mind of any new creations of history in some sense is better than the mind of their predecessors. To clarify this “some sense” I have to make the rather vast digression to operationalize what namely the history change in the human mind.

## **Brightness of Mind**

### *Brightness of Mental-spiritual States*

Zelitchenko (2006, pp. 41-59, 683-692, 2009a, 2009b) introduced the unit of mental-spiritual brightness lyum and the 100-lyum scale of brightness of mental and mental-spiritual states. The brightness of mental state is determined by breadth of consciousness in this state – “how much of World a person is seeing at the present moment”: the brighter state the broader consciousness, the more part of world – the things of world and the relationships between these things – it reflects.

The scale of brightness lifts from the simplest forms of mental activity (where just one sensation or feeling, as sensations of pain or of hungry, dominates on the overall mental state and determines this state) through the more and more complex states to such complex states as inventing management strategies or solving mathematical problems and continues to climb even higher. The six zones of this scale I named black (0–10 lyums), blue (10–30), green (30–50), yellow (50–70), orange (70–90) and red (90–100). The first four of them cover the most part of our everyday states.

The yellow states correspond to the impressions from classic music, or to the states, in which the scientist works on scientific article, or to the states, in which the executive makes decisions on the development of his company and so forth. In yellow states an intuition works well, men see themselves objectively and see the big groups, in which they involved – their countries, or their professional communities. In these states, people may feel both light sorrow and sad irony...For example, right now I am writing the present text in the yellow state and I want to hope that you are reading this in the yellow state also.

Between the black states and the yellow ones, there are the intermediate blue and green states. Blue states are the states of fun during football match or on rock-concert, or the states of conveyer worker, or ones of scullery maid. Green states are the states of clerk, or the state of newspaper’s reader.

The five columns of Table1 demonstrate the five of ten lines of growth of brightness (see Table 1-4 of Zelitchenko, 2006, Appendix 3, or Table 1-5 of Zelitchenko 2009a, for

complete data of all 10 lines of growth). The Table 1 consists of 10 rows: groups of states with brightness 0–10 (states-0), 11–20 (states-1) and so on up to 91–100 lyums (states-9). Each of these lines may be considered as a descriptor (or a component) of mental state.

**Table 1. Brightness-height of mental-spiritual states**

Height	Resolvable task	Motives <sup>b, c</sup>	Thoughts–opinions <sup>d, e</sup>	Emotions <sup>c, e</sup>	Self-awareness
0	To take some food		God lives in the church		The person has no any notion about himself
	To release bone ache	“I do what they order me to do”	Good society is one, which is good for me	Sexual desire Pain	
1	To earn from time to time some hundred dollars	“I do what I want” “I do what turns out itself” “I do what others do”	God is lord of the world Good society is one, where is good for everybody	Jealous Vexations	The person is able to answer “I” on the question “Who did this?”
	To cure a scratch		God is creator of the world Good society is one, where everybody is awarded in accordance with his merits	Amorousness Offence	
2	To get a salary \$1000 monthly	“I do what is prescribed, what is customary”	Only one god exists Good society is communism	Tenderness Despair	The person is able to recognize the reason of own behavior
	To cure of cold		God does not exist Society cannot be good for everybody	Empathy Melancholy Feeling of beauty of things (of clothes, or of dishes)	
3	To save for a rainy day	“I act originally, in my own way”	The existence of God cannot be proved Good society is one with optimal governance	Devotion Sadness Feeling of beauty of “loudly beautiful” (of mountain landscape or of sea sunset)	The person is able to be aware of what he did
	To extract a tooth		God is Absolute Spirit Good society assists everybody in his development	Care of and understanding “Light sorrow” Feeling of beauty of “usual” things (e.g. of the tree, or of the field)	
4	To invest	“Despite of obstacles, I do what I must do”			The person is able to see own disadvantages
	To operate an ulcer				
5	To organize medium enterprise	“I do what I decided to do”			The person is able to recognize how he acts and to see “the observer” inside himself
	To organize mass vaccination				
6	To organize big enterprise	“I act in accordance with my Duty”			
	To invent AIDS vaccine				

