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“Total and Radical Liberation”: The Religious and Philosophical Background of Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s Revolutionary Ideas

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Abstract

The article explores the religious and philosophical origins of Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s ideas of “honesty with oneself,” “omnilateral liberation,” and “concordism.” Two treatises, *Vidrodzhennia natsii* (Rebirth of a Nation, 1919–1920) and *Konkordyzm. Systema buduvannia shchastia* (Concordism. A System of Building Happiness, 1938–1945), illustrate the development of Vynnychenko’s worldview. In the first work, social revolution was considered as the answer to human problems, while, in the second, such a solution was found in becoming one with the universe. Despite his negative attitude towards religion, Volodymyr Vynnychenko actively used religious images and patterns in his writings. For instance, criticizing Christianity for its dogmatism, he nevertheless created his codex of thirteen rules of concordism, which had to harmonize the unbalanced forces of mankind with the universe. In this context, particular attention is paid to the significant influence of pagan concepts on Vynnychenko’s thinking.

Key Words: ideology, Ukrainian Revolution, religion, morality, concordism.



Introduction

Volodymyr Vynnychenko is known as one of the leaders of the Ukrainian National Liberation Struggle of 1917–1919. He was the head of the General Secretariat of the Central Rada, the first Ukrainian government in 1917–1918. He also held the post of Chairman of the Directory of the Ukrainian People’s Republic in 1918–1919. Vynnychenko actively participated in establishing the laws and orders which proclaimed Ukrainian autonomy and sovereignty. Due in no small part to his authority as a famous writer and public figure, Vynnychenko notably influenced the country’s domestic and foreign policies. This influence, especially in the literary sphere, was still palpable in the 1920s after he left Ukraine.

In the perspective of Vynnychenko’s role in Ukrainian history, his beliefs and his worldview become significant issues. Their clarification provides a clue to understanding his political activities as well as the existential codes of his writings. Vynnychenko had an immense lifelong interest in the nature of man and society. He therefore dealt with different questions related to moral philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and the history of religion. Vynnychenko’s

plays and novels reflected his search for existential sense. His literary works served as an illustration of his moral and political opinions. As Volodymyr Panchenko observes:

V. Vynnychenko was attracted not so much to self-realization through creativity as to the public impact of the word and its capacity to influence society. He considered it to be his responsibility as an artist to bring pressing issues to public discussion and thereby fulfil his “provocative” mission.¹

Besides his political and artistic activities, Vynnychenko wrote polemical works about historical, sociological, and moral topics. Looking through his writings, Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky claims that Vynnychenko was focused on his favorite slogan “omnilateral liberation” (*vsebichne vyzvolennia*), explained as “social, national, political, moral, cultural” liberation or “total and radical liberation.”² Tamara Hundorova stresses three periods of Vynnychenko’s thinking. The first, “honesty with oneself” (1900s-1910s), was substantially influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche and his “will to power” concept. The idea of “honesty with oneself” was considered as the principle of the new non-religious “proletarian” morality. “It is based on the elements of nihilism, ethical metaphysics, voluntarism, existentialism, psychoanalysis, vitalism, and related structures of thinking, although it is not limited to any of them.”³ The second period, “philosophy of happiness” (1920s), was shaped by the French theoretical physicist and philosopher Henri Poincaré, who taught about the inner harmony of the world as a unique reality. Thus, in that period, happiness for Vynnychenko consisted of an “effective balance of forces.”⁴ The final stage of Vynnychenko’s thinking is known as “concordism” (1930s-1940s). His treatise *Concordism. A System of Building Happiness* (1938–1945) was created at that time. Tamara Hundorova defines this work as a “socio-psychotherapeutic utopia,” whose ideal is the “renewal of paradise.”⁵

This paper focuses on two of Vynnychenko’s treatises: *Rebirth of a Nation* (1919–1920) and *Concordism* (1938–1945). These works illustrate the development of Vynnychenko’s worldview. Both treatises cope with the issue of liberation. *Rebirth of a Nation*, based on Vynnychenko’s fresh memories about the political events of 1917–1919, deals with the problem of national and social liberation. *Concordism* goes further, incorporating national and social liberation into the program of all mankind’s healing and salvation through harmonizing different forces within an

1 Volodymyr Panchenko, *Volodymyr Vynnychenko: paradoksy doli i tvorchosti: Knyha rozvidok ta mandrivok* [*Volodymyr Vynnychenko: Paradoxes of Fate and Creativity. A Book of Searches and Travels*] (Kyiv: Tvim inter, 2004), 124.

