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**The eschatological perspective of the world in the philosophical and logical  
thought of antiquity and modern times: ontological and gnoseological  
challenges**

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**Abstract.** *This article conducts a comparative analysis of ancient and modern eschatological models to explain the patterns behind contemporary ontological challenges. The study justifies revising the "end of the world" category as a tool to overcome existential anxiety and develop strategies for sustainable development amidst the current civilizational breakdown.*

**Methods.** *A comparative-historical method contrasts ancient cyclical paradigms with modern linear models. A systemic approach treats eschatology as a holistic ontological category. Deconstruction of the idea of progress identifies the origins of modern catastrophism, while hermeneutic analysis of pre-Socratic, Platonic, and Cartesian works reveals the genetic links between classical doctrines and modernity.*

**Results.** *It is proven that ancient thought transformed the mythological "end of the world" into an ontological regularity where the finale serves as a natural stage of cosmic renewal. Ancient cyclism (Heraclitus, Stoics) is revealed as a philosophical prototype for modern sustainable development. Conversely, the modern linear model and subject-object relations shifted the human role from passive observer to an active, transformative force.*

**Conclusions.** *The study substantiates the concept of a "responsible eschaton" – a 21st-century synthetic model integrating ancient ontological limits with modern subject ethics. Overcoming existential anxiety requires combining ancient "calm finalism" with awareness of technogenic responsibility. This approach transforms eschatological expectations into a methodological basis for managing global risks (AI, ecological collapse), functioning as an ethical regulator that restores planetary unity and defines the limits of nature interference.*

**Keywords:** *eschatological ontology, ontological challenge, cyclism of being, existential anxiety, subject-object relations, responsibility of the subject, civilizational break, sustainable development.*



**Есхатологічна перспектива світу у філософсько-логічній думці  
античності та нового часу: онтологічні та гносеологічні виклики**

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***Анотація.** Мета статті полягає у здійсненні порівняльного аналізу есхатологічних моделей античності та Нового часу для експлікації закономірностей формування сучасних онтологічних викликів. У дослідженні ставиться завдання обґрунтувати необхідність переосмислення категорії «кінця світу» як інструменту подолання екзистенційної тривоги та пошуку*



*стратегій майбутнього сталого розвитку в умовах сучасного цивілізаційного зламу.*

**Методи.** *Порівняльно-історичний метод – для протиставлення циклічної парадигми Античності лінійній моделі Сучасності. Системний підхід – для розгляду есхатології як цілісної онтологічної категорії, що визначає людський спосіб існування. Метод деконструкції ідеї прогресу – для виявлення витоків сучасного катастрофізму, герменевтичний аналіз праць досократиків, Платона, Арістотеля, Ф. Бекона та Р. Декарта – для виявлення генетичного зв'язку між класичними доктринами та сучасною епохою.*

**Результати.** *Доведено, що в античній філософській думці відбулася трансформація міфологічного «кінця світу» в онтологічну закономірність, де фінал постає природним етапом циклічного оновлення Космосу. Розкрито потенціал античного циклізму (Геракліт, Анаксимандр, стоїки) як філософського прообразу сучасної ідеї сталого розвитку, де визнання меж росту є запорукою збереження буття. Встановлено, що лінійна модель історії та формування суб'єктно-об'єктних відносин у Новий час змінили статус людини: з пасивного спостерігача вона перетворилася на активну силу трансформації світу.*

**Висновки.** *У дослідженні вперше обґрунтовано концепцію «відповідального есхатону» – синтетичної моделі буття XXI століття, що інтегрує античне розуміння онтологічних меж із новочасною етикою суб'єкта. Автором аргументовано, що подолання сучасної екзистенційної тривоги можливе лише через поєднання античного «спокійного фіналізму» з усвідомленою відповідальністю людини за наслідки техногенної діяльності. Запропонований підхід дозволяє перетворити есхатологічне очікування з чинника деструкції на методологічне підтримання для управління глобальними ризиками (ШІ, екологічний колапс). Доведено, що есхатологія в цифрову епоху має функціонувати як етичний регулятор, що повертає людству відчуття*



планетарної єдності та визначає межі допустимого втручання в порядок природи.

