

CHORNOBYL IN CONTEMPORARY HUMANITIES DISCOURSE: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL RUPTURE AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF MEMORY

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INTRODUCTION

The Chernobyl disaster was, first and foremost, a media story. It was precisely this fact that played a dominant role in the processes of its subsequent reinterpretation and representation within the continuum of the Ukrainian state's coexistence with the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone as an iconic «place of memory» in the sociocultural space of post-Soviet Ukrainian society, functioning as a cultural phenomenon. Thanks to the particular media coverage of its consequences, the Chernobyl accident gained global recognition as «the greatest man-made disaster in the history of the 20th century», and the words «Chernobyl» and «zone» became nominal.

The relevance of the Chernobyl discourse for Ukrainian culture as a whole is determined by trends in the development of contemporary social and humanistic knowledge, the issues of which are reflected in the ethnosophical characteristics of historical thinking in the post-Soviet region.

The very nature of this issue is determined by the contemporary challenges of national revival and the uniqueness of the historical and cultural experience gained by the Ukrainian people during the clean-up of the accident on their own territory. In Western literature dealing with the mental and spiritual crisis of post-Soviet society, the term «cultural Chernobyl» is frequently encountered, highlighting the underlying basis of «spiritual extinction». Indeed, following the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine found itself amidst the ruins of the Chernobyl disaster, held hostage by the catastrophe; and as it has become a transit point where East and West meet, it is gradually transforming into a symbolic site of post-Soviet re-evaluation. This situation calls for living within the parameters of constant responsibility and remembrance of the past¹.

1. Chernobyl in Contemporary Humanities Discourse

The explosion at the fourth power unit of the Chernobyl NPP on 26 April 1986 is one of the most significant events in the historical record of Ukraine and the world. This man-made disaster affected every aspect of our country's existence, forcing people to take a fresh look at the dangers of uncontrolled nuclear power and technological progress in general. Ukrainian society is deeply permeated by the experience and consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Due to its geographical proximity to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, Ukrainian society and culture have absorbed the full spectrum of cognitive dissonance surrounding the images of

¹ Гундорова Т. Транзитна культура. Симптоми постколоніальної травми. Київ : Грані-Т, 2013. С. 210.

Chornobyl, having experienced first-hand the bitter aftertaste of the «wormwood» of post-Chornobyl existence, which is saturated with the radiological, environmental, psychological, informational and socio-medical consequences of the Chornobyl accident to a greater extent than any other country in the world.

The phenomenon of the Chornobyl issue lies in the «dual nature» of the explosion at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant's Unit 4 – first there was the reactor explosion (technogenic), and then the media exploded (informational). The informational explosion of Chornobyl caused greater harm to the world than the actual radiation. When news of the events of the night of 26 April 1986 became public, the global consciousness suffered an irreversible mass information shock, which triggered widespread panic; the accident came to be spoken of not merely as a national disaster or a man-made catastrophe, but as a tragedy. For it is precisely this, predominantly literary, term that can fully capture the human experiences and adaptations that befell the Soviet community following this unique disruption – in terms of its radioactive composition – of the normal living environment and ecological balance across the country. Indeed, the accident at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant is primarily associated with radiation, which led to the most devastating ecological imbalance of the 20th century and came to be defined as an accident of planetary scale, giving rise to the so-called «Chornobyl syndrome» in global society.

Incidentally, Serhiy Mirnyi, a Ukrainian researcher of the post-Chornobyl socio-historical paradigm, concludes that the consequences of the Chornobyl accident are global, complex and long-term for several reasons: it was a large-scale radiation accident that occurred in a culturally and economically significant region of the world (Europe) at a critical historical moment – coinciding with the onset of the processes of democratisation and perestroika in the USSR (in which the environmental movement played a major role), and with the onset of global informatisation, the acceleration of information flow via the Internet and the global media (the latter having formed a strong associative link between «Ukraine and Chornobyl»)².

It is clear that the scale of the Chornobyl disaster defies measurement: its nuclear fallout spread to ever-wider areas, and the threat of radioactive contamination loomed over all of humanity and all living things. The tragedy and heroism of the Chornobyl disaster shook the world, giving rise to a wave of global compassion and the desire of millions of people to help overcome this shared socio-environmental disaster – day and night, new workers, engineers, scientists, specialists from various sectors of the national economy, staff from the internal affairs agencies, state security, the public prosecutor's office, and soldiers of the army.

