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## ФІЛОСОФИ СВІТУ СОЛІДАРНІ З УКРАЇНОЮ

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**Від редколегії:** За дозволом організаторів і модераторів відкритої інтернет-платформи “Philosophers for Ukraine” («Філософи за Україну»)<sup>1</sup> ми продовжуємо оприлюднення на сторінках нашого часопису мовою оригіналів реакції філософів світу на варварську агресію путінської Росії проти України. Ми розглядаємо дописи відомих та ще не відомих українській спільноті філософів не лише як надзвичайно важливий інтелектуальний внесок у справу міжнародної солідарності із самовідданою боротьбою українського суспільства проти нападника, а й як перші спроби осмислення засад та наслідків злочину цієї війни XXI століття для всього людства.

Неупереджений висновок, який слідує з географічної ширини респондентів та фактичної однотайності у підтримці нашої справедливої боротьби за свободу, свідчить про епічний провал російської пропаганди з поширення міфів та відвертої брехні про нашу країну, її історію, культуру, політичну систему тощо. Можливо, не всі з представлених у проекті колег активно співпрацювали з українськими філософами, не досконально знають нашу історію та культуру, але потенціал філософського розуму та моральної інтуїції дозволив їм стати на правильну сторону – сторону добра і справедливості!

Ми закликаємо колег долучатися до проекту: контакуйте із колегами по усьому світу, інформуйте їх про несправедливу війну росії проти України, повідомте про можливість долучитись до цієї та інших акцій підтримки нашої країни.

**Michael Marder,**  
*Ikerbasque Research Professor*  
*of Philosophy at the University of the Basque Country,*  
*Vitoria-Gasteiz, editor at The Philosophical Salon*

### Thinking in the Face of War

Since the start of Putin’s horrific invasion of Ukraine, it has been difficult for me to think clearly. This time, war has struck too close to home. Literally. More than half of my family comes from Ukraine. My father’s roots are in Nikopol’, located one hundred kilometers southwest of Dnipro. My maternal grandfather was from Berdychiv, where most of his family perished in the Holocaust. My great-grandfather, also on my mother’s side of the genealogical tree, came from Poltava. Chernobyl, which along with the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant, has been savagely and recklessly attacked by the Russian occupying forces, has left an indelible trace in my own biography, as evident in *The Chernobyl Herbarium*, co-created with French artist Anais Tondeur. I persistently worry about relatives, friends, and colleagues in Ukraine, as well as about the people of Ukraine who have found themselves in an excruciatingly difficult situation, sandwiched between an increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> Philosophers for Ukraine: <https://philosophersforukraine.com.ua/>

belligerent Russia and the West that voices its support but does little to protect Ukraine's civilian population within this sovereign country's borders.

Yet, think we must. And, in this sense, empty statements of support for Ukraine or formal denunciations of Putin's aggression are insufficient.

A concrete example of thinking in the face of the current war has to do with the very meaning of a nuclear threat and of unprecedented attacks on nuclear energy facilities by the Russian armed forces. The non-interventionist position of NATO that defines itself as a defensive organization for its members is based on an outdated idea of territorial defense. It implies that a threat is clearly localizable in space and limited in time; hence, any response is indexed to its circumscribed nature. The sense of a nuclear threat is very different, however, and it doesn't matter if it has to do with the deployment of atomic weapons or shelling that endangers the safety of nuclear reactors at a power plant. Here, the consequences are not limited in space to the national territory nor in time to the duration of military activity. A fallout in Zaporizhia could affect Romania and Bulgaria, Poland and the Baltic countries, as well as Central Europe, at the very least. It would extend not only to the present human populations, but also to future generations and to entire ecosystems. The logic of NATO defensive activities needs to be urgently updated in order to account for situations where member countries are at an extreme risk, regardless of whether or not bombs are falling on their national territory.

There is no justification in the world that would exempt philosophers from "thinking on the spot" in such circumstances.

**Jeff McMahan,**

*Sekyra and White's Professor of Moral Philosophy,  
Professorial Fellow, Corpus Christi College*

### **Russian soldiers in Ukraine are guilty of both fighting in an unjust war and violating the rules of war**

According to traditional just war theory, soldiers who fight in an unjust war do not act impermissibly unless they violate the rules of war, for example by intentionally attacking civilians. According to revisionist just war theory, by contrast, soldiers who use violence to achieve unjust aims act impermissibly even if their targets are only members of the enemy military.