2 Ivan L. Rudnytsky, “Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s Ideas in the Light of His Political Writings,” in *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, ed. by Peter L. Rudnytsky (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.ditext.com/rudnytsky/history/vynn.html>.

3 Tamara Hundorova, *Konkordyzm Volodymyra Vynnychenka: trahedia odniiei utopii* [*Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s Concordism: The Tragedy of One Utopia*], in *Konkordyzm. Systema buduvannia shchastia* by Volodymyr Vynnychenko (Kyiv: Ukrainskyi pysmennyk, 2011), 10.

4 Hundorova, *Konkordyzm*, 16.

5 Hundorova, *Konkordyzm*, 21–23.

individual. Thus, Vynnychenko binds his slogans "honesty with oneself," "omnilateral liberation," and "an effective balance of forces" into one system.

Marxism-Leninism as Absolute Knowledge

The very genesis of the term "ideology" demonstrates its connection to religion. As Cyril Hovorun remarked, "Ideology' was invented at the end of the eighteenth century as an alternative to religion and was intended to exercise the same impact on people's minds and behavior."⁶ This statement also applies to Marxist-Leninist ideology, which borrowed many of its postulates from Judaic and Christian sources. For instance, Raymond Aron characterized Marxist patterns as follows: "The mission of the proletariat, the end of prehistory thanks to the Revolution, the reign of liberty — it is easy to recognize the source of these ideas: the Messiah, the break with the past, the Kingdom of God."⁷ Despite its hostile attitude towards religion, Marxism-Leninism is very close to it in its logic and world perception. However, it concerns not only, and not so much, Judaic or Christian terms, but rather a pagan core and the pursuit of omnipotence. Raymond Aron argues that

The Communists, who claim quite unashamedly to be atheists, are nevertheless imbued with a faith: they do not aim exclusively at a rational exploitation of natural resources and of communal life; they aspire to control all cosmic forces and all societies in order to solve the riddle of history and to turn mankind away from meditation on the Fall on to the path of self-sufficiency.⁸

In this context, Hannah Arendt also mentions the Nazi, and the Bolshevik obsession with "the immutable laws" of history and nature: "The propaganda effect of infallibility, the striking success of posing as a mere interpreting agent of predictable forces, has encouraged in totalitarian dictators the habit of announcing their political intentions in the form of prophecy."⁹

According to Alain Besançon, the main obstacle to understanding Soviet ideology arises from reducing it to religion or philosophy. He assumes that there is "no continuity of *kind* between ideology and the movements of scientific and philosophical thought from which it claims descent" as well as rejects claims that ideology is a religion.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Besançon finds a precedent for Soviet ideology in the history of religions. He argues that such an "attitude

6 Cyril Hovorun, "Ideology and Religion," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 3 (2016): 23, accessed February 24, 2017, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18523/kmhj73933.2016-3.23-35>.

7 Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: The Norton Library, 1962), 66.

8 Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, 85.

9 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, New York: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1962), 349.

10 Alain Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag. Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, trans. Sarah Matthews (New York: Continuum, 1981), 8.

of mind” as gnosis can “present fairly close analogies to ideology.”¹¹ Gnosticism teaches about salvation through knowledge, bearing on the laws of the cosmos, the causes of its fall and the means that will guide “the salvatory actions of the elect.”¹² The gnostics, consequently, were accused by Jewish and Christian orthodoxy of having replaced faith in divine revelation by a belief that they “have pierced the central mystery of the cosmos and of history.”¹³ Although gnosticism has been sharply criticized by the Church, its mindset, however, has always influenced European intellectual life.