As we can see, thanks to a complex set of radiation-ecological cause-and-effect factors that emerged retrospectively, the Chornobyl disaster became the logical and long-awaited conclusion to the systematic US-USSR conflict of the second half of the 20th century, which manifested itself in the progressive rivalry between VVER and RMBK-type reactors. The Chornobyl accident became a unique and, at the same time, radical resolution to a long-standing international conflict, taking on the character of the «final argument» in a long-standing dialogue – the nuclear standoff

² Мирний С. Чорнобиль як інфо-травма. *Критика*. 2010. № 3-4. С. 18.

between the USSR and the USA had come to an end... the events of 26 April 1896 clearly determined who had won and who had lost in this «war».

At the same time, the exceptional nature of the Chornobyl accident was evident in the sheer number and multifaceted nature of the negative social phenomena it triggered, affecting almost every aspect of public life – from the philosophical aspects of existence to radiation hygiene in the contaminated areas. It is therefore not surprising that the post-Chornobyl processes are closely linked to a multifaceted complex of media myths and the polemical excesses of academics, which amplify the effect of the deliberate psycho-traumatic information impact of the Chornobyl accident, leading to the formation of a specific eco-social phenomenon of an interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and international nature.

The dominant factor in the reinterpretation of the Chornobyl tragedy is its gradual transformation into a fully-fledged cultural phenomenon through cultural hypertextualisation by artists and cultural figures from various countries around the world. The reinterpreted image of the Chornobyl tragedy has found vivid expression both in the cultural and artistic sphere and in philosophical discourse, demonstrating that the use of Chornobyl as a metaphor serves as evidence confirming the fact of the accident at the Chornobyl NPP as a powerful component of the Ukrainian people's socio- and historical cultural memory of the Ukrainian people; a means of influencing the national consciousness of Ukrainians, reinforced by the effect of the «living memory» of a large number of liquidators and «Chornobyl refugees», which is gradually becoming an integral pedagogical aspect of the upbringing and enculturation of future generations of Ukrainians.

Particularly relevant in the context of the Chornobyl disaster are also contemporary trends in the shifting attitudes towards the past in post-Soviet Ukraine, which mainly involve a critical approach to official history and the revival of «repressed history», as well as a rapid surge in Ukrainians' interest in their national «roots» and genealogy, commemorative events and new museums, and «cultural heritage». Put simply, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has experienced a «return of memory». Today, the issue of Chornobyl stands on a par with other examples of «old history» such as the Holodomor of the 1930s, the repression of the scientific intelligentsia and cultural figures in the 1930s–1950s, the activities of the OUN-UPA, and so on.

This argumentation allows us to speak of the theoretical and practical significance of the Chornobyl discourse in contemporary humanities. After all, there is an obvious need to study the problems of the Ukrainian ethnos's perception of the «post-Chornobyl» space and the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone as a model of a «place of memory», as well as the psycho-cultural adaptation of Ukrainians to this tragedy, particularly in the processes of enculturation and the formation of national identity, collective memory and the ethnophilosophy of Ukrainians in the era of independence.

2. An Epistemological Rupture and the Reconfiguration of Memory

Today, the accident at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant is regarded by experts as the worst man-made disaster in human history [However, in the context of March 2011 (in light of the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan), it may be more appropriate to regard the Chornobyl accident as the first of its kind,

the greatest man-made disaster of the 20th century]. The consequences it had formed the basis for classifying this tragic event as one of global significance. Of the 192 tonnes of fuel in the reactor of Unit 4, around 4% was released into the atmosphere over a period of 10 days (mainly radioactive iodine, strontium, plutonium and certain other isotopes). Taking into account the decay of these substances, the total release of radioactive material at the Chornobyl NPP amounted to 50 million curies, which is equivalent to the effects of the explosion of more than 500 atomic bombs, similar to those dropped in 1945 by the US armed forces on the Japanese city of Hiroshima³. It is hard to imagine now, but for about 10 days, radioactive substances were ejected from the destroyed reactor by a hot stream of steam and reactor combustion products to a height of 4–6 km. Heated to 1000°C, the jet of emissions reached the troposphere. The conditions that developed facilitated the transport of radioactive substances over long distances, contaminating not only the territory of the Ukrainian SSR: the Chornobyl radioactive «cloud» covered over 140,000 km² of territory in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, of which around 40,000 km² of Ukrainian territory was classified as an ecological risk zone, including 6.7 million hectares of agricultural land [Geographically, this covers 12 regions of modern-day Ukraine; there are 2,294 settlements within this area]; and radioactive fallout was recorded in 17 European countries. Equally important is the fact that, as a result of the disaster, the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone was established [a restricted area, geographically forming a circle with an area of over 2.8 km², at the centre of which lies the Chornobyl NPP] and the so-called «Red Forest» appeared on the map of Europe [approximately 10 km² of woodland adjacent to the Chornobyl NPP, which absorbed the bulk of the radioactive dust released during the explosion at the plant's fourth reactor in 1986].