**Ключові слова:** есхатологічна онтологія, онтологічний виклик, циклізм буття, екзистенційна тривога, суб'єктно-об'єктні відносини, відповідальність суб'єкта, цивілізаційний злам, сталий розвиток.

**Problem statement.** Global upheavals in the modern world, such as the war in Ukraine, which has been going on for almost four years and could escalate into World War III, the crisis in the international security system, the threat of nuclear war, and global environmental threats, such as the melting of the “doomsday glacier,” are contributing to the escalation of fears in global society. The expectation of a “catastrophe” – man-made, caused by humans, and more potentially real than ever before – forces people to reflect on the fundamental principles of modern civilization in order to find guidelines for shaping a strategy for the future.

The eschatological perspective of humanity is defined by reflections on the limits of existence, the understanding of which varies according to the worldview paradigm of the time. Antiquity and the Modern Era were chosen as two epochs that significantly influenced the formation of the foundations of modern civilization. In antiquity, the main worldview problems were laid down and the very logic of human understanding of the world and their place in it was formed. The Modern Era brought science into the world, which gave humans a sense of omnipotence and omnipresence, forming subject-object relations in the human-world system. Thus, existence became dependent not only on fate or the established world order (Antiquity) or God (the Middle Ages), but also on humans. If antiquity, with its cyclical perception of time, is characterized by ontological optimism, then the transition to a linear model of history, conditioned by the Christian worldview, introduces the problem of the inevitability of the end into philosophical thought. The



idea, born of science, of faith in the boundless powers of “humanity armed with the correct method of cognition” and endless progress secularizes eschatological expectations and introduces into them the ethical aspect of human responsibility, and at the same time, anxiety about the unknown future.

Eschatology in the context of the issue under study appears not only as a religious doctrine about the end of the world, but also as an ontological category that determines the way of human existence. For the modern world, the ancient approach to the problem of inevitable catastrophe (the end of one cosmic cycle and the beginning of another) is an alternative view of a model of existence capable of radical transformations and eternal vitality. The cult of progress embedded in modern philosophy has led to a situation where, as a result of technological development, humans now face the threat of man-made catastrophe and the challenges of AI.

In general, there is a paradigm shift, a transition from the ancient model of “fate” and cyclicity to the linear model of progress of the New era (secularized ontology). With the paradigm shift comes a gnoseological conflict, when faith in the unlimited power of science, which gave rise to a sense of human omnipotence, on the other hand, shifted the responsibility for the end of history from “fate” (the ancient coordinate system) and God (the Middle Ages) to man. This will ultimately become the cause of an existential challenge, as the modern era transforms eschatology into an ontological category that determines how humans survive in the face of modern technogenic challenges.

#### **Analysis of recent studies and publications.**

An analysis of scientific literature in recent years gives reason to conclude that there has been a change in the approach to interpreting eschatological issues in the philosophical thought of antiquity and modern times. There has been a shift in meaning from a religious understanding to the conceptualization of eschatology as a fundamental ontological category.



The ancient legacy of the pre-Socratics, in particular their ontological developments, is subject to review. Thus, P. Kurd, in his fundamental study “The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought,” argues that the first natural philosophical models laid the logical foundation for understanding the cyclical nature of being as an act of cosmic justice. [1, p. 15-20]. T. Vitek (“Heraclitus' Eschatology: Was There One, or Not?”) revisits traditional ideas about epiphorosis (world fire), in particular highlighting the ethical aspect of Heraclitus' “fire” as “judgment” that maintains cosmic balance. [2, p. 27].

The epistemological dimension of overcoming fear of eschatological determinism is explored in detail by V. Glennon in his work *Epicureanism and Death*. Analyzing the atomistic desacralization of death, the researcher proves the irrationality of anxiety about non-existence, which allows the author of the article to consider ancient ethics as a means of psychological adaptation of man to modern catastrophic scenarios [3, p. 37-38].