Height	Resolvable task	Motives <sup>b, c</sup>	Thoughts-opinions <sup>d, e</sup>	Emotions <sup>c, e</sup>	Self-awareness
7	To care of humankind's well-being	Obedience to the Most High	Thoughts that are bigger any words	Religious Feelings (light joy, love to enemies, beauty of "ugly")	Permanent self-awareness
8	Propheying and leading people	Merging personal will with Highest Will	Experienced knowledge of God and of His Providence	Involvement into "Movement of Spheres"	Complete self-awareness
9	Sanctifying people	Highest Will	Clear awareness of the Everything	Unity with God	Absence of Self

Note. a The brightness of groups of mental-spiritual states (0 - less than 10 lyums, 1 - 10-19 lyums, 2 - 20-29 lyums etc).

b Lower motives are obedience to other's will, copying and spontaneous impulses. The brighter motive, the bigger degree, in which it is "own" and in which the act motivated by this motive is purposeful and strong-willed. Becoming brighter motives move from "it happens itself" and "something does it by means of me" to "I am doing". However, in the states-6 this monotone rise of "innerness" changes direction - the person acts as if somebody (or, more precisely, Somebody - some Higher Power) lead him. The same tendency rises in the higher states.

c The power of motive and emotion makes the state brighter, for example, the energetic act is brighter than the same slack one. However, this increase cannot lift the brightness of act more than on 1 degree (10 lyums) - energetic captain may be brighter than inert colonel is, but not than inert marshal is.

d Below is the general scheme of the rise of brightness of opinions ("theories"): (a) Theory-0 - occasionally listened somewhere opinion, (b) Theory-1 - school rudiments like school arithmetic, (c) Theory-2 - simple explanations from popular magazines, (d) Theory-3 - vulgarization of scientific and philosophic theories (of such as Freudism, Darwinism, Marxism) and rudiments of professional knowledge, (e) Theory-4 - "common" professional knowledge, formal philosophical systems (like atheism or positivism), (f) Theory-5 - knowledge of professional "secrets", worldly wisdom, last scientific achievements, (g) Theory-6 - heights of European philosophy (e.g. Leibniz's monadology).

e The brighter emotions and thoughts, the larger "amount" of them and the more saturated and richer by nuances they are - as if a bush spreads out and blossoms. Here the rise of brightness is illustrated by the example of two emotions - love and grief - to designate such "spreading out" third emotion is added beginning from the states-4 - feeling of beauty.

The brightness of state is determined by the maximum value of its descriptors, for example, the brightness of the state with 10 descriptors, each of them having value 50, is 50, while the brightness of the state, which have only 1 descriptor with value 60 and 9 descriptors with value 10 is 60.

Since the brighter common states corresponds to the belonging to the higher social strata, seven groups of states - from the states-0 to the states-6 - may be named in accordance with the steps of military, academic or some other carrier, for example, (a) first grade student (states-0), (b) fifth grade student (states-1), (c) tenth grade student (states-2); (d) University student (states-3), (e) Master of Science (states-4), (f) Doctor of Philosophy (states-5), (g) Full Professor (states-6).

The general principle of organizing the tables' columns may be illustrated by following example. One of the important tasks, which almost everybody meets, is to force some powerful person ("boss") to do what this person initially is not going to do. How do peoples in different states resolve this task?

Person in state-0 simply demands, "Give me!"

Person in state-1 obtains by weeping, forces to do "this" from pity.

Person in state-2 repeats his request as long as necessary not paying attention on rejects.

Person in state-3 waits a good mood of the boss ("requests after dinner").

Person in state-4 explains the boss why he must do this.

Person in state-5 convinces the boss, that he wants to do this himself.

Person in state-6 creates the situation, when the boss has no other choice than to do this.

The yellow states are not the highest states of the scale of brightness of mental-spiritual states. However, the upper – orange and red – states are rarely experienced. High inspirations, enlightenment, revelations and other forms of higher religious experience belong to these groups. These are super-aesthetic states or religious ones, which are known only for most developed people who were lucky enough to experience these states at least some seconds. (The memory about these seconds lives with person all his life and leads the person in his development.)