Russian soldiers in Ukraine are guilty of both fighting in an unjust war and violating the rules of war. Soldiers who fight in unjust wars and even soldiers who commit war crimes sometimes act in conditions that may partially excuse their action. Certainly Russian soldiers have been subjected to brainwashing by the Russian elite and many of them may sincerely have believed that they were going to fight in a war that was both a war of preventive defense and an instance of humanitarian intervention. But those delusions must have been dispelled when they found no forces mobilized for offensive operations and no throngs of grateful civilians welcoming their liberators.

All soldiers have a duty to make conscientious efforts to determine whether the killing they are likely to do when sent to war will be morally justified. It should now be

obvious to Russian soldiers that they engaged in action that is no more justified than the action of Nazis who invaded the Soviet Union and murdered innocent Soviet citizens. Russian civilians, too, can by now surely understand that they have been systematically lied to. They have a duty to do what they can, though not at unreasonable personal cost, to bring pressure on their government to end this appalling war of aggression, which their government has explicitly threatened to escalate to nuclear war. Those who have had the courage to defy their government must have our deepest admiration and gratitude.

**Graham Priest,**

*Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the CUNY Graduate Center*

### **Right-thinking people should act now as best they can to end the invasion**

Violence—whether it be personal, international, or somewhere in between—is intrinsically a bad thing. It causes suffering of many kinds: physical, emotional, economic. Not only is it intrinsically bad, but, as many have observed, violence rarely ends violence, but very often causes more violence.

That does not mean that it should be eschewed entirely. Just sometimes, appropriate violence can indeed prevent greater suffering. Violence in self-defense can be of this kind. But unless it is of this kind, violence is morally rebarbative.

Invasions of another country are virtually never of this kind. Thus, the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 are to be condemned. For the same reason, so is the current invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Of course, moral condemnation is never going to stop such wars. Those who trigger them do not care about morality: they are driven by quite other considerations: power, wealth, prestige, resentment. Naturally, this is an ugly admission for them to have to make. So such people will lie about their motives—to others, and maybe even themselves.

The present situation in Ukraine is complex. As anyone who has followed matters since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 will know, the “Western” powers—in particular the US—must bear significant responsibility for the situation. However, the immediate aggressor is clearly Russia; and it is imperative that the invasion be brought to an end. All peaceful means should be used for doing so.

What of violent means? For anybody who is not there, there will always be an uncertainty about what, exactly, is happening. The conditions of war make the truth hard to determine, even for people of good faith; and many are not of good faith. As is often pointed out, the first casualty of war is truth. However, it seems clear that very many citizens of Ukraine are mounting a determined and courageous defense against the aggression. This certainly does come under the banner of self-defense. Those who can should support their struggle.

What the results of the invasion will be—on Ukraine, on Russia, on Western Europe, and indeed on the rest of the world—both in the short term and in the long-term, only time will tell. But what is clear is that all right-thinking people should act now as best they can to end the invasion and the suffering it is causing.

**Gérard Bensussan,**

*Professor of philosophy at the Marc-Bloch University  
of Strasbourg, France, researcher at the CNRS, translator*

### **Today, the Ukrainian people embody all the resistances to oppression that have always passed through history**

Today, the Ukrainian people embody all the resistances to oppression that have always passed through history.

Their courage, their determined strength, their spirit of freedom force admiration, as does President Zelensky's resolution. Our first movement is spontaneously to come to aid, as the European Union does, but to a still insufficient extent. Putin's nuclear blackmail shows those who still had some illusions about him the terrorist nature of his plans for expansion and the danger he represents for the Ukrainian people in the immediate future and for Europe as a whole.

Terrible suffering strikes and will strike the Ukrainians again. The least we can do is to stand by their side, because it is simply a matter of democracy, without which nothing is worth living every day or practicing philosophy.

**Michail Maiatsky,**

*Research Fellow, University of Lausanne*

### **The Ominous Event Took Place**

What had happened had its reasons and could be anticipated, but took many of us by surprise, and was completely unexpected in its scale. Today evil has its own face, its own name. It is Putin and his criminal gang. But it is also all of us, those who are connected to Russia by birth, by language, by work. It is we who failed to recognize and prevent evil in time.

