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## **Zen Buddhism as a stratagem of self-realization from the perspective of modern civilizational transformations**

The article analyzes the prospects for the civilizational development of mankind, focused on the education of a spiritual personality, which causes interest in the eastern cultural heritage in general and in philosophical thought in particular. Using the methodology of civilizational, sociocultural, axiological approaches, the authors assert a fundamental understanding of the dialogic nature of the modern social space. Referring to the ontological, epistemological, and ethical experience of Zen Buddhism, the authors propose to consider it as a worldview basis for the realization by a person of his free creative choice, his independent efforts to transform reality in accordance with his own ideals and values. The authors argue for the need to master the spiritual heritage of various cultures as an important condition for each person to acquire opportunities for their spiritual development.

*Keywords:* civilization, human, spiritual experience, dialogue of cultures, humanism, Zen Buddhism, self-realization, creative choice, consciousness, civilizational development, Taoism.

### *Introduction*

The fundamental problem that determines the future prospects for the development of modern mankind remains the problem of determining and explaining the laws of social development, which in our study is associated with the concept of “civilization”. From our point of view, civilization is such a construction of society, the basis of which is a set of axiological norms that regulate the life of people and their relationship to nature, the social order, and each other. In addition, the basic theoretical and methodological tenet of contemporary studies of civilizational processes can be viewed as an approach that holds that society, in all of its diversity of forms, is not some sort of closed, homogenous system that exists independently of a person and his activity, but rather is a certain system of relations that is formed in the course of people’s actual daily lives. It may be stated that society results from both the expedient action of the individuals who make changes to the objective conditions of their social existence as well as the effect of objective conditions and variables on the character of human activity and conduct. Therefore, the history of the emergence and development of civilization, being an objectively determined process, at the same time appears as a result of a person’s realization of his free creative choice, his independent efforts to transform reality in accordance with his own ideals and values.

This method of research of the processes of social development not only secures the status of a full-fledged subject of activity for a person, consciously taking part in the creative process of transforming the world, but also allows us to consider each member of society as an active participant in modern social transformations, revealing all new own opportunities in this process. An important thought of K. Marx that “the social history of people is always only the history of their individual development, whether they are aware of it or not” [1; 402, 403], allows us to master the logic of civilizational processes through the understanding that creating the world of human relations, a person creates himself. Accordingly, “it is the personal, individual relationship of individuals to each other, their mutual relationship as individuals that has created – and daily recreates – existing relationships” [2; 440], and this means nothing more than that any social change “can arise only from their own change” [2; 480]. This explains the urgent need to turn in modern social practice, first of all, to those aspects of human nature and life that define man as a main and creative principle of civilizational development, creating cultural and social forms of his being.

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### *Experimental*

In the course of the work, civilizational, sociocultural, and axiological approaches were used. Methods of comparative and historical-culturological analysis were applied to understand the dialogic nature of modern social space. These philosophical and general scientific methods are used comprehensively and systematically in the analysis of the research problem. This research provides an axiological assessment of the worldview of Zen Buddhism and indicates the ways of practical application of its ontological, epistemological, and ethical guidelines. The main methodology used in this research can be defined as the philosophy of knowledge and practical action. In the research, the principle of historicism was most important, considering the emergence of a philosophical idea as a need for the realities of a particular historical era and its spiritual component. According to the principles of the unity of the logical and historical, which are used in research, it is necessary to identify the times when specific stable structures were first formed and the times when they reproduced on their own basis, which implied the processes of these systems' development along with the times when these systems were functioning. This study's logical component should be considered within a larger historical framework, which includes making reference to the system's origins and potential future directions in addition to its reproduction in the present. In the end, the historicism of theoretical thought serves as a crucial prerequisite for comprehending the diversity of the processes underlying civilizational evolution.

### *Results and Discussion*

The law of "challenge and response" proposed by the British historian A. Toynbee at one time explains the emergence and development of civilization as a result of people's ability to give an adequate "response" to "challenges" from both natural changes and social transformations. If the necessary "answer" is not found, it is possible to predict a gradual deterioration of the civilizational situation, up to the complete disappearance of this particular form of civilizational order. A feature of the concept of A. Toynbee is that the "response" to "challenges" can be offered and implemented only by the "creative minority", which has the appropriate talent and energy [3].

