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# Unravelling the Ukrainian Revolution: “Dignity,” “Fairness,” “Heterarchy,” and the Challenge to Modernity

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## Abstract

Ukraine’s “Revolution of Dignity,” spanning both the 2013–2014 protests in Kyiv’s city center and the mass mobilization of grass-roots resistance against Russian aggression in 2014–2015 and thereafter, manifest new interpretations of ideas and philosophical concepts. In the first part of the article we unravel the meaning of the Ukrainian word *hidnist* (roughly translated as “dignity”)—a moniker of the revolution whose significance remains underestimated. In the second part we situate Ukraine’s revolution within a broader context of “modernity” and suggest its individualist foundation may be replaced by a form of “personalism”—an ethic that echoes that of Ukraine’s revolutionaries. In the third part of the article, we delve into the substance of the revolution’s agenda: its protagonists’ promise to build a non-hierarchical community of “fairness” (*spravedlyvist*). In the fourth and final section, the main argument of the article is summarized, namely: that the shift from individualism to personalism in social interaction and the transition from hierarchy to heterarchy in power relations, particularly with respect to institutionalizing “fairness,” embodied in the various structures and organizations formed during Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity, may have been reflective of more comprehensive trends in ideational change affecting European (Western) civilization.

**Key Words:** Ukraine, Revolution, Euromaidan, personalism, dignity, heterarchy.



In late 2013 and early 2014, over multiple weeks in sub-zero temperatures, hundreds of thousands of protesters in Kyiv (and in other cities across Ukraine), displayed amazing levels of civic activism, self-organization, and spontaneous cooperation while demonstrating their individual and collective displeasure with their rulers. Their protest achieved its primary goal—the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovich. But victory came at high cost: three months of continuous blockade of the central area of Ukraine’s capital, and a climax during which over 100 civilians were gunned down by riot police and snipers. Over subsequent months, during Russia’s invasion and subsequent war with Ukraine, over ten thousand more were injured or killed, and almost 2 million displaced from the country’s eastern Donbas region. The Crimean peninsula, an autonomous region within the sovereign territory of Ukraine, was

annexed by the Russian Federation in an illegal act that substantively undermined stability and security on the European continent.

The events of 2013–2015, which included both the protests (originally designated “Euromaidan” and then simply “Maidan”) and the mass mobilization of volunteers and grass-roots resistance against Russian aggression, came to be known within Ukraine as the “Revolution of Dignity.”<sup>1</sup> This choice of designation was not random. In the first part of the article we unravel the unique interpretation of the Ukrainian word *hidnist* (roughly translated as “dignity”), and suggest that its usage in a revolutionary context may suggest more fundamental philosophical novelty and civilizational significance than one might expect from a fleeting (though spectacular) series of events that took place on the eastern periphery of Europe early in the 21st century.

In the second part of the article, we situate Ukraine’s revolution, with its seemingly unique rallying cry of “dignity,” within a broader context of the ongoing shift in prevalent ideas and conceptual frameworks that underpin “modern” European (Western) civilization. Specifically, we advance the idea that whereas post-Enlightenment modernity was based on a foundational belief in the primacy of individualism, the post-modern (meaning that which follows “modernity”) may well be grounded in a form of “personalism,” and that the latter was plainly manifest both during the Maidan protest, and in the subsequent grass-roots defense organizations that sprang up across Ukraine in response to Russia’s aggression.<sup>2</sup>

In the third part of the article, we delve into the substance of another main demand of both the Maidan protesters, and of those Ukrainians who mobilized *en masse* in 2014–2015 to fulfill the agenda of revolution: to build a community of “fairness” (*spravedlyvist*). Again, the meaning of this crucial (for the revolution’s protagonists) term is unraveled, not merely because it is significant to the Ukrainian context, but because its connotation presents a full-force challenge to the philosophical underpinnings of “modern” Western civilization.

In the fourth and final section, the main argument of the article is summarized, namely: that Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity was an instantiation of a broader (ongoing and global) transformation of the ideas underpinning the socio-cultural system known as Western “modernity.” Somewhat unconventionally, the author employs the term “post-modern” to denote this evolutionary trend, suggesting that Ukraine’s revolution represents an example of how practices and ideas associated with Western modernity transform under conditions of heightened social activism, and that such transformation may have far-reaching effects. Indeed, we argue that far from being a “backwater” event on the margins of Europe, Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity (including both the Maidan protests and the population’s early mobilization against Russian aggression)

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1 A complete chronicle and analysis of these events is provided in Mychailo Wynnyckyj, *Ukraine’s Maidan, Russia’s War: A Chronicle and Analysis of the Revolution of Dignity* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2019). This article is based on Chapter 10 of that work.

2 For an overview of personalism as a philosophy, see Thomas R. Rourke and Rosita A. Chazarretta Rourke, *A Theory of Personalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005).

embodied ideas that may represent the future of civilizational development on the continent and beyond: a shift from individualism to personalism in social interaction; a transition from hierarchy to heterarchy in power relations—particularly with respect to institutionalizing “fairness”—which engender a new cosmology, reflective of more comprehensive trends affecting European (Western) civilization.<sup>3</sup>

## “Dignity”

Words and their meanings do not emerge randomly. In naming their revolution the “Revolution of Dignity,” Ukrainians formulated a public declaration, and the fact that the name gained lasting popularity is a testament to its resonance. As a moniker that encapsulated the revolutionaries’ demands, the word “dignity” was addressed principally to a domestic audience, but its “shot was heard ‘round the world” and became a rallying cry for millions.