Alain Besançon points out that there is no continuity between gnosticism and Marxist-Leninist ideology. “Lenin ... would have considered it quite mad to be placed in the tradition of Valentin or Mani, of whom, I am sure, he would barely have heard.”¹⁴ Taking into consideration the clear distinction between gnostic doctrine *per se* and its secular ideological use, one can, nevertheless, find important parallels: “*Precedent* should be understood as meaning an analogous structure of thought, an attitude, an arrangement of the intellect, even though what is thought is not related.”¹⁵ Thus, Besançon refers to a number of aspects:

Several of the characteristics of gnosticism are irresistibly reminiscent of Soviet ideology. I have intentionally isolated and pinned down whatever could foster the comparison: a locked encyclopaedic system of cosmology and soteriology; the over-interpretation of history; a morality deriving from the doctrine, and taking its criteria from it; self-criticism as a way of renewing understanding of the interpretative system; the relativization of man to his contribution to salvation; the division laid down between the militants and masses; the militant, custodian of knowledge, ascetic, professional, freed from the ordinary tasks of life; and the geo-historical dualism between regions which are ontologically damned and regions which are saved.¹⁶

Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s worldview was significantly influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology. As a politician, he was seeking to implement socialist (proletarian) principles and norms. As a writer, he constantly expressed these ideas in his novels and plays. Therefore, the approaches mentioned above are essential tools for a comprehensive analysis of Vynnychenko’s writings. At the same time, due regard should be paid to the above-mentioned distinction between religious doctrines *per se* and a religious “attitude of mind” or “arrangement of the intellect.”

11 Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 9.

12 Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 11.

13 Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 11.

14 Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 9.

15 Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 9.

16 Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 16.

Rebirth of a Nation: Revolution in Religious Terms

A sharply negative attitude towards Christianity and religion in general was peculiar to Vynnychenko's worldview during his life. As for *Rebirth of a Nation*, he criticizes priests for inciting hatred and "drugging" people.¹⁷ Vynnychenko was indignant that every Universal was read at Sofiivska Square "with a whole bunch of priests." This seemed to him "an outrage," "an ugly comedy," and an "undignified spectacle."¹⁸ Significantly, Vynnychenko as a politician proposed to replace religious education as a compulsory subject with the history of socialism.

Despite all this, Vynnychenko actively used religious images and patterns in his texts. For example, he compared Ukrainians with "the half-strangled Abel, whose blood was crying out to Heaven for 250 years," when the Tsarist regime "crucified" them, and "slapped their faces."¹⁹ Vynnychenko describes an unsuccessful visit of the Ukrainian Parliament delegation to Petrograd in the chapter "From Pilate to Caiaphas": the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Pilate) did not listen to the Ukrainian delegation and sent it to the Provisional Government (Caiaphas).²⁰ He also criticizes his class enemies in the chapter eloquently named "What was hidden under Caiaphas' doctoral gown?"²¹

To describe the acceptance of the social revolution, Vynnychenko deliberately uses biblical terms which concern the coming of the Messiah (quotation from Luke 2:29), the conversion, and spiritual rebirth, characterized by breaking with the old life and the beginning of the new one:

In those days the whole tortured soul of the Ukrainian nation knelt down religiously and prayed to the Revolution: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

We welcomed a Great Newness with sincerity, with a devout heart and pure admiration. We joyfully purified our hearts from all old pain, resentment, bitterness, hate. We put on clean clothes of friendship and fraternity. We forgot everything and were ready to protect what we had achieved with all our strength.

Immediately, without hesitation and without arguing, we believed in the Revolution. And in the same way, without hesitation, wholeheartedly and firmly, we rejected and threw out prerevolutionary feelings, intentions, expectations, and calculations. All this became futile at once.²²

However, in contrast to the Christian understanding of new life in Jesus Christ, Vynnychenko's vision is based on the faith in special knowledge. The socialists "went through

17 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii* [*Rebirth of a Nation*] in 3 volumes, vol. 2 (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo politychnoi literatury Ukrainy, 1990), 116.

18 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 115, 130.

19 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 1, 38.

20 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 1, 159.

21 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 1, 166.