One can acknowledge the need for a critical rethinking of the concept of "creative minority" if one agrees with the main idea of A. Toynbee regarding the influence of the human factor on the development of civilization in the sense that the response to a "challenge" of any kind can only be given by a person. Our subject is the growing influence of phenomena reflected in the concepts of "global world order" and "planetary humanity" in the context of modern civilizational development. These phenomena shape each person's need for deeply realizing their own, yet are inextricably linked to the vital interests of all humanity, goals. Each member of society must embrace and put into practice a personal moral and social responsibility stance that would enable him to fully represent all of humanity and become the master of his own destiny in order for this value orientation to be purposefully developed. In such a scenario, personal endeavors to realize one's own well-being as a result of self-actualization result in fresh chances for the advancement of human civilization based on the complete humanization of all social connections.

Even I. Kant argued that a person, being a rational being, is able to develop his natural foundations not as an individual but precisely as a representative of the human race, passing on the accumulated experience from generation to generation in his work "The Idea of Universal History in the World-Civil Plan". Meanwhile, "nature was not at all concerned that a person lived well, but that he would attain a position where, by his actions, he would become deserving of life and well-being" [4; 59].

In addition, I. Kant pays close attention to the still urgent problem of a political nature that humanity needs to solve, striving for the establishment of perfect civil order. This is the task of "establishing lawful external relations between states", creating a "worldwide civil state of public state security" [4; 63]. The absence of such a system of collective security, according to I. Kant, does not allow states to engage in their main and most worthy business, namely: work "on the internal improvement of the way of thinking of their citizens" [4; 65].

The aforementioned theoretical understandings of the key determinants and circumstances of civilizational development enable us to draw the conclusion that people have a propensity during the course of their life activity to not only replicate the conditions of their existence in unaltered biological organization but also to give their personal and social lives a certain meaning. Since the current stage of civilizational development is characterized by an increasingly complex variety of ties that unite humanity into a single planetary whole, the very meaning of human existence can no longer be limited to the narrow framework of momentary bene-

fits. In the conditions of modern civilization, each individual social community has a unique opportunity, relying on its own cultural and historical foundations, to take from the universal experience those materials and spiritual values that they will be able to master and which will become an organic part of their own civilizational project. For example, A.P. Markov believes that “an alternative to the neoliberal concept of the world order, openly professing inhuman ideologemes and practices of social Darwinism and racism, violating social justice and openly ignoring moral responsibility, is the “Eurasian project”, which fundamentally rejects market-liberal totalitarianism and the power of fictitious capital” [5; 15].

Modern social cognition highlights the importance of various worldview practices and concepts from both Western and Eastern cultures, showing how nonviolent action tactics and a view of nature as a living being were used to regulate and improve human existence itself. They now have a new significance that is consistent with the idea of the biosphere as an integral living organism and with activity strategies based on the principles of humanism and the co-evolution of nature and society. They were previously disregarded by technogenic civilization as economically inefficient.

New demands for creative substance, personal significance, and independence in the structuring of human activities are important prerequisites for the realization of these civilizational growth potentials. It is often emphasized by proponents of socio-humanitarian knowledge that the major objective of social growth is not to hasten the development of material production and everything that goes with it, but rather to provide the circumstances for human self-actualization. That is the circumstances that enable one to live a healthy, fulfilling life where the overall development of one’s own attributes serves as the foundation for the advancement of all people. The main idea that was guided by A. Maslow, who developed this concept, was that the path of self-actualization is, in principle, open to any person, and it is necessary to promote the creation of external and internal conditions that ensure real movement in this direction. At the same time, A. Maslow paid considerable attention to the problems of upbringing and education, vocational guidance, and finding ways to stimulate the processes of self-actualization of the individual.

