

Social-philosophical Analysis of the Activity of Levko Lukianenko

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Abstract--- *This article presents a social-philosophical analysis of the life and work of Levko Lukianenko (1928–2018), a prominent Ukrainian dissident, politician, and human rights advocate who spent his life working for the emancipation and sovereignty of his people. Using his life and work as a platform, this paper explores how his (both implicit and explicit) philosophical beliefs have influenced and are influenced by his socio-political activities from his time as a dissident in Soviet Ukraine to his work on human rights, nonviolent resistance, political reform and the constitution-making efforts for a new, independent Ukraine. The focus is on intricate concepts of Ukrainian identity and sovereignty, in which existentialist humanism and both social constructivist and postmodern approaches to understanding the political played a crucial part alongside his activities as a human rights lawyer and political campaigner. Finally, I relate his work to contemporary Ukraine by demonstrating how his republicanism (as a citizen rather than a member of a political party) and his cosmopolitan views on human relations offer a valuable alternative to present-day nationalist and populist trends that plague the post-Maidan society and the ongoing struggle for democratic values. By situating Lukianenko's work within broader philosophical discussions, this paper will demonstrate the importance and the value of retaining the view of political action through a philosophical lens, highlighting the ways in which philosophical ideas shed critical light on political activism and the analysis of civic action, as well as its role in the development of national identity in the context of overarching socio-political transformations.*

Keywords--- *Levko Lukianenko, Philosophical Ideas, Democracy, Ukrainian Society, Historical Discourse.*

I. INTRODUCTION

THE struggle for democracy and human rights has been a defining feature of Ukraine's modern history, with influential figures emerging to advocate for these ideals during times of political oppression. Levko Lukianenko, a major dissident, politician, and thinker, had the most significant impact on Ukrainian life and thought. He was born in 1928 in the Kyiv region of Ukraine and was an eyewitness to – and active participant in – the dramatic narrative of independent Ukrainian political development in the second half of the 20th century. His path to nationalism and human rights started in Soviet times, under repressive state power that crushed dissent and the expression of Ukrainian identity (Verbytskyi, 2020).

His work on civil liberties culminated in the organization of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, monitoring the application of human rights in the USSR. The ideological foundations of this activism are rooted in personal freedom, social responsibility, and individual identity – or what can be described as a broader Western social-philosophical debate around the role of political engagement in modernity.

The task of this article is a social-philosophical exegesis of a great act of Levko Lukianenko. The process by which this intellectual and activist influenced the development of contemporary Ukrainian civic identity and promoted the adoption of liberal values will be illuminated. In existentialism and social constructivism frameworks, we shall see what place we fill as free individuals in a society and what path to our self-fulfillment is possible. We shall unearth the social sensibility of his philosophy in connection with today's Ukraine. By doing so, we are shedding light on Lukianenko's enduring contribution to Ukrainian political thought and signaling the potential of his ideas for Ukraine's human rights and democracy in the years to come. This research will be of interest to academics, policymakers and activists alike working in the fields of political philosophy, human rights advocacy and the modern history of Ukraine, in particular by demonstrating the deeply enabling role of the cultural and philosophical turn in the pursuit of meaningful political activism and social change.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The proposed methodology is based on a systematic literature review, providing access to the newest knowledge on the social-philosophical context of Lukianenko's activities as one of the leading Ukrainian public political figures. Subject-thematic and structured review methodology is essential for providing state-of-the-art information and identifying thematic trends in acquired knowledge connected with Lukianenko's contribution and the context of Ukrainian political thought. The following steps describe the specifics of the subject-thematic methodology of systematic literature review.

Historical Context of Ukrainian Dissidence

To understand Lukianenko's contributions, it is necessary to situate his work within the specific historical context of Soviet Ukraine. As Martsinkiv (2021) notes: '[Under] Soviet oppression of Ukrainian identity ...there existed ample grounds for dissidence.' Among those active in the late 20th-century dissident movement, the scholar Haran (2002) mentions the rise of nationalist movements while marking Lukianenko as one of

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their key figures. His involvement with the founding of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group in 1976 is particularly important, as the scholar Kuzio (2003) points out in his academic paper on intellectual history: '[This] group [was] important not only as a platform that watched over human rights abuses in the late-Soviet period and developed reform proposals at all levels.'