As old as philosophy itself, the problem of the relationship between philosophy and power turned out to be not purely academic. Recently, we discussed the case of Heidegger and other intellectuals of the Third Reich, and we compared it to the situation in the Soviet Union. But today, in the country that is the successor of the USSR, this problem is again more than urgent.

The ideological control, a kind of Gleichschaltung, to which the authorities have subjugated the entire society for the last 20 years, has completely affected philosophy as well. Instead of patiently building a democratic civil society, hundreds of (allegedly) philosophers have begun composing countless texts about the Great, Unique, Exceptional, Best-in-the-world Russian Idea, which is supposedly the bearer of the new Civilization Matrix and the model to follow. But in essence, these «philosophers» were in the service of resentment, xenophobia, and nationalistic arrogance, which fuelled the Kremlin's insane Nazi-like fantasies. Today, these fantasies kill.

Our guilt is endless. Our only consolation is that the corrupt, kleptocratic, brutal regime will collapse under the weight of its gross hubris and disregard for reality in favor of crazy fantasies. From this putsch against humanity and reason, the human race will emerge strengthened and enlightened. Russian society has a long road ahead of it, practically from scratch, to comprehend its moral fall. Philosophy has a modest but important role to play in this inevitable and difficult task.

**Elizabeth Anderson,**  
*Max Shaye Professor of Public Philosophy*  
*University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*

### **An inspiration and a model to all who cherish or hope to live in a free democratic country**

Let us honor the people of Ukraine. In the course of this terrible and unjust invasion, the Ukrainian people have stood steadfast and courageous in defense of their liberty and their democracy.

It is sometimes said that the threat of loss makes people most vividly aware of the value and significance of what they stand to lose. The Ukrainian people's bravery in opposing tyranny offers an inspiration and a model to all who cherish or hope to live in a free democratic country, and a reminder of what this is worth, and what sacrifices must sometimes be made for it.

I send my best wishes to the Ukrainian people as the world unites in solidarity with you.

**Michael Hauskeller,**  
Head of Department of Philosophy,  
University of Liverpool

### **Nothing Can Justify Russia's Attack on Ukraine**

Nothing can justify Russia's attack on Ukraine. Whatever the goals are, the reckless and unprovoked attack on a sovereign nation and the wanton killing of many thousands of innocent people and displacement of millions is, without a shadow of a doubt, as evil as it gets.

And yet, it is being justified, mostly with absurdly transparent lies, not only by the perpetrators, but, even more disturbingly, by all those – and there are many – who like their leaders ruthless and indifferent to the suffering they cause.

Nurtured by Plato and his footnotes, we like to imagine that good is a powerful force in the world, but Augustine was surely right that the pull of evil is at least equally strong. What is Putin hoping to gain from Russia's attack on its neighbour? Perhaps nothing. Perhaps he was simply getting tired of playing by the rules. Destruction for destruction's sake has its own appeal, even self-destruction. It is the pull of nothingness, of the abyss that attracts our gaze and turns us into monsters.

The seismic shift away from any serious commitment to facts that is noticeable everywhere, not only in Putin's Russia, is also owed to that pull. Truth is increasingly regarded as at best an inconvenience that we must put up with, and at worst an enemy that needs to be eradicated. Truth is no longer found, let alone sought. Instead, we make up our own, pulling away from reality itself. We are being attacked, cries the attacker. We are the victims here, cries the aggressor. They may even believe it, or not. It is hard to tell, and it makes no difference. What matters is that if it is shouted often and loud enough, people will believe it and will call the lie truth and the truth a lie.

**Saulius Geniusas,**  
*Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy,  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

### **The Ukrainians are fighting for freedom, self-determination, and the rule of law**

This is the time for the philosophical community to show unequivocal support for Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. Fear, narrow self-interest and ideological commitments are the only things that stand in the way, and it is a philosopher's responsibility to show that nothing sustainable can be built on their basis.

Putin has three great weapons: the atomic weapon, narrow self-interests of other nations, and fear. We cannot deprive him of the first one, but we can deprive him of the other two. By means of sanctions, the international community can demonstrate that when need arises, it can set its own narrow interests aside. As far as the third weapon is concerned, the courage and resilience of the Ukrainian people continues to demonstrate that we do not need to be afraid. This is extremely inspiring, for it reminds us that we are not just creatures driven by pragmatic interests, but that we are also committed to values that are more important to us than anything else. The Ukrainians are fighting for freedom, self-determination, and the rule of law. They are fighting for our values; they are fighting for us.