On the night of 27 April, the reactors of the first and second power units were shut down. Work began to deal with the aftermath of the accident.

Between 1986 and 1987, a huge amount of work was carried out by the emergency response teams and staff from more than 40 ministries and agencies of the USSR to mitigate the consequences of the Chornobyl accident. Over 600,000 people were involved in the clean-up operation, half of whom were military personnel – it was they who prevented even more devastating consequences of the accident, and it was they who saved the world from a global environmental catastrophe.

The primary task in dealing with the aftermath of the accident was to carry out a range of works aimed at stopping the release of radioactive substances. Much of this work was done by hand. Despite the fact that the liquidators' shifts lasted between 20 seconds and 1 minute, many of them received lethal doses of radiation.

It is therefore clear that the most immediate consequences of the Chornobyl accident were the radiation exposure suffered by those who took part in firefighting and emergency operations at the nuclear power station. According to reports from 1986, 238 people contracted acute radiation sickness, of whom 29 died in the first few months following the accident; around 2,000 people suffered localised radiation injuries; and approximately 91,000 people were forced to evacuate from the towns of

³ The International Chernobyl Project: Technical Report: Assessment of Radiological Consequences and Evaluation of Protective Measures. IAEA, 1991. P. 7.

Pripyat and Chornobyl and rural settlements within the 30-km zone. A further 50,000 people were resettled from contaminated areas during the longer-term post-accident period⁴. This is precisely why, from the very first days of the accident to the present day, the health of various groups affected by the accident has been continuously monitored. In total, there are over 3.2 million people in Ukraine affected by the Chornobyl disaster, including around 1 million children [According to current Ukrainian legislation, the categories of people affected by the Chornobyl disaster include: persons who took part in the accident clean-up at the industrial site and within the 30-km zone (around 350,000 people), the evacuated and resettled population (around 150,000 people), and the population living in the contaminated territory (around 2.4 million people)].

It should be noted that the conditions under which the Chornobyl accident was dealt with were characterised by a complete lack of knowledge, high radiation risks and intense pressure from senior officials; therefore, all those involved in this massive clean-up operation deserve global gratitude, remembrance and respect.

Thus, the Chornobyl accident occurred at a time when the totalitarian system of the former Soviet society was beginning to crumble, exposing fundamental points of disharmony in its social, technical and moral culture. At the same time, representatives of various peoples of the former USSR demonstrated heroism, courage and talent in localising and overcoming the consequences of the disaster. At the cost of their health and lives, they saved humanity from even greater calamity.

When we talk about any historical event, we must also bear in mind that memories of it will evolve from generation to generation. A person's memory of an event in which they were a participant or eyewitness differs from their memory of an event they learnt about through stories, books or other sources. Taking the Holodomor as an example, it is only natural that with each passing year the number of people who lived through this event – and who are, in fact, the bearers of its «living memory» – is dwindling. Consequently, new generations are now forming their own memory of the 1932–1933 Holodomor, drawing information from various sources and, as a result, forming a kind of informational amalgam, which constitutes this generation's collective memory of the Holodomor. As for the Chornobyl disaster, it has, first and foremost, entered the collective memory of the younger generation of modern Ukraine as a historical fact. A common and fairly widespread cultural model across all cultures, upon which the collective memory of the events of April 1986 is built, is an interpretative model that links the Chornobyl disaster with war, death, destruction, alienation, and so on.

According to the German historian Kerstin Jobst, who in 2011 successfully delivered a series of lectures in Ukraine on the topic «Collective memory of national tragedies in Ukraine: the examples of the Holodomor and Chornobyl», it was the Chornobyl disaster that lifted the taboo surrounding the «Great Ukrainian Famine». She believes that every nation has the right to come to terms with its past. This refers both to a traumatic past, where the community perceives itself as a victim, and to a

⁴ The International Chernobyl Project: Technical Report: Assessment of Radiological Consequences and Evaluation of Protective Measures. IAEA, 1991. P. 301.

past involving guilt and the community's responsibility for past historical events⁵. Thus, the historian emphasises that Ukrainians must integrate the memory of the Chornobyl disaster into the national narrative of contemporary Ukraine.