The concept of dignity has its roots in the Enlightenment, and is often viewed as an extension of the notion of individual rights—fundamental to the paradigm of Western liberal democracy. As Harvard professor Michael Rosen points out in *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*, the English word “dignity” traces its etymology to the Latin *dignitas* and is understood in the sense meant by Cicero in his *De Officio* (On Duties), as being a quality of honor, possessed by the *optimi* (best citizens) in a well-ordered society.<sup>4</sup> In traditional European (feudal) societies, only the landed gentry, were seen as “dignified.” An individual was said to have dignity if he (inevitably it was “he”) was deserving of it through noble birth and requisite bloodline. Similarly, in French, the word *dignité* traditionally denoted the privileges enjoyed exclusively by the aristocracy—until the French Revolution introduced the idea of universal rights.<sup>5</sup>

One of the fundamental achievements of the French Revolution may be described as the democratization of dignity: its conversion from a term connoting status, to one connoting a universal characteristic of the human condition. Increased democratization of Western societies—their “modernization”—resulted in the assertion of dignity as a fundamental and universal human right in such 20th century legal documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention, and the German Grundgesetz (Basic Law).<sup>6</sup> Two centuries after the French Revolution, Oxford professor

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3 The argument is heavily influenced by Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003) and his *The Great Revolutions and the Civilizations of Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

4 Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2012), 11–12.

5 Rosen, *Dignity: Its History*, 40–41.

6 Preamble to the UN Universal Declaration: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...” Rule 90 of International Humanitarian Law reads: “Torture, cruel or inhuman treatment and outrages upon personal dignity, in particular

Jeremy Waldron observed: “The modern notion of human dignity involves an upward equalization of rank, so that we now try to accord to every human being something of the dignity, rank and expectation of respect that was formerly accorded (only) to nobility.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the Ukrainian word *hidnist* (commonly translated into English as “dignity”) reflects a different conceptual category that has nothing to do with status, rank or privilege, and its etymology seems to have little in common with Ciceronian honor. According to the Academic Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language the word *hidnist* has two meanings: 1) a set of traits that characterize a person’s positive moral qualities, 2) comprehension by a person of their civic worth and civic responsibility.<sup>8</sup> In the first sense, the term refers to the inherent value of the person as a uniquely moral being capable of self-actualization, whereas in the second it implies the fundamentally social quality of human existence.<sup>9</sup> Neither of these definitions imply that *hidnist* is an attribute of status. On the contrary, in the first sense, the term signifies a possession of virtue,<sup>10</sup> whereas in the second definition the term references a civic and/or societal context for the term. This seems to differ significantly from the conventional English or French (i. e. Western) usage of the term “dignity” — if only because the Ukrainian term makes no allusion to hierarchy.

In Russian, the Ukrainian word *hidnist* is translated as *dostoinstvo*, and in Ukrainian, the terms *hidnist* and *dostoinist* (both used) are often claimed to be synonyms. The first is said to originate from the Polish *godność* and the latter from the Russian *dostoinstvo*.<sup>11</sup> But the actual usage of the terms *hidnist* and *dostoinist* in Ukrainian indicates some nuance. First, a bad person (lacking virtue) can be referred to as *nehidnyk* (lacking *hidnist*), but the equivalent antonymous noun does not exist for a person lacking *dostoinist*. Secondly, when referring to a fundamental encroachment on the humanity of an individual, one references *hidnist* (not *dostoinist*): if a violation of that which is considered sacred in one’s humanity occurs, a person is said to be stripped of their

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humiliating and degrading treatment, are prohibited.” Article 1 of Germany’s Basic Law: “Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.”

7 Jeremy Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, and Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33.

8 “Hidnist [Dignity],” *Akademichnyi tlumachnyi slovnyk ukrainskoi movy*, accessed July 17, 2019, <http://sum.in.ua/s/ghidnistj>.

9 This same dichotomy is present in M. H. Toftul, *Etyka [Ethics]* (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy tsentr “Akademiia,” 2005).

10 In his reply to Rosen, who enjoins Aquinas’ formulation of “dignity” as signifying an inherent virtue of the person-created-in-God’s-image, Jeremy Waldron states: “I know of no consistent or respectable (modern) use of ‘dignity’ that treats it as a synonym for ‘goodness’ — understood as a praiseworthy quality of conduct or the possession of virtues” (Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*, 138). It is highly unfortunate that Waldron does not speak Ukrainian.

11 See Vasylyna M. Chaban, “Kontseptosfera hidnist v ukrainskii linhvokulturi [The Concept of Dignity in Ukrainian Linguoculture],” *Naukovi zapysky Natsionalnoho universytetu “Ostrozka akademiia”* 48 (2014): 119–22.