22 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 1, 42.

all the stages of the enlightenment of the mind” and “waited for the moment of the All-Russian awakening as for the Messiah.”²³ Thus, the reality established by the revolution resembles the Millennial Kingdom. Vynnychenko mentions the “awakening of masses,” “brotherhood,” the “victory of justice,” a “new order,” a “new age,” and “new life.”²⁴ Socialism was proclaimed to be “the freedom from discrimination, slavery, humiliation, and exploitation.”²⁵ Rejecting the entire old pain and suffering, the Ukrainian socialists greeted the Russian revolution and were ready for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Describing the Russian political powers, Vynnychenko, nevertheless, notes that their attitude towards the Ukrainian issue did not change at all. Russian imperialists (Monarchists, Black Hundreds) as well as democrats were denying the right of Ukraine for autonomy and self-determination. They did not want to accept any changes of the status of Ukraine as a part of the Empire.

Significantly, Vynnychenko could have blamed any Russian party except one, the Bolsheviks. He clearly distinguishes them from all others and is deeply fascinated by their slogans: “All power to the workers; all apparatuses, institutions, establishments, laws, and tendencies of the exploitative classes must be demolished and destroyed immediately and decisively, without any doubt...”²⁶ Vynnychenko regrets that the Central Rada did not understand “the great and powerful simplicity of Bolshevism.”²⁷ Generally, he considered Bolshevism to have “the biggest honesty with oneself.”²⁸

Despite his fascination with the Bolsheviks, Vynnychenko could not ignore their actions. As head of the government, he was witness to all the stages of the Ukrainian-Soviet war. He had to recognize such Bolshevik “mistakes” as backstabbing and the non-fulfillment of commitments, the establishment of the Moscow-controlled puppet government in Kharkiv, the economic exploitation of Ukraine, executions of Ukrainian activists, the continuation of Empress Catherine II’s anti-Ukrainian policy, and the destruction of Ukrainian statehood. There were obvious fundamental differences between the two regimes. “It was quite impossible to unite Russia and Ukraine under a common federative roof; they were two countries whose respective internal developments were incompatible.”²⁹

Nevertheless, Vynnychenko persisted in finding various pretexts and excuses, convincing himself that all Bolshevik atrocities are temporary incidents, which will be overcome in the future. Thus, he explains the violent dispersal of the free elected Constituent Assembly by the fact that “the Assembly was elected when the idea of the social revolution was not yet widely known

23 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 1, 79.

24 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 1, 42, 43, 51, 53.

25 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 91.

26 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 3, 329.

27 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 94.

28 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 1, 101–02.

29 Ivan L. Rudnytsky, “The Fourth Universal and Its Ideological Antecedents,” in *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, ed. by Peter L. Rudnytsky (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.ditext.com/rudnytsky/history/fourth.html>.

to the masses."³⁰ The elimination of Ukrainian culture was due mainly to the cultural imperialism of Russian Bolsheviks inherited from the old regime, which is why they "did not see" and "did not realize" the importance of the national issue for the Ukrainians.³¹ Citing different statements of Bukharin, Lenin, and Trotsky, Vynnychenko expected them to deepen their understanding of the national question. He worried about Bolshevik politics as well as their image. Thus, describing the Red Terror in Ukraine, he cares about the purity of the revolution: "They are the same imperialists and violators of our nation as the Monarchists and the Black Hundreds are. And then the question arises: is it all useful for the common cause of social revolution?"³²

Volodymyr Vynnychenko, however, rarely assigns *responsibility* to the official party *per se*. In fact, the source of all the disasters was only one Bolshevik fraction — *piatakovshchyna* (Piatakovism), which, together with Ukrainian *otamanshchyna* (Otamanism), provoked the war and the Bolshevik terror. Vynnychenko claims *Piatakovism* and *Otamanism* to be "evil forces," responsible for the violence in Ukraine.³³ Raymond Aron characterized such a tendency as follows: "Any man, even a Bolshevik, can make a mistake. The Party, in a certain sense, cannot and must not make a mistake since it is the mouthpiece and the instrument of historical truth."³⁴ This bifurcation — one may say "dishonesty with himself" — was not uniquely provoked by Vynnychenko's desire to come back to Soviet Ukraine from his exile. It came from his faith in Marxist doctrine as the highest knowledge accepted by the Bolsheviks and realized through their policy.