Another German historian, Anna-Veronika Wendland, also notes that the Chornobyl theme is actively being incorporated into the national narrative of the Ukrainian people. The researcher of Eastern European history argues that for Ukraine, as the de facto «birthplace» of the Chornobyl disaster, it is easiest to integrate this historical event into its national history. In her view, the phenomenon of the Chornobyl issue in Ukraine lies in the fact that, in the global understanding, the fourth block of the Chornobyl NPP, destroyed by the explosion, became an emblem of ruin and the end of the 20th century, a kind of scarification of global ecology and history, whereas the post-Chornobyl era in Ukraine's national history marked the beginning of the country's resurgence⁶.

Another characteristic feature of the Chornobyl narrative in Ukraine is that the memory of the Chornobyl disaster is annually channelled into a kind of ritualised form of «anniversary dates». And here, according to Wendland, Chornobyl plays the functional role of a national tragedy of the second half of the 20th century, just as the Holodomor and the horrors of the Second World War played such a role for the first half of the century. In this function, Chornobyl plays an ex post telological role as a catalyst: this event can be interpreted as the collapse of the Soviet system and a harbinger of the Union's disintegration, or as an impetus for mass mobilisation against the government's policy of secrecy, silence and intimidation, which, admittedly, took effect belatedly, yet developed into a national movement – «from Chornobyl to sovereignty».

However, according to the interpretations of the Ukrainian writer Serhiy Zhadan, «The Chornobyl disaster, as a part of history with which the country's citizens must come to terms one way or another, has long since become a kind of socio-historical symbol, a memorable date on the calendar by which everyone must live, regardless of how important or close to home that date is»⁷.

It is significant that the Chornobyl accident and the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone are invariably associated with Ukrainians' attitude towards radiation. That is precisely why we believe it became an event of global significance not only due to the sum of all its unprecedented consequences – technological, nuclear-radiological, medical, and environmental – but also because of its eschatological significance: a black abyss of the otherworldly anti-world has opened up before humanity. Thus, as is customary, the anniversary of such a global phenomenon as Chornobyl triggers a deluge of publications, conferences, exhibitions, and television and radio marathons of varying tones – ranging from sentimental recollections of individual participants in the clean-up operation to attempts at a historical understanding of the tragedy, from scientific and technical assessments of the causes of the explosion to reflections on the future of global energy.

⁵ Йобст К. Українська травматична пам'ять: Голодомор і Чорнобиль. *Критика*. 2011. № 11–12. С. 169.

⁶ Вендланд А.-В. Повернення до Чорнобилю. *Україна модерна: міжнародний інтелектуальний часопис*. 2011. № 18. С. 158.

⁷ Жадан С. Чорнобиль: місце для прізвища. URL: <http://glavnoe.ua/articles/a5061>

It is also telling that the Chernobyl disaster and the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone are usually treated as an indivisible whole, as cause and effect, leading to a single cultural and historical outcome. Whether such a view is appropriate or not remains an open question, but, in our opinion, these new developments in Ukrainian history should be considered separately.

Returning to the ideas of «new history», let us focus our attention on the concept of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone as a «place of memory». The term «lieu de mémoire» («place of memory»), proposed by the French historian Pierre Nora, means, first and foremost, «that which remains». An extreme form of commemorative consciousness that itself evokes history, since it does not know it⁸. That is, «places of memory» can be monuments, historical figures, institutions, or – as in our case – events. Thus, Nora speaks of «places of memory», that is, those actual locations where particular historical events took place. One such place of memory in Ukraine is the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, within which the explosion of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant's fourth reactor occurred in April 1986.

Conceptually, the emergence of Pierre Nora's theory of «places of memory» is linked to the de-ritualisation of the modern world; consequently, this theory functions as a counterpoint to historical memory. The primary source of this line of thought is the historian's view of the postmodern era as a «memorial era», that is, an era dominated by the process of the «acceleration of history» and the victimisation of the past, which, as exemplified by the post-Soviet space, testifies to a rapid «return of memory». In his view, the process of «accelerating history» leads to the isolation of national memory and necessitates engagement with the cultural past solely through what remains of it (for example, the «exclusion zone»). In his concept, the French researcher proceeds from the premise that history has always been a collective sphere, whilst memory is a sphere of the individual; yet, in the context of current cultural and historical transformations, history has now been replaced by memory, which, in turn, has gained authority as a social protest movement, as the history of those who have been deprived of history⁹.