A. Maslow draws attention to the fact that animal experiments have already demonstrated that “a stimulating environment in the early stages of an individual’s life has a special influence on the development of the cerebral cortex in that direction, which we usually call desirable” [6; 16]. He makes the point that the highest human potentialities can only be realized in a well-organized society. It follows that “human specimens need a decent society that would allow them to realize themselves as excellent specimens” [6; 16]. As a result, “the study of those factors that contribute to the formation of a fine specimen, as well as those that inhibit such development” [6; 17] becomes the responsibility of scientists.

Advances in biology and psychology in the study of choices, preferences, reinforcements, etc. allow us to talk not only about the fact that “a healthy organism itself gives clear and loud signals about what it, the organism, prefers, or chooses, or recognizes as a desirable state of affairs”, but also about existing opportunities “to teach people to experience happiness and serenity” [7; 20].

The organism, to a greater extent than was supposed a century ago, has a tendency to choose health, to increase biological success. This actualizes anti-authoritarian approaches to the problems of upbringing and education and means a return to a serious consideration of the Taoist position, which, in relation to a person, requires “more trust in the child’s internal impulses for psychological growth and self-actualization, which means more emphasis on spontaneity and autonomy than on prediction and external control” [6; 23]. Scientists, teachers, parents need to learn to trust more the “biological wisdom” of the body as independent, self-governing, and independently choosing the best.

As the great humanist and scientist of the XXth century A. Schweitzer wrote: “The greatest delusion of the former ethical thinking was the misunderstanding and non-recognition of the heterogeneity of the ethics of the moral personality and ethics created in the interests of society. It has always been believed that both of these ethics can and must be molded from one piece. This led to the fact that the ethics of the moral person was sacrificed to the ethics of society. We need to end this” [8; 292].

The antagonism of the realm of material production to other domains of human existence is a perilous condition brought on by the tremendous acceleration in the growth of the economic component of human civilization. Regrettably, we must admit that today’s modern society lacks not so much scientific expertise or the resources required to address urgent problems as it does wisdom and the rational will to harness the vast potential of contemporary civilization for the benefit of each and every member of every community and of all of humanity as a single biosocial organism.

It can be said with absolute certainty that the advancement of human civilization depends on both the spiritual development of individuals and the global humanization of social interactions.

In this regard, the spiritual experience of Zen Buddhism, from our point of view, can be considered as the ideological basis for the search for new social practices for the formation of a humanistically oriented strategy for the further civilizational development of mankind. Zen Buddhism does not contradict itself to logic since it is centered on returning a person to their original condition and is a doctrine that, on the one hand, rejects reasoning. Although Zen makes numerous denials, it views this one as the highest affirmation possible. In Zen, it is held that the understanding of truth can only come about via spiritual experience. Taoism and Zen both point the way. The transmission of knowledge from instructor to student via non-symbolic words or actions is also given a lot of emphases. In Zen Buddhism, communication only occurs through the transmission of the fundamental principles of the teaching, allowing each individual to choose their own spiritual path [9].

Since Zen Buddhism is technically a type of Mahayana, to achieve enlightenment, followers do not have to leave their families and retire to monasteries. The “awakening” of consciousness can occur at any moment, it depends on the state of consciousness and its readiness to gain freedom, and not on external conditions. “Every place on this earth is the best, every time in this world is the best”, says Zen. As a result, current Zen is not so much a philosophy or religion as it is a way of living that promotes harmony with oneself and the environment, freeing oneself of fearful and painful experiences and fostering a sense of freedom and total self-realization. Zen is both a state of meditation and a system of meditation practices, at least in a very limited sense. Zen Buddhism is thus, in a sense, a contemplative version of Buddhism or, more precisely, Buddhism with a focus on its meditative component. The primary tenet of both Taoism and Zen Buddhism is that discursive-logical thought is incapable of comprehending or expressing the greatest truth (Truth or Tao). Liberation from word and sign, as well as the consequent obstacles “imposed” by the physical world, is a prerequisite for enlightenment. We use words to communicate with the outside world and other people, but it is like we are using a lousy translator; it causes a lot of confusion since we constantly interpret various things under the same term. Zen Buddhism makes an effort to get a direct understanding of reality through the awareness of the functionality of things through meditation, a specialized practice of self-regulation. Understanding the true nature of things is a return to the holistic vision of the wholeness of the universe, the link between all things, and the undifferentiated source of experience, layers of consciousness that are untouched by verbalization. This closely resembles William James’ concept of passive command. An unhurried effort to comprehend and actualize the perspective of the information field without attempting to categorize it.