While different countries have their own interests, they nonetheless have common values – this is what the war in Ukraine has shown us. It has also shown us that these values are shared by the Ukrainian people. We are all members of the same family and one can only hope that this fact will be institutionally ratified without delay by admitting Ukraine to the European Union. If history teaches us anything, it is the following: no dictator can impose his will upon the whole world if the world chooses to resist it. Only our unity can pave the way to peace. Slava Ukraini!

**Margaret A. Cuonzo,**  
*Professor of Philosophy, Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus*

### **Putin is no match for a community of people around the world who are committed to justice**

In their heroic fight against repression and autocracy, the people of Ukraine have shown an increasingly cynical world that freedom is worth fighting for, that we must band together, and that human beings are still capable of incredible courage and self-sacrifice. Putin, whose aspirations are reminiscent of those of the tyrant described in Plato's Republic, is no match for a community of people around the world who are committed to justice.

I stand with the people of Ukraine, and call upon fellow philosophers to support Ukraine by doing what philosophers do best, namely, exposing the false equivalences and other types of fallacious reasoning of Putin's propaganda machine, sharing their views on the meaning of the current struggle, providing ethical frameworks for the tough decisions that Ukrainians and the rest of the free world must now make, and call out injustice wherever it arises.

Autocrats cannot achieve their unjust aims without the help of their deluded supporters, who are lulled into believing that an evil cause is an acceptable one. Philosophers can shine the light of reason on the obvious falsehoods and provide clarity regarding what is happening in Ukraine. This is an extremely powerful “weapon,” one that must now be used in the interest of freedom.

**Edwige Chirouter,**

*University Professor, Philosophy of Education, University of Nantes.*

*CREN. Holder of the UNESCO Chair for “Philosophy Practices with Children”*

### **Putin’s attitude is based on the impossibility of questioning his own beliefs and convictions**

With this message, as a university professor of philosophy at the University of Nantes (France) and holder of the UNESCO Chair on Philosophy with Children, I would like to express my full support to our Ukrainian comrades, and in particular to all the teaching colleagues who work every day for the education and protection of children.

It is more necessary than ever to democratize access to philosophy for all future citizens in order to bring the democratic ideal to life, to cultivate critical thinking and intercultural dialogue. One of the challenges of democratic education in this post-modern and crisis-ridden world is to fight against both the pitfalls of dogmatism and relativism.

Fanaticism, as manifested by Putin’s insane attitude, is based on the impossibility both of questioning one’s own beliefs or convictions, and of going fraternally, as H. Arendt would say, «to meet the other» (1975). A humanist democracy requires of its citizens rigor of thought, benevolence and open-mindedness, qualities that can only be obtained through a demanding intellectual practice whose emancipatory force is nourished by the diversity and intensity of experiences of encounters and resonance with the ideas of others.

An authentic democratic education should thus make us more open by exposing us to difference and to the recognition of our vulnerability. The democratization of philosophy teaching is at the heart of this political emergency.

The UNESCO Chair on the Practice of Philosophy with Children is thus committed to supporting both the reception of all Ukrainian children in exile and to helping all educators to implement philosophy workshops with young students in their schools in order to keep alive this hope of the Enlightenment.

**Andy Owen,**

*Philosopher and Writer, a former British Army intelligence officer*

### **Ukraine may be for Putin what the 1986 disaster at Chernobyl was for the USSR**

Francis Fukuyama argued in 1992 that as Western liberal democracy defeated the communism of the USSR, humanity had reached “not just... the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history.. the end-point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”

Yet, as former members of the USSR aligned themselves with the EU and NATO, and the winners of the Cold War repurposed their military's technological advantage into commercial advantage, flooding Russian homes with high-tech products the like of which no home-grown company could match, we barely noticed the growing, smouldering, anger of the Russian political class and security apparatus.

Russian influence seeped into every corner of Europe's economic and political landscape. Few questions were asked as the money poured in – communism had been defeated so what was the threat? As the first evidence of the return of ghosts of Europe's brutal past emerged in the Balkans as ethnic and religious conflicts tore apart the previous communist dictatorship in Yugoslavia, NATO snubbed Russia. Acting unilaterally in what Russia saw as its sphere of influence, it attacked its allies the Serbs. Putin railed about the bombing campaigns against the Serbs during a recent joint press briefing with the German Chancellor.