Philosophical Underpinnings of Lukianenko's Activism

Underlying Lukianenko's philosophical beliefs is existentialism and a pragmatically humanistic conception of the individual person who bears responsibility towards humanity as a whole. These themes and many more are treated in detail by several scholars. For instance, Tyskyi (2009) has examined the philosophical vision of Lukianenko, which crystallizes into the concept of 'national consciousness,' whereby individuals must come together culturally to awaken and embrace civic responsibility.

Kryvda (2022) argues that Lukianenko's militancy, more than being merely political, was a deeply philosophical ethical project. It aimed to foster emotional connections that shape the attitudes and habits of an 'ethics of solidarity' among Ukrainians. Lukianenko's work weaves in the moral imperative, reminding the reader that we have to be anti-authoritarian, to treat injustice as a great wrong against the whole of humanity, and to remember that rights are not the legislation of one class over the other, as expressed by de Beauvoir (1948), 'Rights are not acts of restraint, by the Caesars for the enslaved people. They are analogical rights that [rational] man must claim or demand for himself and all others.'

Lukianenko and Human Rights Advocacy

Lukianenko's narrative is rooted in broader international human rights discourses and is compared to the works of other Soviet-era dissidents (Andrushkiv et al., 2020). He emphasized the primacy of every person's right to self-authorship and self-expression in whatever form they choose. In this sense, as Bilyk (2020) writes, Lukianenko's work exemplifies the universality of human rights.

Additionally, a newer piece by Bohdanenko & Martyshyn (2023) discusses the legacy of Lukianenko, specifically of and for contemporary Ukraine, when his ideas are being renewed in public discourse on democracy, governance, and civil society. His thought remains an inspiration for the continuing hope in the renewal of human rights discourse.

Impact on Ukrainian National Identity

The concluding area of scholarship focuses on Lukianenko's activism and its lasting influence on Ukrainian national identity. A number of authors, for example, in the collection edited by Kampo et al. (2023), examine how his ideas about sovereignty and national solidarity influence the broad context of contemporary Ukrainian culture, especially its enduring tensions with neighboring Russia. The scholarly analyses demonstrate how the ideals of Lukianenko inspire and inform contemporary movements for civil rights and national sovereignty, illustrating the historical and foundational organizing framework of his vision for future sovereignty.

Recent Perspectives and Future Research Directions

Recent research also understands Lukianenko's legacy as important to Ukraine's civil society's future. Hapanenko (2020) has shown in detail how prescient Lukianenko's ideas continue to be for Ukraine's post-Euromaidan transition (2014) and how Lukianenko's work can inform the future possibilities of political struggle and social justice in Ukraine.

Academic scholars, deeply engrossed in the study of Lukianenko's philosophies and his potential impact on contemporary social movements, continue their research. The challenges of globalization and digitalization in the 21st century's technological age are just a few of the many contemporary issues that his ideas may be the key to. The ongoing preservation and evolution of Lukianenko's legacy in contemporary Ukraine is also a topic of interest and discussion, connecting us to a living history.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Levko Lukianenko commenced his activities by analyzing the political and social processes in Ukraine during the 1960s to 1990s and his own participation in them. Reflecting on his time in Soviet prisons, Levko Hryhorovych noted that despite all the suffering and humiliation – imprisonment can be viewed as a university of Ukrainian studies, political science, and history.

The well-known Ukrainian dissident spoke about his vision for the formation of national consciousness among Ukrainians, highlighting the difference between Slavic values and the Asian model of Russian society, and the predictability of the Revolution of Dignity and the armed aggression of Russia against Ukraine. The time will come, and Ukraine will inevitably defeat Moscow, as the people themselves have taken a stand in defense of Ukraine and its borders, as emphasized Levko Lukianenko.