*hidnist* (*pozbylena hidnosti*). Finally, approximating the English (and traditional French) term "dignity," *dostoinist* implies possession of status or rank whereas *hidnist* seems to signify a universal human quality. The two are close, but not synonymous.

A person may be *dostoinyi* (worthy) of respect or reward,<sup>12</sup> but this is not the same as *hidnyi* (the adjectival form of the noun *hidnist*). *Hidnist* is an immutable quality of being human, universally possessed, and not subject to relativism (i. e. a person cannot have more/less *hidnist*): in everyday usage one can be said to be *hidnyi* or not, but without degree. On the other hand, *dostoinist* is relative: the degree to which a person's virtuous qualities are actualized may be the subject of evaluation, but the basic quality of *hidnist* may not be questioned. A person who is *dostoinyi* deserves recognition by others, whereas *hidnist* implies a right or claim that is more fundamental and universal. In other words, *hidnist* in the Ukrainian language seems to entail not only an inherent value possessed by the person (similar to the inherent "worth" or *Wurde* that was the foundation of Kant's moral philosophy),<sup>13</sup> but also one that requires respect from others for validation. This claim to respect can be legitimately demanded by all who claim *hidnist*—i. e. it does not require a status position or accomplishment, as is the case with *dostoinyi*.

For Western scholars who have analyzed dignity in its various legal and philosophical usages, the conceptual link between the concept of "dignity" (as *hidnist*), and the requirement that it be respected is novel. To quote Michael Rosen:

In protecting the individual from degradation, insult, and contempt we are requiring that people act towards others in ways that are substantively respectful. To respect their dignity in this sense means to treat them *with respect* [italics in original]... (T)his is a very important point indeed. On the one hand, it gives content to the idea of human dignity—gives an answer to those who allege that there is nothing more to the idea of "dignity" than rhetorical wrapping paper for a set of substantive rights-claims. On the other, it implies that dignitary harms are harms of a special kind. What degradation, insult, and contempt have in common is that they are expressive or symbolic harms, ones in which the elevated status of human beings *fails to be acknowledged* [italics in original].<sup>14</sup>

Dignity—when recognized as the fundamental principle according to which society is organized—is both the principle that constrains the state from violating rights

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12 In this sense, the adjective *dostoinyi* translates almost exactly into the German *wurdig* which means both "deserving" and "dignified" (see Rosen, *Dignity: Its History*, 19). It was in this sense that Hobbes used the term "dignity."

13 See Waldron, *Dignity*, 23–27 and Rosen, *Dignity: Its History*, 19–31 for a discussion of the use of *Wurde* by Kant in the context of "dignity."

14 Michael Rosen, "Dignity Past and Present," in *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*, ed. Jeremy Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 95.

(i. e. a principle underpinning formal institutions), and the social force that constrains the individual from violating the rights of others (i. e. the foundation for informal institutions: conventions, social norms, moral rules). In other words, dignity is the principle that is actualized in the practice of respect. It was in this sense that the Maidan protesters and Ukraine's defenders (volunteers and grass-roots organizers) demanded recognition (i. e. respect) for their individual and their nation's collective *hidnist*.

### “Personalism”

As noted, the Ukrainian term *hidnist* has two meanings: it refers to an inherent quality of a person (i. e. his/her unassailable value), and simultaneously connotes an ethical attitude (respect) of society to that person. In each of these dimensions, one can say that a person or group possesses *hidnist*. It is the second dimension that leads us to the social aspect of the human condition: to the subject's self-identification within a community; to agency.<sup>15</sup>

This social aspect of the term *hidnist* is most relevant to the present discussion of the novel senses produced by the Ukrainian revolution. Specifically, both during the protests, and during the mobilization phase of the country's anti-Russian resistance, Ukrainians demanded recognition of their dignity. In this sense, dignity (*hidnist*) was understood in a relational logic: as an inherent attribute of an individual (or collectivity—nation), and simultaneously as a legitimate demand upon others. From this perspective, an individual or collectivity (nation) may inherently possess dignity, but that in itself matters little unless that dignity is recognized by another. In this sense, dignity is conceptually possible only within a collectivity of mutual respect.

This distinctively Ukrainian interpretation of the concept of dignity (*hidnist*) deserves particular scrutiny. Its core seems to approximate the still underdeveloped strand of philosophy called “Personalism”—a worldview that emphasizes the centrality of the socially-embedded person as the starting point for moral and political reflection. Although not representing a clear school or doctrine, personalism “emphasizes the significance, uniqueness and inviolability of the person, as well as the person's essentially relational or communitarian dimension.”<sup>16</sup> This duality of the human condition is fundamental to personalism: personhood subsumes individual dignity, but persons never exist in isolation, and interpersonal communion with others is fundamental to the human condition. As University of Notre Dame sociology professor Christian Smith explains:

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15 Given the importance of identity and patriotism to the discourse of revolution in Ukraine in 2013–2015, the fact that the term “dignity” should be tied to patriotism and national self-identification is not surprising.

16 Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, “Personalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified January 8, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/personalism/>.