As a consequence of such a worldview, everything was permitted for the Bolsheviks. They were allowed to sign a separate peace treaty with the Germans as well as disperse the Constituent Assembly. They were free to make promises and not to keep them. In fact, the Bolsheviks, people of sacred knowledge, were unable to make mistakes. Even when their actions were contrary to common sense they represented the only sure way. Vynnychenko believes that history, the almighty judge, justified the Bolsheviks. "They were wiser politicians than those 'real politicians,' who called them 'fantasists,' 'ignoramuses' and 'criminals.' History mocked the politically educated, deceitful diplomats."³⁵ This revolutionary pathos amazingly echoes the Bible: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1Cor 1:25). Except that in the new worldview God is replaced by history, faith by knowledge, weakness by political power and expediency. According to Hannah Arendt, the Bolsheviks, just as the Nazis later on, used "the language of prophetic scientificity" in order to "assure their followers that economic forces have the power of a verdict of history."³⁶ The same totalitarian logic approves that "the liquidation is fitted into a historical process in which man only does or suffers what, according to immutable laws, is bound to happen anyway."³⁷ This pattern is

30 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 175.

31 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 265.

32 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 279.

33 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 3, 222, 339, 344.

34 Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, 109.

35 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 208.

36 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 350.

37 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 349.

repeated in *Rebirth of a Nation*. The respectful attitude towards the Bolsheviks goes together with an apology of their violence: “The class which took power has to fight for it and for its goals by all means. It has to use violence, in one form or another, against the hostile class.”³⁸ Using these arguments, Vynnychenko justifies the Red Terror: “They used violence and inequality to establish equality and destroy any violence.”³⁹

After all, the Bolsheviks were pursuing such a hostile policy because the Ukrainian authorities themselves demonstrated “hostility towards the social revolution.”⁴⁰ Thus, Vynnychenko comes back, again and again, to the main mortal sin of the Ukrainian governments in 1917–1919: the rejection of the Bolshevik version of the Marxist doctrine. Analyzing the causes and the outcomes of such a “disastrous” attitude, he claims: “We were even referring to Marx without knowing his doctrine, without knowing that Bolshevism was nothing but a consistent, pure Marxism.”⁴¹ Thus, Kyiv “flirted” with the largest landowners when the Bolsheviks confiscated the land and gave it to the peasants.

Vynnychenko’s fascination with the Bolsheviks is so strong that he interprets their ultimatum almost as an obligation to choose between good and evil: “Tell us right now whose side you are on: on our side or the counterrevolutionary side?”⁴² Obviously, a negative response to such a fateful question automatically denies any right to national existence. Vynnychenko stigmatizes the Central Rada’s refusals to satisfy Bolshevik requirements (for instance the denial to violate neutrality or to accept imposed reelections) as uncertainty on the fundamental issue of the attitude towards the social revolution. He was convinced, if the Ukrainian government had chosen the way of Bolshevik radicalism in time, there would have been no conflict with Russia.

The last pages of *Rebirth of a Nation* are full of solemn declarations. The expectation for a bright future goes together with the prediction of a final struggle between the forces of good and evil: “the Capital will spill a lot of blood, it will also strangle a lot of lives in its death spasms, before it will fall in this giant and fatal battle.”⁴³ This ideological mantra has to reduce the critical remarks mentioned above as well as reconcile the contradictions in Vynnychenko’s own worldview. Borrowed from the theological sphere, this statement became one of the main pillars of the revolutionary identity. As Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy observed:

Hence a peculiar eschatology: the process of attack, lawlessness, destruction, must be perpetual, because the solution cannot be found until the Last Day of Creation. The final vision is a peaceful earth; but the whole period between today and the end is bloodshed, force, treason, struggle and fight. History means war, class-war.⁴⁴

38 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 185.

39 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 188.

40 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 271–72.

41 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 107.

42 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 2, 142.