Thus, the era of multicultural postmodernism has given rise to the phenomenon of collective memory, which appears as «living history» – a history woven from the real memories of individuals and groups, possessing both sacred and popular significance. This type of history is characterised by the organisation of «places of memory» – sites that embody national values and serve to «archive» the unbiased memory of the people. «Places of memory» are the remnants of a people's history; they are places in three senses of the word – material, symbolic and functional – and are intended to shape society's perception of itself and its history.¹⁰

In line with Pierre Nora's concept, the collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a period of radicalisation of national and ethnic memory, during which «small nations» felt the need for a collective reinterpretation of their history and underwent, firstly, a process of «reclaiming memory», and secondly, a modification of ethnic self-identification through inculturation processes. In the post-Soviet period, in the

⁸ Нора П. Теперішнє, нація, пам'ять. Київ : КЛІО, 2014. С. 191.

⁹ Алексієвич С. Чорнобильська молитва: хроніка майбутнього. *КОМОРА*. 2016. С. 54.

¹⁰ Нора П. Всемирное торжество памяти. *Неприкосновенный запас*. 2005. № 2–3. С. 207.

context of Chernobyl, the «ideologisation» of history was supplanted by «popular» memory, which, on a subconscious level, merged with morality and national semantics, thereby absorbing the previous history and forming a «place of memory» emblematic of this process.

Consequently, «Chernobyl» entered the national historical and cultural discourse entered through the prism of the concept of commemoration – «a process that mobilises various discourses and practices in the representation of an event, embodying a social and cultural vision of memory regarding a commemorative event, serving as an expression of group solidarity». ¹¹

It is worth recalling here the view of the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who once emphasised that «science does not develop through the accumulation of true knowledge that supplants false knowledge, but through a critical rupture in which old, limited theories are incorporated into new, broader systems as separate or even subordinate cases»¹². In this context, the Chernobyl discourse, within its anthropological and philosophical landscapes, exhibits signs of an epistemological rupture. To put it simply, Chernobyl undermined modern notions of the controllability of technical progress. The Soviet episteme, founded on a belief in rationality, centralised knowledge and the manageability of risks, proved incapable of explaining the scale and consequences of the disaster. This created a rupture between official knowledge and people's experiences – between what «could be known» and what was actually experienced. It is precisely this discrepancy that constitutes a classic manifestation of an epistemological rupture.

Subsequently, this rupture led to the delegitimisation of previous narratives. State rhetoric characterised by silence, fragmentation and manipulation of information lost credibility, opening up space for alternative forms of knowledge: oral testimonies, artistic interpretations and local memories. Consequently, the memory of Chernobyl ceases to be monolithic and shifts into a polyphonic mode.

It is within these conceptual boundaries that the contemporary phase of reconfiguring the memory of the Chernobyl accident begins, where the focus is not merely on «adding new facts», but on changing the very structure of memory:

- from a heroic-technocratic narrative – to a traumatic and ecological one;
- from a centralised memory – to multiple, often conflicting memories;
- from a local event – to a global symbol of a planetary catastrophe.

Another key factor is that this transition has been a dynamic one, as the memory of Chernobyl is constantly being reinterpreted in the light of new contexts: from post-Soviet decolonial reinterpretations to the contemporary military and radiation challenges posed by the Russia-Ukraine war. After all, «science begins where ideology ends, that is, where we leave behind mythical or anthropological conceptions of humanity and begin to investigate the objective structures themselves»¹³.

¹¹ Nora P. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*. 1998. Columbia University Press. P. 37.

¹² Bachelard G. *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*. 1988. Dallas Institute publications. P. 62.

¹³ Althusser L. *Pour Marx*. 1965. Paris: Librairie François Maspero. P. 22.

It is fair to say that it was precisely the rupture between knowledge and experience, between official and alternative epistemes, that created the conditions for the transition from a stabilised memory to its reconfiguration into an open, reconstructive remembrance, in the course of which memories become a «source of meaning» within a social group.