Humans literally cannot develop as persons without other persons with whom they share and sustain their personhood. To be a person is not to be an incommunicable self, distinct from other selves. It is also to be related to, communicating among, and in communion with other personal selves. Inherent to personalist understanding of the human being is a strong dimension of relational connection and solidarity. Only by living in communities of other personal selves can anyone become a distinct personal self.<sup>17</sup>

Central to the ethic of Personalism is the concept of transcendence. In its theological interpretation (e. g. the writings of Karol Wojtyła — Pope John Paul II),<sup>18</sup> personalist philosophy posits that every human has an aptitude for “vertical transcendence” — an inherent orientation to truth (virtue, morality); a capacity to distinguish good from evil that is a manifestation of the Divine image in which every human is believed by Christians to have been created.<sup>19</sup> The Maidan protests certainly had a mystical manifestation, but the feeling of humanity that was prevalent among the protesters — and similarly reported by veterans returning from the front — did not require affiliation to a particular faith. The ethic of Maidan (i. e. what Ukrainians refer to as the “values of Maidan” / *tsinnosti Maidanu*), and indeed the ethic of defense in war, were both based on a black/white absolutist appraisal of one’s environment. Intellectually, in everyday interactions one may accept “grey,” but in situations of extreme stress and intense conviction, valuations defy conditionality: there is only good/evil; us/them; truth/lie. The ability to make such evaluative judgments in extreme situations is not a deficiency of the human condition, but rather its essential virtue — that which defines the rational person; his/her inherent dignity. According to Personalist philosophy, this vertical transcendence is the basis for conscience, self-determination (identity), self-control, and values.

In addition to theorizing the roots of humans’ aptitude for moral judgment, Personalism also proposes “horizontal transcendence” to be a fundamental characteristic of the human condition. As the famous Personalist Emmanuel Mounier memorably joked, “I love, therefore I am.”<sup>20</sup> Or more academically: the individual cannot exist without others, and the social is an integral part of the human condition. The shared essence of the person compels cohabitation in a community (nation), and it is this community that is the basis for public sovereignty:

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17 Christian Smith, *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 474.

18 See Jove Jim S. Aquas, “The Notions of the Human Person and Human Dignity in Aquinas and Wojtyła,” *Kritike* 3.1 (2009): 40–60.

19 Rourke and Rourke, *A Theory of Personalism*, 11.

20 Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 23.



In this view, sovereignty is not so much a contract drawn up among individuals who are by nature autonomous, isolated, and unrelated, as it is a consensus arising from the unity of wills who seek to live in a community in pursuit of a common good.<sup>21</sup>

Personalists adamantly reject the post-Enlightenment development of philosophical thinking, according to which the individual was hallowed as the central figure of ethics, politics, and economics. Indeed Personalists bemoan the fact that the sovereign individual—a being with inalienable individual rights and individual responsibilities—became the philosophical basis of modernity. Thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Marx all focused on the well-being of the individual as the aim of politics. Although each recognized, with differing emphasis, that individuals coexist in societies, living together according to some accepted system of rights, authority, and some form of solidarity, these fundamentally social aspects of the human condition were either downplayed (in the liberal tradition) or delegated to the state to regulate (in the socialist tradition). Sovereign individuals were seen as incapable of binding together without a mediating power to police their competing interests (e. g. Hobbes' Leviathan or Locke's sovereign to whom power was delegated through a "social contract"). Ideologues discussed how best to satisfy the material needs and wants of this sovereign individual (via free-market capitalism or state-guided socialism), but the fundamental tenet of individualism was never questioned.

Article 5 of Ukraine's Constitution proclaims that "The people shall be the bearer of sovereignty, and the only source of power in Ukraine." It is notable that the term "people" (*narod*) is used in the singular—not referencing a collection of individuals, but rather an existential category *sui generis*. This seems to reflect an important tenet of Personalist philosophy, namely that "community is ontologically prior to the establishment of any political institution,"<sup>22</sup> and that political authority is derived from the community—a social union that consists of more than simply an aggregate of individuals. This fact could be considered peripheral (an interesting terminological anomaly of the Ukrainian Constitution) if one of the most prominent symbols of the Maidan protests had not been the Roman numeral "V"—a publicly expressive reference to Article 5. The protesters (and later the volunteers who organized Ukraine's resistance to Russia's aggression) demanded that the *hidnist* of the *narod* be recognized and respected—a demand that seemed to reflect a phenomenological vision of collective sovereignty, engendered both in patriotic discourse, and in very concrete acts aimed at improving the collective well-being of society.

The "person-of-Maidan" (and the volunteer fighter / aid provider / government reform activist) who declares his/her individual rights, but simultaneously recognizes collective responsibility to "the people" (i. e. a duty to help, defend, feed, and sacrifice for others with no overt or assumed benefit in return) stands in sharp contrast to the

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21 Rourke and Rourke, *A Theory of Personalism*, 71.

22 Rourke and Rourke, *A Theory of Personalism*, 67.

Individual (writ large) of Hobbes and Locke, and therefore diverges fundamentally from the basic tenets of "modernity." The unique values complex generated and proliferated by the Ukrainian revolution seems a strange mix of Western individualism with respect to rights, and Slavic collectivism with respect to responsibility.<sup>23</sup> It may be interpreted as a cultural peculiarity of early 21st century Ukraine, or as a product of social development, suggesting an evolution of ideas beyond those underpinning Western modernity. Indeed, it may be both.

