

# HOW DO WE SEE THE END OF THE WORLD

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*Bruno Petrušić*

## *Introduction: Does metaphysics matter?*

To answer this question from the title requires a short introduction. When we say: “the end of the world”, what are we actually thinking of? What does it mean “the end of the world”? Do we mean literary that the world will stop existing, or that the world will become something else, or that it will be the end of life or end of mankind? What do we mean when we say — “world”, at last? Before answering these questions, as the one in the title, first we need to see from which point of view we are looking at current phenomenon — in this case the phenomenon of the end of the world. That requires thinking about worldviews that are depending on our basic and fundamental, we could say — metaphysical premises that themselves are not dependent on anything else. These metaphysical premises are axioms, a priori fact of our existence and our way of thinking, our dealing with the world, and as such they are unquestioned and (scientifically) unproven. They are structuring our worldviews. Not to take account of these metaphysical premises (when speaking about anything) seems to me quite inappropriate, because, as Ludwig Wittgenstein has pointed out, only in a particular worldview, or as he calls it — the life form, the things and talk about them attain their true meaning. So if we are interested in true meaning of the phenomenon of the end of the world, we need to have in mind these worldviews and metaphysical premises that are founding current worldview. Since it is about unquestioned and unproven metaphysical premises, the criterion for accepting or rejecting one or another, will be the William James’ pragmatism. Pragmatism says that we should accept those metaphysical premises which are having importance for our current lives. Does metaphysics matter? The answer is yes, because the metaphysical premises structure our worldviews and our worldview is structuring the meaning of the current phenomenon for us.

1. *How many worldviews are there and are they all justified?*

One could say that there are so many worldviews as there are people, because the worldview means my personal view of the world, and since the world is always the same, there are lots of personal views on that same world. But it is not the case. We could say that there are lots of worldviews that are depending of person's concepts and ideas, but those ideas that are structuring every worldview, as I mentioned earlier, those metaphysical premises, are determined. We can speak about few of those fundamental ideas or metaphysical premises, but I will mention only two of them. One is that everything that exists is a matter (materialism) and the other is that everything that exists is a spirit (spiritualism). It is not hard to see that both of these ideas are totally wrong as long as they are exclusive. The truth is somewhere in the middle, and includes both ideas.

So, first I will shortly deal with two different and opposed worldviews that are based on those two ideas. It is about materialistic and religious worldviews. Many see justification of the materialistic worldview in so-called Ockham's razor, which claims that we should accept that explanation of a phenomenon that is simpler and has less guesses and unnecessary hypothesis. This approach is interesting because it has pragmatic value in a sense of accepting that explanation which is simpler, and it is accessible than the other. But the question is do we lose something that is even more important for our lives if we accept this materialistic worldview? If so, we should deny and reject that worldview, but not exclude it from our thinking.

One of justifications based on Ockham's razor for the materialistic worldview we can find in the new atheist movement. They point the evolution as the better, simpler and better founded explanation for the diversity of life, while the God as explanation seems to bring more problems than benefits. They ask who created the Creator and so one, and for that reason they insist on Ockham's razor and proclaim religious worldview as an illusion or even as spell that we need to end. As opposed to religion they insist on science and materialistic worldview which is associated with the scientific paradigm of the world, while the religious worldview is more closely related to the humanities (holistic) and spiritual approaches to reality. What they do not see is that materialistic worldview is based on (scientifically) unproven metaphysical premises, or the idea that everything that exists is only matter, even though the things are not so clear as we shall see.

There are many types of materialism but I am interested only in two: emergent and naturalistic materialism. The difference between them is that naturalistic materialism denies any possibility of the existence of anything immaterial in the world (such as the consciousness, minds, thought ...), while

the emergent naturalism says that there is possibility for the existence of something immaterial, but just as a byproduct and after the matter itself. But it is important that both are excluding God from the world, since God is spirit.

The idea, or metaphysical premise, that is structuring religious worldview, on the other hand, in the most cases is the spiritualism. But that does not exclude the matter, rather just give priority to the spirit, since the God is spirit. And it is interesting to see that in the most cases the religious worldview includes materialism in some sort of dualism, but there are also religions or religious worldviews that are only acknowledging the existence of the spirit and denying the existence of the matter. As it was the case with the materialistic worldview, and religion worldview has its justification, but it is also based on (scientifically) unproven metaphysical premises. Considering all I said earlier in the text, it is pragmatically justified the acceptance of the religious worldview since inside it we have phenomena that are very important for the actual human lives, and which are denied in the materialistic worldview. And paradoxically, today it is the materialistic worldview that is predominant in our society and that is something we should have in mind considering and thinking about the end of the world.

## 2. *Scenarios and perspectives for the end of the world*

Now we shall outline some possible scenarios and perspective of the end of the world starting first from the materialistic and then from a religious worldview. But first, we should say that the concept of the end of the world was (and still is) primarily religious theme which is today experiencing its secular, scientific and cultural variations. And in those variations it is often means not the end of the world, but rather ends of an era, or in the worst case, the end of humanity.