43 Vynnychenko, *Vidrodzhennia natsii*, vol. 3, 503.

44 Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (Oxford: Providence, 1993), 110.

Nevertheless, Vynnychenko's metahistorical reasoning and his conciliatory tone regarding the Bolsheviks in the last chapter of *Rebirth of a Nation* do not sound very convincing. It is an emotional expression of his political credo rather than the conclusion of all his thoughts and observations reflected in three volumes. Finally, the unsuccessful efforts to return to the Soviet Ukraine a short time later and his lifelong exile proved his doubts and fears.

Concordism: Forging a New Man

As Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky points out, although Vynnychenko, in view of the horrible news about Stalin's terror, moved away from his conception of Ukrainian national communism as well as Marxism in the mid-1930s, he did not abandon "the final goal that Marxism sets for itself: the striving toward a 'paradise on earth,' a classless and non-antagonistic social order."⁴⁵ In this context, the question arises of how sincere he was and whether he renounced his ideological fascinations at all. "Characteristically, in the writings of his last fifteen years, Vynnychenko never overtly repudiated the errors of his former Marxist and pro-communist positions."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, after moving from Paris to Mougins in 1934, Vynnychenko began to develop his doctrine of concordism, which became the outcome of his previous searches in various fields, including art, philosophy, politics, and morality. It was summarized in his treatise *Concordism* and his novels of that period.

Trying to find the recipes for happiness and harmony, Vynnychenko looks for the key moment in history which could explain the whole set of basic problems of humankind in the private and social spheres. Denying sinfulness as a "cruel" and "unjust" idea, Vynnychenko nevertheless recognizes that "the legend about the dwelling of the first people (Adam and Eve) in Paradise has a real base."⁴⁷ The point is, he claims, that the history of the human race is divided into two periods — before the geological disaster and after it. Before this great cataclysm "people lived and developed in complete harmony of their energy with the energy of the Universe."⁴⁸ There was no hierarchy or violence in their relationship. Vynnychenko, therefore, believes in initially good human nature. Man went bad only because of geological disaster. "Completely satisfied with the most important, with food and shelter for the night, he never had any reason and need to fight against his neighbors or his community."⁴⁹ As proof, Vynnychenko gives — without reference to the source — the example of an island somewhere in the ocean where British travelers had found a happy savage people who lived without struggle and fear because their basic needs were satisfied.⁵⁰ In general, the image of a noble savage is crucial to his doctrine, as well as the image of a sweet mother nature, which "is not like a god of religious people: unlike

45 Rudnytsky, "Volodymyr Vynnychenko's Ideas."

46 Rudnytsky, "Volodymyr Vynnychenko's Ideas."

47 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm. Systema buduvannia shchastia* [*Concordism. A System of Happiness Building*] (Kyiv: Ukrainskyi pysmennyk, 2011), 52.

48 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 98.

49 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 59.

50 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 66.

him, it requires no asceticism, no avoiding gaiety, joy of body or soul for deserving its affection.”⁵¹ Apparently influenced by the ideas of Bachofen and his followers, Vynnychenko pictures an ideal matriarchal world as a place of “complete equality and concord” between the sexes.⁵² Thus, in his worldview, maternal inclusivity is countered by paternal exclusivity; female acceptance contrasts with masculine rejection. “There were hence no moral or religious restrictions. There was no original sin and the sex instinct existed freely and without limits.”⁵³

The geological disaster dramatically worsened the favorable living conditions and caused people to eat meat. According to Vynnychenko, this fact — eating meat — became the key reason for the energy disbalance in man’s organism. “Whilst sensitive by nature to the suffering of their community members, he learnt to be firm.”⁵⁴ Human degradation, therefore, follows such an order: geological disaster forced people to eat meat, which led to the discord of body energies, followed by the psychological disturbances that turned into social disorder at the end. Religion emerged for the same reason. Following Feuerbach, Vynnychenko claims that people created God in their image because of fear and priests’ manipulation. Gradually over time, two dominant groups emerged in primitive society: physically strong warriors and “psychologically slick” priests whose function was to cultivate “a sense of respect, fear, and servility.”⁵⁵ Thus, the sickness of discordism corrupted human nature and social relationships.