### "Fairness"

Revolutions are often viewed as inflection points: somehow after a revolution life is supposed to become radically different than it was before. Apparently, this is the main difference between a revolutionary period, and the "normality" of everyday life. Under normal conditions, social relations and practices (micro-level society) and political and economic institutions (macro-level) evolve gradually because they are underpinned by a relatively stable system of prevalent values and norms, which in turn are reinforced by a dominant discourse. During a period of revolutionary transformation, the most enduring aspects of a social system—its ideational foundations—undergo accelerated transformation. Revolutions change prevalent ways of thinking, acting, and verbalizing. New ideas are generated, discussed, debated, and then piloted in new structures, organizations, initiatives, practices, and terms. For the protagonists, it feels like a brave new world is being created by, before, and for them, and for the benefit of all humanity.<sup>24</sup> In reality, the pace of transformation is often overestimated: during revolutionary periods, ideas develop faster than during non-revolutionary periods, but their institutionalization is necessarily more gradual than the pace at which members of the political elite are replaced.

The demonstration of people power that came to be known internationally as the "Euromaidan" and domestically as the "Revolution of Dignity" was coupled with a remarkable optimism and positive determination to effect change at all levels of society, particularly given the fatalism and pessimism of prevalent post-Soviet discourse with which it contrasted. As the slogan prominently posted at each entrance to the Maidan

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23 Since 2002, this author has presented two questions from the individualism/collectivism scale developed by Geert Hofstede to multiple business school classes: the first measures respondents' attitudes to individual rights and freedoms, while the second measures their attitudes to individual/collective responsibility. Without fail, Ukrainians score exceptionally high in their value of individual freedom, and also exceptionally high in their value of collective responsibility. This informal research is based on previous work conducted by Pavlo Sheremeta—see: Oleksandr Rozhen, "Chy zavazhaie nasha mentalnist zhyttievomu uspihku? [Does Our Mentality Hinder Success in Life?]," *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, May 24, 2002, [https://zn.ua/ukr/science/chi\\_zavazhaie\\_nasha\\_mentalnist\\_zhyttievomu\\_uspihu.html](https://zn.ua/ukr/science/chi_zavazhaie_nasha_mentalnist_zhyttievomu_uspihu.html).

24 Hannah Arendt identified a "pathos of novelty" as a requisite characteristic of "great" revolutions—see Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 29.

camp suggested, grass roots community activists set their sights high: “Please excuse the inconvenience: we’re building a new country.” During the three months of protest in the city center, not a single shop was looted, nor even a window broken on the capital’s main thoroughfare (except the Trade Unions Building which was set ablaze on February 18, 2014 by attacking regime forces). In the wake of Yanukovych’s ouster, police presence effectively disappeared from the streets of most major cities (including Kyiv), but order was maintained by spontaneously organized community patrols. The atmosphere of revolution generated peaceful activism, and a spontaneous serenity.

The brave new world that the revolutionaries promised was to be both “fair” and “just” — uncorrupt, legitimate, and righteous. This promise remains largely unrealized six years after the ouster of Yanukovych, but the issue remains no less salient. Russia’s outrageous and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, together with Moscow’s promotion of long-term violence and destruction in the Donbas, made calls for *spravedlyvist* (fairness) acute not just domestically: Ukrainians felt betrayed by the West, whose political leaders had once promised protection in exchange for the former Soviet republic’s voluntary handover of its nuclear arsenal. The fact that according to Paragraph 6 of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, its signatories committed to “consult in the event a situation arises which raises a question concerning these commitments” — and certainly they did “consult” — left little consolation. International agreements formally did not require the US, UK, France and China to intervene militarily on Ukraine’s behalf when the country’s borders were violated by Russia, but certainly it would have been fair (*spravedlyvo*) to do so.

As is the case with “dignity,” the Ukrainian word *spravedlyvist* translates poorly into English. Its closest equivalent is “fairness,” although most often it is rendered as “justice.” This is a misnomer. In English (and in French) the term “justice” carries a legalistic connotation that reflects multiple centuries of judicial tradition: justice is achieved when, in accordance with due process, a judge arbitrates a dispute between two parties based on an interpretation of promulgated law. In contrast, *spravedlyvist*, a term which seems to approximate the Aristotelian notion of righteousness as a reflection of society’s *telos* (agreed purpose)<sup>25</sup> — is secured not (necessarily) through the application of written law, but rather as a natural exigency of community. The term “justice” translates into Ukrainian as *zakonnist* — *spravedlyvist* refers to a moral (ethical) category, rather than a strictly legal concept. Ideally, *spravedlyvist* is achieved through a *pravova spilnota* (righteous community) that does not require a state, as the latter can be hijacked, whereas the community’s “natural law” reflects the common good.<sup>26</sup>