In the modern world, in which scientific and materialistic ideas are gaining more and more strength and an increasing number of adherents, neo-Buddhist ideology (including Zen), having joined the struggle of ideas, acts according to the laws of this struggle - it modernizes, transforms, seeks out new ways for its development and ultimately for their survival. On the one hand, Zen Buddhist trends absorb a stream of people disillusioned with traditional religiosity, on the other hand, it itself has turned into a “religious” religion, has become an element of secular Western culture, and has begun to be frankly utilitarian, practical. These states, however, are not mutually exclusive, and a specialist who has taken up meditation solely for practical reasons can discover in himself the previously dormant spirituality and, as a result, the path to understanding his place in the world, and a serious follower of Zen Buddhism in its classical, religious interpretation, opens for himself the usefulness of it and everyday life, for example, through “meditation at work”.

### *Conclusions*

Naturally, the challenges of fostering harmony and understanding amongst many peoples have always existed, but in the twenty-first century, they are more pressing than ever. The expansion and complexity of the modern multipolar world, which has reached a stage of development where a problem that arises in one region inevitably resonates in other regions, local difficulties and contradictions develop into global difficulties and contradictions, putting the world on the verge of catastrophe, are to blame for this situation. At the same time, individual ethnic and national cultures have entered into a diverse and contradictory interaction that can turn into both a wealth of development and the loss of their uniqueness and originality.

All cultural realms actively engage in and are simultaneously covered by the process of intercultural dialogue and integration. The next set of steps in the integration of cultures for mutual benefit is pointed out by A.N. Nysanbaev. “The original commonality (unity) of the human race is replaced by the differentiation of cultures, ethnic groups, types of relations to the world; then, especially in the modern multipolar world, there is a search for ways of mutual understanding and mutual agreement; thus, an entry into a dialogue is carried out, and in it - real knowledge and understanding of another culture. In this process, there is a mutual ex-

change of values necessary for the life and development of contacting cultures, and, therefore, on this basis, humanity is united in spirit, a truly equal human brotherhood” [10; 5, 6].

It is essential that the conversation itself be constructed taking into account the required circumstances leading to understanding and agreement to accomplish this type of objective, which is dependent upon the future of humanity. The partners engaging in a conversation connection must first have mutual confidence in one another. Since every culture has ideals in its makeup that cannot help but excite interest and respect, through trust and openness, a deeper understanding of one another is carried out, and as a consequence, mutual interest and respect emerge. The conversation then naturally transitions into close, mutually beneficial teamwork to accomplish certain shared objectives.

The emergence of oneness during such a discussion is not to be regarded as the amalgamation of one culture into another, their mutual intermingling, or even as forced preservation of the multiplicity of cultures already there, but rather as a co-creative relationship that benefits all parties involved. The growth of the manifold is all that is happening here. Because otherwise the variety will not develop but rather disintegrate, development can only be accomplished via creative mutual enrichment and mutual impact of the varied components of the whole.

Thus, the multifaceted analysis of the spiritual life and spiritual culture of society, demanded by modern social practice, involves the study of ontological, epistemological, axiological, semiotic, concrete historical and other aspects of social development. At the same time, attention should be paid to the fact that spiritual culture synthesizes in itself all types and forms of social consciousness, that social consciousness is the main content of spiritual culture. If under certain historical conditions, the spiritual life of society can be determined by spontaneous, not fully formed moods, habits and mores of people, i.e., their everyday consciousness, then spiritual culture is always associated with generally valid norms, functions in society through their development. Accordingly, the problem of the formation of spiritual culture and the development of spiritual heritage, as its most important component, is inextricably linked with the problem of social development of a person, his formation as a creative, amateur personality.