As I said before, materialistic worldview is often connected with science which is extremely important and multiple human activities. And it is interesting for us to see possible scenarios for the end of the world which arising from scientific and technological achievements. So we have possible black holes, viruses, global warming, environmental disaster, solar torches, nuclear war ...

Often we could hear over the last few years since lasts project in CERN, called the search for the God particle (Higgs boson), that humanity is risking the formation of a black hole that could swallow up the entire planet. This fear showed unjustified, but science is always offering new possibilities for the end of mankind, and not so much for the end of the world. Then we speak about some virus that somehow moves outside the laboratory, either through human error or terrorist act, followed by pandemic that kills entire humanity

or at least most of the people, what is story or scenario of numerous successful films and Hollywood blockbusters. The next possible cause of the end of the world within a materialistic worldview, is global and sudden environmental disaster, or, as many announce, global warming, which is caused by negligent human activity. Some of these possibilities are caused by humans and other by nature. But in both cases it is about the consequences of scientific and technical progress, which is connected with human clumsiness or wickedness.

There is also a science fiction possibility of an alien invasion that could lead to the extinction the entire mankind. In that case (but also in another, for global warming, environmental disasters...) the science and technologies could help us to prevent or at least mitigate the consequences of the end of the world. So, we could say that the science and technologies are neutral regarding to the end of the world, or at least for the end of the mankind. It is the man who with his knowledge, his motives and his actions can lead to the end of the world. Science and technologies can help us to prevent some of those scenarios. One of the worst, and exactly the most possible scenario of the end of the world where the man is main cause with its science and technology, is war — a nuclear war. Since there is no God, as the materialistic worldview says, only man can be responsible for eventual apocalypse, and only man can prevent that apocalypse.

In the religious worldview the things are quite different, even though it includes most of mentioned scenarios that we have in mind thinking about the end of the world within materialistic worldview. When we are thinking about the end of the world with in religious traditions (with concept of linear time), we often speak about war or conflict between forces of evil and powers of good. Then we also speak about apocalyptic disasters, about earthquakes, about war, but not between humans, than between God and Satan. And if you look at internet on some sites, on You tube, you will find different scenarios of the end of the world inspired primarily with Apocalypse of st. John, and others apocalyptic literature. The most of those scenarios includes just some apocalyptic disasters, so, I think that most of them are wrong, and that interpretation of that apocalyptic literature should be considered inside theistic concept of linear time. That concept says that in the end of time there will be no world, just God. So, inside the religious worldview, the God is causing the end of the world while the humans are passively engaged in final conflict between good and evil. And after that final battle there will be no world, no time, no space, just God.

### 3. *Breaking news: Apocalypse today*

We live in time and culture that is marked by domination of the image and various informations, and it is interesting to see the attention that media devote to apocalyptic events, such as the terrorists attack, earthquake, war, which is very often for the last decades. And when something like that happens, they invite experts from different fields of science into life TV shows and broadcast their interviews about forthcoming apocalypse. And jet till now it didn't happen. Were they wrong? Of course they were.

Taking into account lot of movies, commercials and books about the end of the world, or, apocalypse that is happening today, we can say that it is important to see that this topic of the end of the world is very actual and that it does concern modern society. The question that matters is how are we dealing with it? Is the movie or commercial the best we can do? And at the same time the number of different sects, weather they are religious or non-religious, increases. On the other hand, lot of religion traditions are lousing interest of this topic and science is usually denying it. So we could say that we live in quiet interesting time marked by paradox that seems inextricable. It is important to mention that it is so because today we are not thinking about worldviews and metaphysical premises that are structuring our way of dealing with the world, our sense and our way of thinking about anything.

Therefore it is important to reanimate some of religious dealing with this topic of the end of the world because the vast majority of people is lost and confused by the contemporary solutions and offers that are available in society, culture or some sectarian movements.

### *Conclusion: True meaning of the end of the world today*

So, as a conclusion for this paper we can say that, since today's predominant worldview is materialistic worldview, then the true meaning for the end of the world must be meant inside that worldview. Then we are not talking about the end of the world, but rather about apocalyptic events, as spoken. But if we take into account pragmatism then we must reject materialistic worldview because it represents reductionism that is unjustified. On the other hand, religion has lost its position and role in (post)modern society, so first we must restore religious interpretation and worldview to place that deserves. Also, since metaphysic matters, we need to ask ourselves is it possible to believe in God and at the same time live, thinking and dealing with the world from the materialistic worldview, or it is possible to integrate both of those worldviews into one life form that would be comprehensive. This is paradox which marks today's postmodern society in which the religion seems to be unimportant

and ignorant for the human life, or for the life of consumers of the western world which are not even trying to establish one comprehensive worldview.

And at the end, I feel it necessary to mention that although religion has lost its role and position in today's society, we still need to have in mind that some of today's basic elements and phenomenon, in that same society, have its origin in religion traditions, and this means that the true meaning of them are inside religious worldview, as it is the case for the end of the world.