In his essay “Xenophanes' Scepticism,” D. Lesher uses an analysis of Xenophanes' scepticism to highlight an empirical approach to catastrophism, where knowledge of past cataclysms becomes the basis for assumptions about future changes to the Earth's surface [4, p. 10, 13].

The problem of the ethical dimension of eschatology in Platonism is reflected in the works of D. Graham, in particular in *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, which emphasizes the correlation between the moral decline of society and natural collapses in the dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias* [5]. M. Scott joins the study of the eschatological context in antiquity in his monograph *Apocalyptic Thinking in Early Greek Philosophy*, analyzing how ancient structures of thought influence contemporary perceptions of global threats [6, p. 5].

The transition to a modern ontological-epistemological shift in the system of human-world relations is achieved through criticism of subject-object relations. In his work *The Progress Trap: From Bacon to the Modern Age*, B. Verbeek explores



how the modern idea of progress and Bacon's principle of domination over nature formed the basis for contemporary ecological pessimism [7, p. 110-115]. The issue of R. Descartes' dualism as a source of modern technocentrism is analyzed in the works of L. Nolan, in particular in “The Routledge Companion to Descartes,” which emphasizes the autonomy of “extended substance” as an object of unlimited technological exploitation [8, p. 210].

I. Vitiuk (“Eschatological Ideas in Ancient Philosophy: Challenges of Today”) focuses on adapting ancient ideas to the conditions of war in Ukraine, emphasizing the importance of “philosophical calm” as a survival strategy [9, p.18]. Also important are the works of O. Gomilko, “Anthropological Limits of Progress: Philosophical Reflection,” and S. Proleev, “Metamorphoses of Modern Rationality,” which analyze the crisis of modern rationality in the context of contemporary catastrophism [10; 11]. Separately, it is worth highlighting N. Kochubei's study “Order and Chaos: The Synergistic Paradigm of Modernity,” which reinterprets the ancient concept of chaos in the context of modern social upheavals through the prism of synergetics [12].

Thus, we can identify the main directions of contemporary research on this issue. First, a review of the ancient heritage (P. Kurd, T. Vitek), second, the gnoseological vector, which analyzes options for overcoming fear (V. Glennon, D. Leshner), as well as the ethical direction associated with criticism of progress (D. Graham, M. Scott, B. Verbeke, L. Nolan). The presence of eschatological issues in contemporary Ukrainian philosophical discourse is evidenced by attempts to adapt the ideas of “philosophical peace” and synergetics to life in the conditions of war in Ukraine (I. Vitiuk, O. Gomilko, S. Proleeva, N. Kochubei).

The theoretical meaning of the article lies in the author's attempt to trace the genetic connection between the ancient experience of “growth limits” and subjective responsibility, which is actualized in the concept of eschatology as a means of ontological adaptation of man in modern realities.



The practical meaning of the article lies in the author's attempt, based on the study of eschatological models of antiquity and modern times, to derive methodological foundations for overcoming anxiety, guidelines for forming strategies for the future, and achieving “philosophical peace” as a strategy for psychological survival.

**Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem.**

Despite thorough analysis, the aforementioned works do not sufficiently highlight the genetic link between ancient cyclicity and the modern linear model of progress as the only tool for overcoming contemporary anxiety about the challenges of the 21st century, in particular AI and nuclear collapse. Most studies are highly specialized.

This article attempts to prove that in the modern world, eschatology is finally losing its purely religious connotations, transforming into a fundamental philosophical category and ontological reference point. The synthesis of ancient experience of “growth limits” and modern subjective responsibility proposed in this work allows us to overcome the existing fragmentation of knowledge, offering a comprehensive strategy for human adaptation to the situation of global uncertainty through rational understanding of the limits of one's own existence.