Post-9/11, our attention was directed elsewhere, fighting the new threat to liberal democracy – Islamic Extremism. In 1993, Samuel P. Huntington, in response to Fukuyama, claimed that temporary conflict between ideologies was being replaced by a “clash of civilizations.” Despite the over-simplistic binary thinking, and the use of veiled racist language, the idea stuck. The Global War on Terror followed, creating an Axis of Evil splitting the world into two.

Fuelled by hubris, the expansionist liberal democracy project defeated itself in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the aftermath, it became clear the world was a more complex place. It is not binary, but multipolar: a complex web of competing nations tied together by the threads of global trade, financial systems and – with most fragility – the rule of international law. Writing in 1989 John Gray claimed, “the waning of the Soviet system is bound to be accompanied by a waxing of ethnic and nationalistic conflicts – just the sort of stuff history has always been made of.”

Stalin had ruthlessly dislocated entire peoples, relocating them without regard to their histories. As the USSR collapsed Gray saw that “age-old enmities and loyalties” were coming back to the surface after decades of totalitarian suppression. It was “not, then, the end of history, but instead its resumption – and on decidedly traditional lines.” Putin's rewriting of history provided a nationalistic justification for invasion under the guise of protecting the ethnically Russian peoples of Ukraine. Putin's talk of the rights of peoples however is a shallow cover for his hunger for glory and resentment over Russia's decline. He is happy to stoke the fires of these age-old enmities for his own ends.

As history resumes, Putin has become an agent of chaos, using targeted assassinations, cyber-attacks, misinformation, election interference, and the use of mercenaries. In 2021, he used the flow of migrants from Belarus as a weapon to sow disunity. The activities of Wagner Group mercenaries in Africa could enable Russia to manipulate future refugee flows into Europe. At the end of the Cold War, we convinced ourselves we had found the one system best for all of humanity. We attempted to force that system on others and instead unleashed long-suppressed and highly destructive old enmities. What we did through naivete and arrogance, Putin



is doing deliberately. For Gray, due to the plurality of human needs, it's utopian to imagine one political system could be good for all. Human nature is an inherent obstacle to advancing political progress. There's no end to our history of violence.

Instead, our ceaseless attempts to try to find some meaning to life drive us into the embrace of religious belief systems and their secular imitations, like nationalism – and, consequently, to conflict. In the face of this, Gray believes we need to adopt a form of political realism that accepts that there are political dilemmas for which there are simply no solutions. There is a plurality of human values that determines many ways of living, and these values – and those that hold them – will clash. We must search for ways of living together despite this, while also accepting that the reality is history is cyclic, not some straight line from unenlightened times to enlightened. War is followed by peace, followed by war.

Ukraine may be for Putin what the 1986 disaster at Chernobyl was for the USSR. The deceit and corruption it exposed hastened the Soviet collapse and spurred the growth of a grassroots green movement in Ukraine, which grew into an independence movement. The seizure of Chernobyl and the attack on Europe's largest nuclear plant, Zaporizhzhia, last week reminded us there could be a very real end of history. This is the first war fought in countries with nuclear power plants. If history does not end on the Ukrainian steppes, we should do all we can to extend the next period of peace, but this should be accompanied by a political realism that sees through our own illusions and the carefully crafted illusions of those in competition with our values who are prepared to release our worst impulses for their own gain.

**Marc Bobro,**

*Professor and Chair of Philosophy, Santa Barbara City College, California, USA*

### **May Ukraine Stay Strong**

My father, George Bobro, was a Ukrainian refugee, who fled Ukraine as a boy with many other Ukrainians, Russians, Christians, and Jews, due to Soviet religious persecution before WWII. He would turn over in his grave at Russia's latest invasion of his beloved home country.

We may never know Vladimir Putin's real motives, but whatever they are, they are clearly unjustified.

My father emigrated to the US after WWII and never received more than a high school education, yet instilled in me my philosophical passion. He philosophized through the rich landscape of Ukrainian folktales and proverbs. My philosophical journey has never strayed far from my father's influence. May Ukraine stand strong!

**J. Edward Hackett,**

*Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Southern University and A&M College, English and Philosophy Department*

### **Reflections on the Possibility of Lasting Peace**

Thomas Jefferson began the American Declaration of Independence with these words, «When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people

to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.»