25 Michael Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 99.

26 During the Parliamentary debates that led to the adoption of Ukraine’s original Constitution in 1996, the formulation of the article declaring the country to be a “rule of law state” was hotly debated, and eventually the phrase *verkhovenstvo prava* was adopted. In the words of Deputy Hoshovska (see Constitutional debate transcripts — June 28, 1996): “*Pravo* is the expression of the general will of the people, the nation, whereas *zakony* often express the particular

Given the practical requirements of governance — i. e. the need for daily judgments of what constitutes the “common good” — the institutional arrangements of liberal democracies include an impartial judiciary charged with securing the “rule of law.” The Ukrainian language offers two possible translations of this English term: 1) *verkhovenstvo zakonu* (meaning rule of statute law), and 2) *verkhovenstvo prava* (meaning rule of natural law or “right” in the sense of righteousness). The contrast between *pravo* and *zakon* is similar to the French *droit* vs. *loi*, or the German *Recht* vs. *Gesetz*. The Ukrainian *pravo* (approximating *droit* and *Recht*) connotes a similar concept to natural law or “righteousness” rather than statute. Ukraine’s Constitution recognizes the primacy of *verkhovenstvo prava*, and so theoretically, a case can be made in court against any statute law that it does not conform to *pravo*. However, under circumstances when statute law is not the sole criterion of righteousness, it is unclear who is to be the arbiter of *pravo* and how *spravedlyvist* (fairness) is to be achieved and/or institutionally assured.

The Ukrainian term *spravedlyvist* implies the possibility of a natural justice; both a feeling of fairness and an objective category according to which “rights” (*prava*) are restored if/when impinged. Spawned by a community of both protest and activism, the feeling that such righteous fairness was possible was precisely what this author (and many others) experienced during the Maidan protests and their aftermath. The fact that *spravedlyvist* was not achieved during the years after Yanukovych’s ouster represented one of the main disappointments of the early years of the Revolution of Dignity. During its next phase, the challenge faced by Ukrainians is to find ways to institutionalize communal “fairness” (natural justice) in new structures that will ensure both objective justice (i. e. judicial impartiality, due legal process, and consequential application of court decisions) and subjective feelings of trust in whatever dispute resolution system becomes implemented.

## Heterarchy

For those who experienced the phenomenon directly, the protest camp in Kyiv’s Independence Square (lasting from December 2013 to mid-February 2014) had a kind of mystical quality: a feeling of spirituality was reported by numerous participants.<sup>27</sup> Mysticism surrounded not only the place, but also the concept that it represented. The word “dignity” captures one aspect of the protests (i. e. a demand for recognition and respect); *spravedlyvist* (i. e. a belief in the possibility of a fair society) captures another.

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will of a parliamentary majority.” For more see Mychailo Wynnyckyj, “Ukraine 2006–2007: Building Elite Consensus through Conflict,” in *Ukraine on its Meandering Path Between East and West*, ed. Andrej N. Lushnycky and Mykola Riabchuk (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 113–36. The original research was presented in my MPhil dissertation “The 1996 Constitution of Ukraine: A Reflection of the Values of the Political Elite” (Cambridge University, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Mykhailo Dymyd and Klymentia Dymyd, *Kaminnia Maidnu* [*Stones of Maidan*] (Lviv: Svichado, 2014).

In both cases, the demands were transcendent. Mutuality, community, and belief in the possibility of a common good meant inclusiveness, and a consensual culture where no decision could ever be imposed. Spontaneously created horizontal structures rejected any individual who would claim lasting authority because the collective was organized heterarchically, with authority roles that shifted according to situational need.

For the nominal leaders of the political opposition (Yatseniuk, Klitschko, Tiahnybok), such overt rejection of institutionalized hierarchical relations by the protesting masses posed a significant management problem, felt repeatedly throughout the protests when effective control over the crowds was lost (particularly on the evening of 21 February, when the Maidan snubbed the accord that the opposition leaders had just signed with Yanukovich). A similar management problem was faced by Ukraine's top military commanders during the summer of 2014 and into 2015: for many of the volunteer soldiers on the frontlines, compliance with orders was not consequential of their receipt. The volunteer battalions of the National Guard (and the Right Sector Volunteer Corps) were managed as consensual units whose leaders were respected only when they shunned the trappings of rank.<sup>28</sup> Among the men (and women), although the ideal of defending one's country was venerated, a clear differentiating line was drawn between *kraina* (country) and *derzhava* (state). Patriotism meant love of country; in many cases (tragically), it also meant hatred of the state. In countless interviews from the frontlines, one heard the same: the enemy is despised, but central command is hated more: "At least the enemy is predictable—they are trying to kill you. With the brass you never know."<sup>29</sup>

The words of Ukraine's frontline defenders may echo anarchy, but they reflected a paradigm that seemed to be deeply rooted in the discourse of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, according to which personal freedom was valued above all else. From mid-2016 to mid-2018, the burned-out Trade Unions Building on Independence Square in Kyiv was draped with a massive banner proclaiming "Freedom is our Religion!"<sup>30</sup> For Ukraine's revolutionaries and territorial defenders, this freedom included the right of assembly and freedom of speech, but by extension, it also included freedom of the "nation"—seen as a collective of equals, a broad-based community of like-minded others who are necessarily skeptical of the hierarchical structures of the state. The conceptual link to the mythomoteur of the Zaporozhian Cossacks was plainly visible here.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, during a closed meeting that this author attended at the Presidential Administration in August 2015, President Petro Poroshenko lamented that during the

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28 The nominal organizer of the Donbas battalion, Semen Semenchenko (not his real name), refused to be seen without a balaclava mask throughout 2014.