**Formulation of the article's objectives (setting the task).**

**The aim of the study** is to explain the patterns of formation of contemporary ontological challenges based on the analysis of eschatological models of Antiquity and Modern Times and to justify the need to rethink the category of “the end of the world” as a tool for overcoming existential anxiety and searching for strategies for a sustainable future in the context of the current civilizational breakdown. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are addressed: 1) to reveal the potential of ancient cyclicity as a philosophical prototype for modern sustainable development; 2) to deconstruct the Modern linear idea of progress to identify the origins of the contemporary “progress trap” and its technogenic risks (AI, climate collapse); 3) to

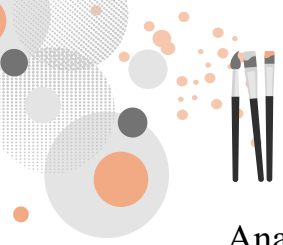


identify the ontological roots of modern catastrophism by comparing ancient “calm finalism” with the modern feeling of “hopelessness” and existential disorientation in the digital age; 4) to trace the transformation of eschatology from an objective cosmic cycle to a subjectively determined finale where humans are active agents of crisis; 5) to formulate a synthesis-based model of a “responsible eschaton” that integrates development dynamics with the recognition of the ontological limits of being.

### **Presentation of the main research material.**

Attempts by ancient philosophers to explain the world “from within itself,” that is, without the influence of supernatural factors, which we encounter in religious and mythological explanations of the world order, raise questions about its origin, source, and foundation (“arche”). This entails a transformation of the eschatological vision: the question of the “end” is a natural derivative of the question of the beginning (the first principle). If, for the religious-mythological worldview, the “end of the world” is determined by the will of the gods, then philosophical thought transforms its understanding into an ontological regularity. Considering the issues raised by ancient philosophy, we will try to outline the general picture of eschatological visions. Ancient eschatology is studied mainly in the context of religious and religious studies. Among the well-known researchers are D. Walls, E. Aveni, L. Verburgt, M. Scott, N. Wright, J. Lynch, B. McGinn, and others. However, the modern focus is shifting to the logical-gnoseological aspect: how knowledge about the end structures the understanding of the present.

The Milesian school approaches the problem of explaining the world from a rationalistic standpoint and offers a new methodological approach, unlike mythological and religious models of the universe. Thales sees the main question of philosophy as the question of the origin (“arche”) of the world, from which it arises. Inheriting from mythology the idea of an orderly Cosmos as opposed to the original Chaos, the first philosophers already formed the idea of its transience. Thus,



Anaximander assumes the return of all things in the world to where they originate, to the infinite (Apeiron) [13]. This approach to what will later be called “the end of the world” does not bear the mark of catastrophism, but rather has the character of a natural state of affairs, a natural stage of development [14]. This is not catastrophism, but a natural law, where eschatos is an act of cosmic justice.

Heraclitus, a proponent of the idea of flux (the principle of “panta rei”), reinforces this approach by referring to the metaphor of “eternally living fire.” If, in order to understand the principle of the “functioning” of the world, the image of fire primarily implies its incessant movement, then one of the preserved fragments of his works (B66) also points to the destruction of the world by fire: “Fire will come and judge all things” [5]. Therefore, the destruction of the world is only a stage in continuous motion – “panta rei”.

Democritus perceived the world as discrete, formulated an atomistic view of the world, a doctrine of atoms – being and emptiness – non-being, which logically agreed with the assumption/statement about the existence of many worlds that are destroyed as a result of collisions between each other [14]. And if we take into account that Democritus was a supporter of the idea of strict determinism and denied chance, it follows that the collision of worlds is also “predetermined” and, therefore, eschatology is ontologically immanent.

Epicurus, a follower of Democritus, developed the atomistic doctrine, but rejected the idea of determinism. He introduced the concept of spontaneous deviation of atoms (clinamen). His apocalyptic picture of the world predicted the destruction of every world through “scattering into emptiness.” At the same time, he appealed to the epistemological aspect of overcoming the fear of determinism: awareness of the material nature of the “end of the world” desacralizes it [9; 14]. Epicurus eliminates individual fear of death on the basis of ethical categories of “good” (that which causes a person to feel pleasure) or “evil” (that which causes a person to feel pain). And if the dead feel nothing, then death is neither good nor bad



for the deceased. Accordingly, “it is irrational for a person to fear his future state of being dead” [4, p. 223-224].