Consequently, we are justified in saying that the constant of Chornobyl re-interpretation did indeed achieve its retro-sanctioning influence and transformed the phenomenon of the Chornobyl disaster into a multifaceted cultural-historical phenomenon as early as the early 1990s. Overall, the process of cultural and historical re-evaluation of the Chornobyl incident within the post-Chornobyl paradigm of post-Soviet, Slavic cultures has led to the identification of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone as a «place of memory» in the post-Soviet retrospective. However, summarising the analysis of the transformation in the perception of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone itself around the Chornobyl NPP, it should be noted that today it is, firstly, a radiation-hazardous area. Secondly, it is a site housing infrastructure for the management of radioactive waste; thirdly, a research site; and fourthly, a biosphere reserve. And only then is it a territory of interest as a tourist (cultural) attraction¹⁴.

Therefore, further study of the subjectivity of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone from the perspective of «new history» appears entirely rational for ongoing research, and the prospect of studying the problems of mental adaptation and the process of Ukrainians' perception of the post-Chornobyl space remains relevant, as the Chornobyl accident is undoubtedly an element of our national memory.

CONCLUSIONS

The epistemological rupture caused by the Chornobyl disaster revealed a profound crisis in the notions of progressiveness and transparency within Soviet scientific knowledge, as the «invisible» factor of radioactive contamination transformed the familiar sensory and cognitive frameworks through which the scale of the disaster could be grasped. In this context, even in the 21st century, the «Chornobyl syndrome» of radiophobia emerges not only as an indicator of a loss of trust in state institutions, but also as a marker of unpredictable psychosocial reactions. Consequently, the «accident at the Chornobyl NPP's Unit 4» definitively demonstrated the disconnect between specialised knowledge and practical experience, between expert discourse and everyday consciousness, which necessitated an urgent search for new epistemological strategies.

In the realm of memory, the Chornobyl disaster manifests itself rather as a memorable event with deferred and long-lasting consequences, one that defies linear historicisation, as it produces a dynamic space of «living memory» where trauma, silencing, mythologisation and gradual reinterpretation. It is here that the transformative transition from real facts to cultural forms of semiotic articulation takes place.

¹⁴ Шаванова К., Паренюк О. Страшне, прекрасне та потворне в Чорнобилі. 2023. Вихода. С. 188.

Of particular significance in this process is the uniqueness of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone, which emerges as a space where the dangerous and the meaningful, the material and the symbolic, are intertwined. Its continuous presence in Ukraine's cultural and social landscape shapes a specific lens through which the accident itself is perceived, legitimising the territory as a «place of memory» where current narratives of scientific interpretations, artistic representations and ethical reflections are formed.

In this context, the key process defining the current state of the Chornobyl discourse is the reconfiguration of memory, which offers innovative ways of making sense of the hybrid consequences of the disaster. The emergence of the Chornobyl paradigm as a coherent socio-cultural phenomenon indicates a gradual disciplinary delineation of the prospects for the development of its critical field of research in a bioethical or futuristic orientation.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that this process of re-evaluating the Chornobyl disaster is not yet complete. It remains an open-ended process: on the one hand, the Chornobyl experience is being integrated into the national narrative, which is important for the processes of identification and cultural revival of the Ukrainian nation; on the other hand, there remains a risk of it being reduced to a stereotypical attraction within the country's tourism infrastructure.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Chornobyl issue in contemporary humanities presents itself as a complex epistemological and cultural-philosophical challenge, which defines its own polemical nature through the combination of ecological, social and memorial dimensions. The memory of the accident at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant in April 1986 functions actively within Ukrainian society not only as a traumatic experience, but also as a unique space where multiple cross-sectoral interpretations intersect.

SUMMARY

The relevance of this topic stems, firstly, from the crisis in relations between society and the biosphere, which manifests itself in the tragic consciousness associated with human reflection in the post-Chornobyl era; secondly, by the contemporary challenges of Ukraine's national revival, which entails the reconstruction and philosophical interpretation of the nation's historical, collective memory – a task made possible only through the development of fundamentally new conceptual approaches to the presentation of the country's cultural history; thirdly, the fact that our state coexists continuously with the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone, a phenomenon which has recently become an active focus of research in contemporary Ukrainian humanities, whilst remaining an open field for cultural-philosophical interpretations; fourthly, it is grounded against the backdrop of the emergence of a symbolic «place of memory» for the national tragedy and the transformation of «living memory» in the process of historicising the Chornobyl NPP accident.

In interpreting these directions, the author is interested in a systematic exploration of key thematic focuses, namely the phenomena of infoshock and radiopanic, the confrontation between history and memory, adaptation to the consequences of the accident and their social reinterpretation, as well as the process of identifying the Chornobyl paradigm as a holistic socio-cultural phenomenon.

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