The modern languages have too few means to describe the highest states, but in the context of present article, there is no need in their detailed descriptions. The last three rows of the Table 1 was elaborated to designate the scope by means of more or less differentiated presentation of the composition of both orange and red states in the language, some elements of which are originated in Abrahamic religious traditions. (Although it worth to note here that by their nature itself, the components of these states are so closely interrelated that any attempt to decompose them in an analytical manner seems rather doubtful.)

### *Brightness of Things*

The concept brightness may be expanded from the mental states on the things produced by men ("artificial things"): the brightness of the thing is determined by the highest brightness of mental state, in which the perception of this thing is able to transfers perceiving person that is, which the thing induces.

Although the dynamics of mental states depends on many factors besides an environment only and the influence of things on mental state is determined by many factors also (to mention, at least, the associations, which this thing may "switch on"), nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish the things by their impact on brightness of mental state. In this sense, it is possible to state that, like the mental states, the things of the world differ in their brightness, from the simplest stone tools to such production of art as La Gioconda. Table 2 illustrates the rise of brightness of works of arts (cinema, music, literature, architecture, painting and sculpture).

**Table 2. Brightness of Works of Arts**

Height	Films	Music	Literature	Architecture	Paintings and Sculpture
1-5	n/a	Aconcon drumming (Aconcon, n.d.)	n/a	Hut	Paintings of average 3-year-old painter
21-25	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Simple march	Average feuilleton from yellow press	Architectural ensemble of Times Square in New-York	Tang tri-color glazed figurines
41-45	Chaplin's The Gold Rush	Acmes of "Beatles"	Hemingway's Islands in the Stream	Exterior of Luvre	Degas's "dancers"
61-65	Fellini's La Strada	Beethoven's Appassionata, Tchaikovsky's Symphony Pathétique	Shakespeare's Hamlet	Interior of Parthenon, Exterior of Taj Mahal	Acmes of Bosch (e.g. The Garden of Earthly Delights)
Higher than 80			Dante's Divine Comedy	Notre Dame de Paris	Sistine Madonna La Gioconda

Note. a Range of the brightness of the highest mental-spiritual state (in lyums), which may be induced by the work of art.

For methodology of empirical history, it is extremely important that there is the close correlation between the brightness of thing and the brightness of state of both its creator, in which he created this thing, and its user, in which he use the thing. This fact opens the possibility to study the history empirically from the entirely new perspective – how bright were the mental states, which dominated in different societies and/or in different epochs.

### *Spiritual Height of a Person and one of a Society*

The spiritual height of person is determined as the average brightness of this person's mental states (for the period, say, 1 month). This personal characteristic rises in course of life. However, the spiritual height distinguishes not only the state of one person in different ages of his lifespan, but also the different people of one society and, what even more important in historical context, the different societies.

### *Methods of Measurement of Brightness*

There are two groups of methods for the assessment of brightness. The first group consists of the indirect methods, which base on "principle of resonance": the brightness of person is estimated through the brightness of things he likes or trough the brightness of

things that surrounds him. Say, the person who likes Bach's music is higher than the person who likes Strauss.

The second group consists of the direct methods that base on the concordance of experts' estimates. The possibility to get such concordances in spite of the "tastes differ" bases on the fact that the higher experts themselves the more concordance between their estimates of brightness exist, especially when they estimates the things, which they know well. This fact allows building from the maturity of subjective estimates the objective scale of brightness.

## **Pyramid of History**

### *Incomparable and Comparable*

Significant part of *The Decline of the West* is devoted to analysis of the quite different mental constitution of peoples of different cultures. In his polemics with the supporters of ideas of linear history, of progress and so on, it is very important for Spengler to demonstrate uniqueness of each culture and created by this culture mind and impossibility to compare these unique creation of the history. However, his accent on incomparability of different cultures prevented him to notice that there are the different groups of features of cultures.

One group is the universal features, which are common for all cultures. The second group includes the unique features, which determine the qualitative differences between cultures and unique "favor" of each culture. However, there is also the third group of features consisted of the features, the quantitative degree of which differ from one culture to other. These last features create the base for comparison of different cultures and introduction of the concept progress. Among the features belonging to this third group, there are the culture's both average spiritual height and broadness of consciousness.