We may now add to Jefferson's injunction that it becomes necessary for any people to maintain the dissolution of those political bands which have invaded the sovereign integrity of a peaceful nation. Russia as the aggressor violates all ethical standards of Western thought that could justify war by invading a sovereign independent state and the use of force is not one of self-defense but wanton invasion. The use of force is specifically targeting Ukrainian civilians and already there has been reckless military fighting around a nuclear power plant that could jeopardize the safety of Russia and Europe in general.

For Russia and Putin's ego are inseparable and wish nothing more than to thwart the expansion of a collective security of NATO and reconstitute the former glory of the Soviet Union – all at the same time. In Putin's mind, these two goals are merged as one. The success or failure of one side of either is both personal and collective. Peace may well involve assuaging Putin's ego, and if that proves true, then only removing Putin may be the only lasting solution for peace between the United States, Europe, and Russia. For this reason, not only should the Russian government withdraw from Ukraine, but they should also remove Putin.

In less than a week, Putin derailed decades old confidence in diplomacy and plunged European peace by conventional means and continually rattled his saber. His invocation of the nuclear arsenal must be taken seriously; Putin and by extension Russia now pose the ultimate risk to global security that not even China may ignore. If Putin's ego has merged with the state, then there is no practical difference anymore between whatever safeguards are in place that authorize the use of nuclear weapons and his want to use them. Putin must be deposed.

Not only must Putin be deposed, but Russia must reassure the world that such expansionist energies end with his removal. Russia must promote the aims of peace lest we forget what our forebears did a generation ago. To instill in us a desire for peace and that escalation of nuclear warfare never see the light of day, the US and Russia ratified the Mutually Assured Destruction treaty in 1972. Let us honor that agreement, and also commit to a new nuclear disarmament treaty that would put an end to Putin-like efforts to destabilize the collective security of entire continents.

In a new era of peace, let us strengthen ties between Washington and Moscow. Let us have cultural exchanges. Let us increase trade between us. Let us prosper as one Earth and let us say no to any state that would threaten the peaceful conditions of trade and commerce. By coming together to end the Ukraine invasion, we can do more than stop Russia as an aggressor, but Russia could lead the world in building a lasting peace. Be a model of peace, Russia, and not a model for autocratic tyranny. Be a lamp unto yourself in guiding your country away from one man's ego and see the divine truth in so many of the Earth's major religions.

We are all interconnected. We exist in an ontological state of fragile vulnerability and mutual interdependence. To neglect this truth is to cast peace aside and condone violence throughout history. Let this be the first moment in the dream of perpetual peace that puts asunder the savagery of war, and let our combined spirit together restore the world to peace. After such restoration, then, let us build a better world where no war occurs and our hearts care for each other.

**Katalin Balog,**

*Professor, Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University-Newark*

### **Слава Україні!**

What difference a week can make. Since Putin's invasion last Wednesday, our view of what happened has changed drastically, due to a collective jolt at the sight of the heroic people of Ukraine. The way the world appears is shaped not just by the world itself, but equally by our conceptions of it, and by the myriad ways in which it affects us. These feelings, of course, are highly sensitive to those of others. We are not an island — we feel as part of a collective. In a revolution your fellow citizens might stop being indifferent strangers — they become your brothers and sisters who you are willing to sacrifice for. This process can work in the negative direction as well: in a civil war your neighbors and friends suddenly might seem as sinister enemies.

Something like this happened with regard to Putin's war. In the world we lived in just a week ago, events like Russian aggression seemed pre-ordained, an occurrence not that much can be done about, a distant happening in a distant land. This feeling was widely shared. But many of us in the West now see a villain and we see heroic and worthy defenders and we see tragedy but we see hope, as well as scope for agency. This was not pre-ordained; such gestalt shifts might or might not occur at pivotal points in history. Simone Weil called the way our view of the world is colored by collective movements of the soul "reading".

Of course, Russians living under autocracy and controlled media have their own reading of what is happening. Readings can be more or less accurate, more or less worthy. Human beings are unpredictable, and we can collectively surprise ourselves. The admirable example of a few might become the rule. May the bravery and hope of Ukrainian men and women teach us to be more brave and hopeful — and may their hopes and ours be fulfilled.

Слава Україні!