Interest in the Eastern cultural legacy in general and in philosophical thinking in particular is determined by awareness of the need for further civilizational development that is concentrated on the education of a spiritual personality. To increase the complexity and diversity of human relationships and to build a truly compassionate society focused on the self-development and growth of the person, current social, economic, and political concerns must be solved. A call to restore the original oneness of split humanity, the interaction between East and West is a worldwide cultural process of renewing mankind. This is the mission of developing the ideal person and establishing a humanistic global society. The perception of a person as a person—the greatest value and a vital aspect—and the attitude toward him as a conscious subject of his actions—are the most crucial indicators of humanism. The question of whether a person is an independent value, a conscious subject of his actions, developing based on the laws of his own picture of the world, or whether he is a part of the whole, subject to fundamental laws, must be investigated to determine whether one Eastern philosophical doctrine or another is humanistic. Zen Buddhism is a distinctive kind of religion and philosophy that communicates the spiritual truth of Buddhism from Buddha to man without the need for enigmatic rituals or holy writings that are only accessible to the adept. Zen Buddhism is unique and has gained appeal both historically and in the present era due to its applicability to everyone on earth. The universality, importance, spiritual vigor, unparalleled originality, and persuasive force of the ancient teachings of humanism are reflected in its appeal to all people as well as its practical application in resolving moral or practical issues of daily life.

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## Дзен-буддизм қазіргі өркениеттік қайта құрулар тұрғысынан өзін-өзі жүзеге асырудың стратегиясы ретінде

Мақалада жалпы шығыс мәдени мұрасына, оның ішінде философиялық ойға деген қызығушылықты тудыратын рухани тұлғаны тәрбиелеуге бағытталған адамзаттың өркениеттік даму болашағы талданған. Өркениеттік, әлеуметтік-мәдени, аксиологиялық тәсілдер әдістемесін пайдалана отырып, авторлар қазіргі әлеуметтік кеңістіктің диалогтық табиғатын түбегейлі түсінуді бекітеді. Дзен-буддизмінің онтологиялық, эпистемологиялық және этикалық тәжірибесіне сүйене отырып, авторлар оны адамның еркін шығармашылық таңдауын, шындықты өзінің идеалдары мен құндылықтарына сәйкес өзгертуге деген өзіндік күш-жігерін жүзеге асырудың дүниетанымдық негізі ретінде қарастыруды ұсынған. Сонымен бірге, авторлар әр адамның рухани даму мүмкіндіктерін алуының маңызды шарты ретінде әртүрлі мәдениеттердің рухани мұрасын игеру қажеттілігін алға тартады.

*Кілт сөздер:* өркениет, адам, рухани тәжірибе, мәдениеттер диалогы, гуманизм, дзен-буддизм, өзін-өзі жүзеге асыру, шығармашылық таңдау, сана, өркениеттік даму, даосизм.

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## Дзен-буддизм как стратагема самореализации в ракурсе современных цивилизационных трансформаций

В статье проанализированы перспективы цивилизационного развития человечества, ориентированного на воспитание духовной личности, что обуславливает интерес к восточному культурному наследию, в целом, и к философской мысли, в частности. Используя методологию цивилизационного, социокультурного, аксиологического подходов, авторы утверждают принципиальное понимание диалогичности современного социального пространства. Обращаясь к онтологическому, гносеологическому и этическому опыту дзен-буддизма, авторы предлагают рассматривать его как мировоззренческую основу реализации человеком его свободного творческого выбора, его самостоятельных усилий по преобразованию действительности в соответствии с собственными идеалами и ценностями. Авторами аргументируется необходимость освоения духовного наследия различных культур как важного условия обретения каждым человеком возможностей для своего духовного развития.

*Ключевые слова:* цивилизация, человек, духовный опыт, диалог культур, гуманизм, дзен-буддизм, самореализация, творческий выбор, сознание, цивилизационное развитие, даосизм.

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