### *Axis of the History: What Does Progress Consist in?*

These features form the "axis of the history", the direction of historical process, which allows consider one culture higher than other is. The mental skills of higher culture are not only different but they are based on the mental skills of lower culture. Sometimes the mental skills of higher culture and ones of lower cultures coexist, sometimes the higher skills replace the lower ones, but always the higher skills are developed on base of the lower ones, or, in other words, grows from the lower ones. Most evident this is in the development of different mathematics and mathematical skills, understanding of which Spengler justly considered as the most important key to the understanding of essence of culture. For example, indeed, the Euclidian geometry and the mathematical analysis are quite different parts of mathematics. Moreover, they found on the quite different mental skills. However, it would be incorrect to call these groups of skills incomparable because there are the clear relationships between them: the mathematical-analytic skills may be developed on the base of geometric ones only.

*New mental formations of Humanistic metaculture.* Thus, each metaculture in the history builds the basis for further development of human beings creating its own, unknown for the early cultures mental skills. In other words, each metaculture has its own role in the history.

As a whole, this topic constitutes the subject of historical psychology and, hence, is practically infinite. In this article, I am providing one example of such new mental

formation, which were brought by the Humanistic metaculture, only. Table 3 represents such mental “innovations”.

**Table 3. Directions of Expansion Consciousness in European Culture**

“Scope” of consciousness	Quantitative changes	New formations
Emotions	Rise of “subtleness” of emotions	High aesthetic feeling (emotional reactions on gothic architecture, Rafael, Bach, Goethe among others)
Self-consciousness	Rise of volume of self-consciousness and self-reflectiveness	Inner conflicts (awareness of both plurality and conflicts of motives, cognitive dissonances) Need for meaning
Social intelligence	Rise of reflectiveness, i.e. ability to reconstruct mental realities of other people; Rise of size the group person identify himself with	Empathy - ability to put myself in place of other person and experience this person’s feelings (not be confused with emotional contamination, and similar phenomena)
Practical intelligence	Rise of scale and complexity of activities the person is able to manage	Ability of entrepreneurship
Theoretical intelligence	Rise of cognitive complexity	Ability to analyze, i.e. decompose mentally complex things (in philosophical meaning of world) in more simple ones

Note. From “Psychological roots of cross-cultural and cross-confessional conflicts” by A. Zelitchenko, 2009, p.10. Copyright 2009 by A. Zelitchenko.

### *Ranks of Metacultures and the Pyramid of History*

The main topic of Light of Life is the tracing of both these archetypes and the dynamics of formation of new mental skills in course of the history. Such analysis leads to the determination of five ranks of metacultures in the cultural history. In Table 4, these ranks are designated as Culture-o (“metacultures” of rank o, or the “pro-cultural” state of primitive societies of hunter-gatherers), Culture-I (metaculture of rank I) Culture-II (metaculture of rank II), Culture-III (metaculture of rank III) and Culture-IV (metaculture of rank IV).

Table 4. Five stories of History

Culture-0	Culture-I	Culture-II	Culture-III	Culture-IV
<b>Acmes</b>				
Ritual “art” of Australian aborigines (up to 20 lyums)	Brightest hymns of Mesopotamia and sculptures of Mesoamerica <sup>a</sup> (up to 55 lyums)	Plato’s Timaeus, Symposium; Tao Te Ching (up to 65 lyums)	Gospels, Quran, Buddhist sculpture (up to 75-80 lyums)	Notre Dame de Paris, La Gioconda, Sistine Madonna (up to 85-90 lyums)
<b>Concepts</b>				
Names of concrete things – “house”, “plough”	Names of classes of things – “clothes”, “weapon”	“Good”, “beautiful”, “body”, “virtue”	“Happiness”, “Kingdom of Heaven”, “evil”	“Absolute Spirit”, “will”
<b>Mathematics</b>				
Mathematics-0 are unknown	The number-measure (5 meters, 5 units)	The number as it is (“simply” 5)	Unknown number - x	Variable number, number-function F(x)
<b>Art</b>				
There are no non-functional art-0	Schematic figure	Simple harmony	Ornateness	Symphonicness
<b>Brightest things, which are mass produced</b>				
Boomerang (up to 10 lyums)	Bronze of Shang and Zhou; best Minoan things, Mycenaean armor (up to 15 lyums)	Red-figure pottery, Roman glassware ( up to 20 lyums)	Persian carpets, Chinese porcelain (up to 25 lyums)	Railroads (up to 30 lyums)
<b>“Materials”, which are used in manufacturing</b>				
Raw wood, stones, clay	Bricks, bronze	Nails, stone blocks with slots	Screw, gears	Steam-boiler