The idea of ancient eschatological cyclism takes on its most complete form in the concept of ekpyrosis – a global conflagration, followed by palingenesis – rebirth. Researchers of Heraclitus' eschatology argue that his fire is both the substance of the mind and the final point of the cosmic cycle [2, p. 22]. Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, states that “our age” is approaching “the exhausting heat [of the coming global conflagration].” Downing notes that, along with the idea of cyclical eschatology, ancient philosophical thought was also characterized by the idea of “the aging of the world” (Lucretius, Pliny the Elder) [15, p.99].

The Stoics interpreted natural disasters as the cause of the “end of the world,” some of whom were sympathetic to the idea of the cyclical destruction of worlds in fire, followed by their rebirth [14]. Xenophanes claimed that the end of the world would come as a result of a kind of flood that had already occurred in the past, as evidenced by shells found far from water [14]. An interesting analysis of cyclical catastrophism is provided by D. Leshner in his article “Xenophanes' Scepticism”, where he substantiates a certain empiricism in Xenophanes' epistemological views. Xenophanes questions religious knowledge: divination and prediction of the future. Instead, he argues that we can know nothing about the future, only about the past—past “ends of the world,” as evidenced by fossilized fish and shells in the mountains. And based on this knowledge, we make assumptions about future catastrophes, when the earth will merge with the sea, humanity will perish, and then rise again [4].

The creator of objective idealism, Plato, researchers claim, attempted to describe several scenarios of the “end of the world,” such as fires, earthquakes, and floods [14]. In the dialogues “*Timaeus*” and “*Critias*,” he describes the destruction of Atlantis, which “disappeared, sinking into the sea,” preceded by earthquakes. For Plato, eschatology has an ethical dimension, since he cites the moral decline of society as the cause of the apocalypse [16]. He also raises the issue of natural



disasters as a factor influencing political life (dialogue “Laws”): the decline in people's souls and an unjust social order affect the surrounding world, and nature responds to this with natural disasters [17]. Plato envisions the rebirth of society after the “end of the world,” during which all the “flaws” that hindered the normal development of state and social life will be destroyed [14].




Aristotle supports the idea of cyclical development of humanity, but in his interpretation, eschatology is not global in nature and therefore does not threaten the destruction of all living things. He argued that “the sky did not come into being and cannot be destroyed.” Natural disasters are local in nature and do not threaten the existence of the entire world order: space is eternal [18].

Researchers point to the ethical dimension of ancient eschatology, particularly in the views of the Stoics and Epicureans. Lucretius, for example, “uses the end of the world to help alleviate the fear of death,” while Seneca uses it to alleviate the feeling of man's loneliness [14].

Marcus Aurelius also uses the idea of the end of the world (by water or fire) for therapeutic purposes in his “spiritual exercises” [9, p. 17-19; 14].

Thus, eschatological visions of antiquity were closely linked to ontological and gnoseological-logical aspects, evolving from a natural philosophical explanation of the natural order to a complex ethical-psychological phenomenon, naturally integrated into human existence. On the one hand, eschatological ideas posed an ontological challenge, as they required humans to accept the inevitability of the end, but on the other hand, they naturally contributed to the formulation of a gnoseological task: to understand the laws of nature (the cosmos), the logic of the world's existence, and thus overcome the fear of its eschatological change.

The modernity, beginning in the 16th century, brought the influence of science to the eschatological picture of the world, enriched in the Middle Ages by a linear perception of time. The emergence of science was the factor that drew the attention of thinkers to the philosophical heritage of antiquity with its rationalistic natural



philosophical approach to explaining the world. On the one hand, the emergence of science prompted philosophers to intensify their research into the methodological component of philosophy, which naturally led to a change in the place of man in relation to the world. Science needed a methodology that only philosophy could provide, and armed with the correct method of scientific knowledge, man changes his ontological status in the world.

Eschatological ontology is discussed in G. Leibniz's work "Theodicy," which asserts that our world is the best possible world, and its eschatology is the idea of the constant improvement of the world [19]. The tendency to transform the world was laid down by the scientific revolution, which made man not a part of the established [by God] world order (as claimed by the thinkers of antiquity and the Middle Ages), but an active force, a factor in the transformation of the world.