Lukianenko's work, which reflects his social, political, and moral-ethical views, also received attention. He classified his works into historical-philosophical writings, where he reflected on historical processes, and memoirs about his imprisonment, where he recalled all the fighters for Ukraine's independence with whom he shared long years of torment in Soviet camps (the series "From the Times of Captivity"). These were people who knew how to hold weapons and defend Ukraine's independence but did not know how to articulate their thoughts in writing. It would be a great sin not to write about them, as Lukianenko himself concluded.

The social creative potential of Lukianenko's philosophy can be observed in his ability to inspire action and mobilize the masses towards positive change. He stated that every individual should participate in civic life and carve out a role for the individual as a driver of broader social dynamics. Some of the central themes of Lukianenko's political philosophy – most notably his insistence on national uniqueness and self-determination – could and did motivate many Ukrainians to reclaim their heritage and assert their rights. The very notion of a deeply rooted Ukrainian identity is a motivating force for culture preservation and revivalism. Lukianenko's contributions to the Ukrainian dissident movement of the 1970s and '80s were

considerable and well-known. He was a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, and his primary activities were directed towards promotions. But his activism went beyond 'just politics,' for his activism always had a vital cultural component. In advocating for the rights of the Ukrainian language, literature, and other traditions of the Ukrainian cultural heritage, he was working to lay the very foundations of a broader national and cultural revival that brought about Ukraine's independence. The relevance of Lukianenko's work in light of the contextual situation in which the author argues that Lukianenko's philosophy of culture appeals to what they call a 'reclaiming' of the cultural heritage. In claiming that 'Culture is a natural and necessary part of the state-building process,' Lukianenko set forth a philosophy wherein the preservation or reclamation of crucial elements of cultural identity contributes to greater social cohesion among citizens, thus facilitating a sense of belonging. We might add to this evaluation by suggesting that these claims on culture and the role of national identity are distinctive to Ukrainian experiences of political and social turmoil and are particularly pertinent to the altered situation focusing on human rights and autonomy that Ukraine finds itself in today.

Education was a cornerstone of Lukianenko's philosophy, as he firmly believed that raising awareness of cultural identity and history was crucial for the nation's revival. His commitment to the 'awakening of the mind' reflects ongoing educational discussions. His emphasis on fostering critical thinking and civic consciousness could be a powerful tool in shaping a new, engaged generation of Ukrainians.

Lukianenko inspired many NGOs engaged in cultural education to promote the teaching of Ukrainian history and culture in schools and create an education-oriented public aware of its history and geography as the basis for a healthy civic society. Thus, his philosophy nurtures the founding pillars of civic education, ensuring the growth of an informed and active citizenry, which is needed to sustain any cultural revival. Finally, Lukianenko argued that an informed citizenry would most likely intercede in Russia and halt the bloody history of territorial expansion of a geopolitical entity hostile to human existence. Levko Lukianenko, the philosopher of peace, stands as one of the most relevant thinkers in Ukraine today, reminding us of our power as individuals, our responsibility to be a part of society, and how to preserve our cultural identity.

Lukianenko's intellectual evolution reveals more considerable tensions in Ukrainian political thought in miniature. This social-philosophical reading helps to explain his impact as a thinker who shaped Ukrainian nationalism, human rights activism, and, more broadly, political thought. The central themes in Lukianenko's work shed light on the enduring legacy and relevance of his ideas in the contemporary Western world. Perhaps the most powerful insight from this analysis is that Lukianenko helped to develop national consciousness among all Ukrainians by focusing quite early after independence on the central role of culture and collective memory in nation-building – as necessary in forging unity in an oppressed people as arms for the defense of national sovereignty. Researchers recalled Lukianenko's early print essays on sovereignty and national self-determination as

baseline tenets of national identity and predecessors to the national identity movement. They described this movement as aiming to make Ukraine a country free of foreign domination.

In emphasizing that 'the people are the substance of the state,' Lukianenko reaffirms the need for citizens' participation in the democratic process. Now, more than ever, we can understand his work in connection with the debates on civic involvement and its role in nation-building, and once again, see his ideas continue to appeal to modern proponents of Ukraine's nationhood and sovereignty.