Culture-0	Culture-I	Culture-II	Culture-III	Culture-IV
<b><i>“Ours”</i></b>				
Relatives, big family	Thousands of town-dwellers, subjects of one king; foreigners are – populations of other city-state	Hundreds of thousand cultural peoples of different ethnic origins; foreigners are barbarians	Tens of millions believers, people of God; foreigners are unbelievers, infidels	Billions of members of self-expanding confession; there are no foreigners, because each foreigner is potentially “ours”, future “ours”
<b><i>Spectrum</i></b>				
<i>Knowable zone</i>				
Ritual dances (15-20 lyums)	Market trade (20-30 lyums)	Greek symposiums (30-40 lyums)	Tea ceremony (40-50 lyums)	“Elite” films (50-60 lyums)
<i>Mastered zone</i>				
Plough land (up to 10 lyums)	Bake bread (up to 15 lyums)	Cutting nails (up to 20 lyums)	Visiting Chae-Khaneh (tea-houses) (up to 30 lyums)	Weekends in campsites (up to 40 lyums)
<i>Average spiritual height</i>				
About 8 lyums	About 10 lyums	12-13 lyums	15-16 lyums	19-20 lyums

Note. From “Svet Zhizni [Light of Life, History and Developmental Psychology of Nations]” by A. Zelitchenko, 2006, Moscow: Otkrytyy Mir, p.162. Copyright 2006 by A. Zelitchenko.

a It is difficult to determine the acmes of culture-I, because often they are illuminated by Light of brightest Flash of all cultural History. For example, Egypt pyramids are the acme of overall History rather than the acme of Egypt culture-I.

There is the dependence: the higher rank of culture the less the cultures of this rank there are in the history. In other words, one may see the pyramid-like structure of history, in which there are many cultures of rank I, fewer metacultures of rank II, even fewer metacultures of rank III and still less metacultures of rank IV.

### *Archetypes of metacultures – Three Faces of Pyramid of History*

The different metacultures differ one from other not only by their ranks, but also by their archetypes. In other words, the different metacultures of the same rank develop the different mental skills: the Pyramid of History has several sides, several ascending lines of steps. It is easy to distinguish three such lines corresponding to three sets of metacultures. One of these faces of Pyramid of History is formed by the metacultures of Central World. Two others are formed by the metacultures of Eastern World (East and South-East Asia) and of Western World (America), correspondingly.

Until relatively recent times, the peoples of these three Worlds grew up equally high independently ones from others, but they grew in the different “directions”, in the different aspects, developed different scopes of their mind. The Worlds’ archetypes are what determine the direction of this growth. However, the most interesting processes, which perhaps are most important for those who are trying to understand the modernity, began after the Worlds met one another when their cultures started to interact. The deep understanding of these processes and of their inner motive forces is crucially important for our time, when the new global world is created.

#### *Metacultures, Which Spengler did not Notice - 2*

Now, it is possible to return to the question about the metacultures, which were not noticed by Spengler. Spengler listed the eight metacultures, five from which – Babylonian, Egyptian, Apollonian, Arabian and Western – belong to the Central World; one, Chinese belongs to the Eastern World, one Mexican (Mayan/Aztec) belong to the Western World and one more, Indian demands special discussion, which leads out of the frameworks of this article. Table 5 shows the metacultures in Central World that were omitted by Spengler.