29 Quote from a volunteer battalion veteran who relayed his experiences informally to the author in March 2016.

30 The building's façade was renewed in time for Independence Day celebrations on August 24, 2018.

31 Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Ukrainian Armed Forces' retreat from Debaltsevo in January 2015, he as Commander-in-Chief had had to deal with over 2500 incidents of desertion and/or dereliction of duty. That evening Ukraine's president lamented: "I can tell you, this kind of *otamanshchyna* is very difficult to manage."<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, in post-Yanukovych civilian life, the energy of horizontal activism was harnessed locally in very constructive ways. Under the banner of "dignity," inclusive education was introduced for the first time in Ukrainian schools.<sup>33</sup> Maidan activists became involved in community associations that pressured city administrations to install bicycle paths and parks, advocated changes to hospital rules that allowed parents access to intensive care facilities where their children were being treated,<sup>34</sup> organized local flat owners to create management companies for their apartment blocks, which in turn advocated energy efficiency.<sup>35</sup> During the parliamentary election of October 2014—held in the wake of the Maidan protests—the Samopomich Party (the name translates as "self-help") gained significant voter support with the slogan "*Vizmy i zroby!*" which roughly translates into "Pick it up, and do it!" (paraphrasing the Nike advertisement "Just do it!").

According to accepted social science (and its reflection in management theory), a prerequisite for effecting change in an organization or society is leadership.<sup>36</sup> Someone must take responsibility, and more importantly, to be effective (particularly when stimulating change), this leader must be charismatic. But the protesters in Kyiv in 2013–2014 had no leader! Although the three leaders of the opposition parties were listened to when they rose to the Maidan stage, each of their appearances represented a battle for hearts and minds rather than an oration to converted followers. For example, in early February 2014, when Yatseniuk (leader of the *Batkivshchyna* Party), pronounced that he was ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of the victory of Maidan, his phrase "*kulia v lob*" (bullet in the forehead) became a satirical badge of ridicule. Instead of eluding respect, the image of Klitschko (leader of *Udar*) covered in white powder

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32 The term *otamanshchyna* refers to the period in Ukrainian history immediately following the 1917 *coup d'état* in St. Petersburg, when multiple independent leaders / war lords organized small bands of soldiers in the former southern regions of the Russian empire—each professing to represent the army of a new state.

33 "Yak pratsiuie inklyuzivna osvita v ukrainskykh shkolakh [How Does Inclusive Education in Ukraine Function]," 24 *Kanal*, December 18, 2017, [https://24tv.ua/yak\\_pratsiyuye\\_inklyuzivna\\_osvita\\_v\\_ukrayinskih\\_shkolah\\_n903519](https://24tv.ua/yak_pratsiyuye_inklyuzivna_osvita_v_ukrayinskih_shkolah_n903519).

34 "V Ukraini dozvolily puskaty vidviduvachiv do patsientiv v reanimatsii [Visitors Have Been Allowed Access to Intensive Care Patients in Ukraine]," *Ukrainska Pravda*, June 29, 2016, <https://life.pravda.com.ua/health/2016/06/29/214428/>.

35 "Enerhozberezhennia: shcho robyty i de zviaty hroshi? [Energy Conservation: What Needs Doing and Where is Funding to Come From?]," *Teplo.gov.ua*, August 14, 2016, <http://teplo.gov.ua/energoefektivnist/poradi-shchodo-energozberezhennya/enerhozberezhennya.html>.

36 Christopher Adair-Totef, "Max Weber's Charisma," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 5.2 (2005): 189–204.

after having been sprayed by a fire extinguisher during clashes on Hrushevskoho St. in January were circulated in social media with the caption “snowman boxer.”

Ukraine’s revolutionaries (both Maidan activists and veterans of the subsequent war with Russia) exhibited a common trait: extreme skepticism of any individual who attempts to ascend to the status of “leader.” In this respect the Maidan protests, the volunteer battalions, and the grassroots aid organizations that sprang up in 2014–2015, were structured similarly to other protest actions occurring almost contemporaneously (e. g. Occupy, Arab Spring, Candlelight protests in South Korea, pro-democracy protest in Hong Kong, etc.). The common characteristic of each of these protest actions was skepticism, if not outright rejection, of the principle of hierarchy by the protagonists. These social movements attracted thousands of supporters willing to take to the streets to demonstrate their disagreement with a particular political issue or institutional arrangement (the common catalyst for protest was perceived corruption in government), and each was nominally leaderless.

The significance of the rejection of hierarchy, and the appearance of heterarchical collectives (*spilnoty*) as effective political forces driving Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity (and other social movements) is not to be underestimated. Horizontalization seems to represent one of the symptoms of the ongoing fundamental shift in European civilization beyond “modernity”: whereas during the industrial era change required a charismatic leader (entrepreneur, CEO, political visionary, etc.), in the early 21st century it would seem that humanity has witnessed multiple protest movements that have patently rejected those who would position themselves as leaders. This observation should not be understood to mean that personal leadership is no longer relevant for social action or organizational cohesion. However, these movements demonstrate an evolution of the leadership paradigm that may have broader structural consequences.