The study unequivocally demonstrates Lukianenko's pivotal role in the Ukrainian human rights movement. Lukianenko's writing reveals a core aspect of this countercultural activity as a principled debate on the relationship between state power and spaces of freedom and security: what should be the normative relationship between state and individual, in light of the latter's freedom interests (and related interests, such as justice). It is infused with broader philosophical debates about freedom: it was inspired by Verevka's fidelity to human rights.

Moreover, Lukianenko's advocacy's quantifiable impact proves that his human rights approach needed to be more theoretical. He wasn't merely a bystander to advocacy; he was doing it. Lukianenko's advocacy approach, particularly in his record-keeping, served as a model for future human rights activists. It indicated that individual agency could drive systemic change and be sustained over time. This has significant implications for best practices in protecting human rights in Ukraine and the ongoing efforts to promote and preserve democratic politics. These efforts have become even more urgent and precarious due to Russia's continued unlawful aggression.

Lukianenko shows how a mainstream novel might exhibit a particular philosophical viewpoint that informs political activism. The thesis is confirmed by our content analysis, which reveals that existentialist tropes suffuse the entirety of Lukianenko's work: the relational aspect of the individual, who constitutes and enables one's reality, whereby the meaningfulness of human life lies in the creation of a transcendent project; this philosophical orientation of existentialism lends the political world the contours of a moral command: the citizen is commanded to challenge politically any threats that would negate her freedom.

Case studies illustrate how Lukianenko's philosophical reflections were not simply the stuff of political debate but rather led directly to the kind of engaged civic actions that they justified. The contemporary continuity with which his thought is still harnessed for the aims of civil society initiatives underscores that philosophical reflection is not just an academic exercise, but a powerful tool in political struggle, making us feel the tangible impact of his ideas on real-world actions.

Surprisingly, the analysis revealed, in the same breath as it affirmed Lukianenko's ideals, just how difficult it is to make them a reality in the Ukraine of today. Most scholars as Yachmenikhin & Bratytsia (2023) and Kotsur (2022) claimed to be inspired by his ideal democracy, but they also identified key barriers to its achievement. Political corruption, instability, and external aggression combine to prevent a fully sovereign

and democratic Ukraine. This stark reality underscores the urgency of the situation and the need for continued advocacy for Lukianenko's ideals. This demonstrates the nature of the dialogue between theory and practice that national revival can engender. The country will only be able to live up to the lofty ambitions of its thinkers, such as Lukianenko, if those ambitious ideas reflect and respond to the reality of collective action and advocacy (in historical as well as contemporary terms).

IV. CONCLUSION

A belief in the power of civic engagement as an element in the more significant battle for freedom and justice was an underlying distinction of Lukianenko's career for many years, both as an ardent supporter of alternative civic activism and as a leader of the Ukrainian dissident movement. He continues to provide a model for those who seek inspiration in his life and works, especially those devoted to the future of a more socially equitable and democratic Ukraine.

Many of Lukianenko's insights were valid for the era in which he lived, but the analysis identified ongoing challenges that prevented his dream from becoming fully realized. Political instability, corruption, and foreign threats all made the prospect of the truly democratic Ukraine he had campaigned for hard to fulfill. In this sense, Lukianenko's legacy deserves to be kept alive as Ukraine stands on the threshold of its fight for national independence and social justice. Lukianenko's principled commitment to human rights and to sovereignty as a social relation is all the more necessary today, as they encourage Ukrainians to join reform movements that seek to unite citizens in a bid to protect their inalienable constitutional rights and freedoms.

This work furthers an appreciation for Levko Lukianenko's transformative role in Ukraine, demonstrating the importance of philosophical thought and political activism for cultivating critical, knowledgeable, and involved citizens. The study opens up possibilities for further engagement with how his ideas might be incorporated into contemporary Ukrainian policies for governing, building community, and fighting for civil rights in order to keep Lukianenko's influence on developing democracy and justice alive.

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