**Table 5. Phases of Lives of Metacultures in Central (“Abrahamic”) World**

Metacultures		Phases (centuries)					
Rank	Name	Gleams	Light	Vapor	Water	Ice	End
I	Sumer	23-22BC	21-20BC	19-18BC	17-16BC	15-14BC	13-4BC
	Egypt	18-17BC	16-15BC	14-13BC	12-11BC	10-9BC	8BC-1
II	Assyrian-Persian	13-12BC	11-10BC	9-8BC	7-6BC	5-4BC	3BC-6
	Antiquity	8-7BC	6-5BC	4-3BC	2-1BC	1-2	3-12
III	First-Christian	2-1BC	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-18
	Islamic	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-
IV	Catholic	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-
	Humanistic	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-	
V	Our	19-20	21-				

Note. From “Svet Zhizni [Light of Life, History and Developmental Psychology of Nations]” by A. Zelitchenko, 2006, Moscow: Otkrytyy Mir, p.162. Copyright 2006 by A. Zelitchenko.

Besides the mentioned above Islam metaculture and Humanistic one, Table 5 includes Assyrian-Persian metaculture, which Spengler perhaps considered together with Sumer metaculture as one Babylonian culture (he just few times mentioned this culture) and one more metaculture, which is just in the its very beginning (phase *Gleams*). Spengler

wrote about this metaculture calling it “future Russian culture” and I believe that in general he was right here, although the discussion of this topic is also out of frameworks of this article, which does not aim historical predictions.

Thus, one may see that in respect of Central metacultures, Spengler’s omissions are due to the “amalgamations” of some related, but separate metacultures into one. The same tendency but even stronger expressed may be seen in Spengler’s views on Eastern and Western metacultures. For example, what he named Chinese culture is indeed the set of three metacultures of ranks I, II and III, the beginnings of which are related with Shang (about 12th century BC), Qin (3d century BC) and Tang (7th century) dynasties correspondingly. (I may easily assume that somebody who knows Chinese history better than I do, may notice in it some other metacultures; for example, more or less noticeable rises of creativity are seen in the Spring and Autumn time of Eastern Zhou in 6th – 5th centuries BC and in the time of Ming, 14th – 15th centuries.)

Similarly, what Spengler named Mexican culture, indeed, is the set of, at least, two pre-Columbian metacultures, metaculture of rank I (often named by modern historians as Pre-classic) and metaculture of rank II (Classic). The more detailed discussion of pre-Columbian history is out of the frameworks of this article. However, what is most important in the context of understanding modernity is that two pre-Columbian metacultures only began the row of American metacultures lifted along American face of Pyramid of History. The American metacultures of both rank III (Latin-American culture) and rank IV(modern North-American culture) continue this row. It is widely acceptable that both these metacultures are not “pure American” and were made by strong European influence (metaculture of rank III – mainly by Spanish influence, whereas the metaculture of rank IV mainly by English and French influences). However, what are recognized far not so well are two other facts. The first one is the presence of strong American content in all American metacultures, which make in some important respects the culture of Olmec similar to modern culture of USA.

The second fact is that American metaculture not only did experience the strong European influence, but also itself have influenced European culture actively. The knowledge of American archetype that is common for all American metacultures – for both pre-Columbian metacultures as well as for both European-American metacultures – together with the knowledge of European archetypes are able disclose the essence of internal processes that integrate “Western civilization”.

### **Conclusion: Birth of Cultures and Ontological Challenge**

Attentive view in the history discoveries the existence of many mysteries in it. However, perhaps the questions, which are both most mysterious and most important for us, are the following two:

1) The observations shows that the metacultures emerge very quickly (in historical scale of time), in explosion-like manner approximately twice in millennium, but what are the causes of these explosions, which creates new metacultures? And

2) How are metacultural archetypes (the tasks of metaculture, which determine its place in the history, the program of its development, the meanings and even the program of common life of peoples of metaculture) instilled into the individual minds of all peoples of metaculture?

Attempts to answer these questions without prejudices, which were created by the European Humanistic metaculture, lead us to the revision of the many corner stones of the modern philosophy of science. And perhaps, the most important result of this work will be in understanding that our world as a whole is, speaking in the language of thermodynamics, an open system rather than a closed one.

Many researchers from Spengler to Gumilev (Gumilev, 1990) and Zelitchenko noticed the strong impulses, which increase dramatically the energy of historical processes in more or less regular way in course of historical process. What is the nature of this energy? And where is its source? These questions still are waiting for the answers.

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