Specifically, whereas as Max Weber observed, modernity involved the “institutionalization of charisma” (i. e. transference of the charismatic authority of the leader-persona to an office or rank within an institutionalized hierarchy or organization),<sup>37</sup> both the Maidan protests and the subsequent spontaneous organization of volunteer battalions and logistical organizations suggest a transformation of this previously taken-for-granted prerequisite of institutionalized modernity towards heterarchy and situational leadership—though not the disappearance of charisma as such. Whereas Weber saw charisma as the “quality of an individual personality,”<sup>38</sup> Ukraine’s revolution witnessed the charismatic idea existing and spreading independently, without attachment to individual personality. Individual leaders were distrusted, but the common ideal (“dignity,” “fairness,” etc.) was supremely charismatic—i. e. inspirational and compelling to action. In this logic, the principle of charisma (i. e. compelling attractiveness) remained operative, and indeed was simultaneously the glue and lubricant of collective action.

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37 For more on Weber’s concept of charisma and its institutionalization in modernity see: William H. Friedland, “For a Sociological Concept of Charisma,” *Social Forces* 43.1 (1964): 18–26 and Edward Shils, “Charisma, Order, and Status,” *American Sociological Review* 30.2 (1965): 199–213.

38 Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947), 328.

## Conclusion

The appearance of a powerful leaderless agency in the Maidan movement, its ability to spawn and make charismatic new (or at least redefined) ideas such as dignity and patriotism, and the capacity of both the Maidan protests and the subsequent volunteer movement for longevity in heterarchical structures, are all elements that point to an underrecognized significance of Ukraine's revolution — indicative of its having represented (at least) a punctuation event in a larger story of civilizational transformation.

Social relations during the Maidan protests and in the subsequent volunteer movement (in the battalions and in aid organizations) were heterarchical and driven by idealism. When Russia invaded, the charismatic idea of Ukraine's revolution became crystalized in patriotism: a notion that compelled action in the form of support for territorial defense and public service. Patriotism, in turn, spawned the idea of anti-corruption. Whereas territorial defense and public service were actions compelled by an external threat to the twin concepts of "fairness" and "dignity" (interpreted collectively as affronting the nation), the drive to rid the state apparatus of shady practices that resulted in the enrichment of individuals many would consider undeserving (i. e. in the institutionalization of non-meritocratic social structures) was the result of the application of these ideas to domestic politics. In both cases we see the driving force of collective and individual actions (some more successful, others less so) being the non-embodied, depersonalized, leaderless charismatic idea.

In this sense, Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity approximated Arendt's vision of revolution whose protagonists were driven by a "pathos of novelty": a broad-based feeling of building a new society that was to replace the old — even at the expense of their own well-being.<sup>39</sup> This was not a "social revolution" in the sense described by Theda Skocpol.<sup>40</sup> The Maidan protests were driven by idealism, verbalized in terms such as dignity, fairness, and national liberation; symbolized in countless emotionally stimulating ways. On the other side, Putin's military aggression in Crimea and the Donbas was similarly driven by idealism rather than material interest (gathering the "Russian" lands, consolidating and protecting the "Russian World," etc.).

The powerful agency of charismatic ideas remains one of the most understudied, yet significant, aspects of the Ukrainian Revolution. The Maidan protests did not necessarily spawn entirely new ideas, nor did the Ukrainian protests and subsequent Russian-Ukrainian war uniquely represent the start of a global transformation of the ideational foundations of the civilizational order known as "modernity."<sup>41</sup> However,

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39 Arendt, *On Revolution*.

40 Skocpol emphasizes the largely material (structural) causes and consequences of political revolutions, focusing on the political-economic (class) relations that such social upheavals reconstitute. See: Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

41 The "Third Wave" civilizational phase shift, of which we argue the Revolution of Dignity was a component, was detected much earlier, in other places, and in other (particularly



just as the Great Transformation from agrarian feudalism to industrial capitalism (described thoroughly by virtually every classical social scientist)<sup>42</sup> was punctuated by several political revolutions and wars in the course of its centuries-long progression,<sup>43</sup> so too—according to the argument presented here—will history record Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity as one of the “great revolutions” that fostered the new ideas, social arrangements, and institutions that defined social development in the era that will supersede “modernity.”

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technological) manifestations. In the 1970's Alvin Toffler first popularized the idea that a new post-industrial revolution (the “information age”) would eventually replace the mass-production based economic order. The literature on “post-industrial society” (a term coined by Alain Touraine, and popularized by Daniel Bell) has since grown extensively.

42 Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1981–1984); Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Allen and Unwin, 1930).

43 In the words of renowned sociologist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt: post-Enlightenment “revolutions developed against the background of the major cultural and ideological trends which ushered in the cultural program of Western modernity, a program which became crystalized through these revolutions.” Eisenstadt, *The Great Revolutions*, 38.

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