The epistemological optimism of the Modern Age originates from Francis Bacon's work "Novum Organum," in which he proclaims in the third aphorism: "Knowledge and human power are synonymous," and also that man must rule over nature by learning its laws, that is, by 'submitting' to it: "nature is only subdued by submission." Thus, man has gained the power – knowledge – to rule over nature. However, he also points to the limits of human intervention, beyond which only the forces of nature remain. [20]. In "Instauratio magna," Bacon points to the purpose of knowledge – to be useful, another principle of modern philosophy that would later become fundamental to pragmatism. In developing the problems of gnoseology, the thinker also understands its significance for human existence: "lay firmer foundations for human power and prestige, and to extend their bounds yet wider" [21]. And if we consider eschatology as a movement toward the perfection of the world, as Leibniz spoke of, then the world is "perfected" according to the will of man and his plans.

Francis Bacon's view on the role of humans in the world is shared by René Descartes, who in his treatise *Discourse on Method* asserts that the acquisition of



useful knowledge that can be applied to satisfy human needs can make humans “masters and rulers of nature.” R. Descartes develops a mechanistic picture of the world as a giant mechanism created by God. The world consists of two substances: extended (*res extensa*), matter, and thinking (*res cogitans*), the spiritual world, human consciousness. God gave the world its initial impetus, and then everything in the world happens according to the laws of nature established by God [22].

**Conclusions.** Thus, from ancient philosophical thought to modern times, there has been an ontological transformation of the concept of the “end of the world.” Eschatology has evolved from ancient “cosmic fatalism,” where the end is a natural and just stage of cyclical renewal (Anaximander, Heraclitus, the Stoics), to modern “subjective activism.” In modernity, the end of the world ceased to be merely an objective given and became a sphere of human responsibility, which, through science and method (Francis Bacon, René Descartes), sought to master nature, thereby secularizing eschatological expectations.

The ancient idea of cyclical renewal and the limits of cosmic growth (Plato, Aristotle) appears today not as an archaic concept, but as a philosophical basis for a strategy of sustainable development in the future. The recognition of the ontological limits of existence, characteristic of antiquity, is a necessary corrective for modern civilization, which is suffering from an ecological crisis.

The cult of boundless progress, born of a belief in the limitless powers of the “master of nature” (Descartes), has led to the emergence of modern eschatological threats (AI, nuclear threat, climate collapse), where technological development, instead of guaranteeing security, poses one of the greatest threats to the existence of the world.

The experience of ancient schools (Epicureans and Stoics) demonstrates that rational knowledge of the laws of the world is a tool for desacralizing the fear of catastrophe. Unlike modern anxiety about non-existence, ancient “calm finalism”



offers ethical guidelines for preserving dignity and peace even in times of global upheaval.

A transition in eschatology from an objective cosmic cycle to a subjectively determined finale has been established. Humankind has transformed from a passive observer of natural cataclysms to an active agent of global crises, shifting the question of the end of the world from the realm of fate to that of individual and collective responsibility.

In the 21st century, the synthesis of two eras has resulted in the need to form a new model of existence – a responsible eschaton. It must combine intensive technological development with the ancient understanding of the Cosmos as an indivisible unity. Human technogenic activity requires a reorientation toward ethical guidelines, such as responsibility for the consequences of one's actions on a planetary scale.

The theoretical innovation of the study lies in rethinking eschatology as a fundamental philosophical category that goes beyond purely religious discourse. Its role as a universal tool for ontological modeling is substantiated, allowing for the conceptualization of a “responsible eschaton” – a synthetic model of being that integrates ancient ontology of boundaries with modern ethics of the subject.

The novelty of this worldview is due to the justification of the transition of man from the role of “master of nature” to the status of “guardian of cosmic balance.” A way to overcome contemporary existential disorientation is proposed through the adaptation of ancient “calm finalism” to the realities of the digital age, which transforms the perception of global threats (AI, nuclear collapse) from fatal inevitability into a space of conscious ethical responsibility.

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