In contrast to the previous period, when the social (Bolshevik) revolution was considered as the answer to all problems, Vynnychenko finds the solution in becoming one with the universe: “The first requirement of the fight against discordism consists in renewing the total concord of man with the Universe and earthly nature.”⁵⁶ That means that man is no more the “king of nature” or the “centre of the Universe” than “he is part of everything as well as all other things.”⁵⁷ Vynnychenko proclaims “Thirteen rules of concordism,” which represent “the universal law of the balance and concord of forces in different ways.”⁵⁸ They are supposed to help people harmonize themselves as well as concord their energies with nature and society. This idea is expressed in Vynnychenko’s novels of “the Mougins period” in the 1930s-1940s. For instance, one of the characters of *Leprozorii* (*Leprosarium*, 1938) claims: “The balance and the concord of powers. Anywhere, in anything; in any human or any animal, or any plant.”⁵⁹ Another character from *Nova zapovid* (*The New Commandment*, 1932) expresses this idea as follows: “I feel the imperative need to make peace inside myself.”⁶⁰

51 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 127.

52 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 191.

53 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 192.

54 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 60.

55 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 69.

56 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 100.

57 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 100.

58 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 244.

59 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Leprozorii* [*Leprosarium*] (Kyiv: Znannia, 2013), 105.

60 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Nova zapovid* [*The New Commandment*] (Kyiv: Znannia, 2011), 35. Written in 1932, this novel was first published in French (*Nouveau Commandement*) in 1949. For more details

Vynnychenko also sets his concordist vision of human nature. The discordist way of thinking, based on religious beliefs, mistakenly praises the mind as "a master" and "a dictator." Vynnychenko, however, considers the human body to be a friendly team, which consists of trillions of cells and "does not have any dictator inside."⁶¹ This team does not recognize the orders of the mind and reduces its role to the limited functions of registration and consultation.

Nevertheless, Vynnychenko does not always follow such a polyphonic scheme. He contradicts himself by giving priority to the subconscious, which is claimed to be much older and more powerful than any other body element. The new hierarchy establishes the dominance of the feminine subconscious over masculine consciousness. Thus, femininity (maternal inclusivity) is opposed to masculinity (paternal exclusivity) in a similar way as the proletariat was opposed to the bourgeoisie in *Rebirth of a Nation*.

The seventh chapter of *Concordism* is dedicated to the issue of nutrition. The raw food diet is declared to be the practical tool to concord human energies and activate the ancient power. As an element of the whole, the "right" nutrition maintains the balance of cosmic powers. Similar to shamanic ritual that is supposed to keep the balance in the universe, it is supposed to lead mankind to a concord with the universal law. This is Vynnychenko's creed, where he makes no compromise: "Maybe it is one of the biggest, the most important, and the most difficult revolutions that humanity has ever made."⁶² He regrets that Marx and Engels did not pay enough attention to this problem, which is not a private issue but a social one.

Furthermore, the raw food diet has to provide man with additional and supernatural powers. It is an immutable basic component that can change human nature by catalyzing the concord of human instincts. Diet is the way to get the hidden sources: "all those people who still have the remnants of 'miraculous' power (Hindu fakirs, hypnotists, and especially ancient 'prophets-miracle workers') live mostly with moderation, quite ascetically, particularly regarding food."⁶³

Therefore, the concordist program of making a new man and a new society is the following: by maintaining a raw food diet and abiding by the thirteen rules of concordism, mankind will concord its unbalanced forces and become one with the universe. This new anthropological and social reality should automatically provide access to powerful inner sources of energy. A new morality is also an integral part of Vynnychenko's ideal world. It mostly consists of "honesty with oneself," promiscuity, and a healthy lifestyle: "to be sick and weak degenerates, it represents *immorality* and a crime against class and nation."⁶⁴ After all, in the concordist future, the development of science will answer the basic questions of existence.

All the above provides evidence that *Concordism* is full of self-denial. For instance, Vynnychenko criticizes discordism for its dogmatism and authority. But at the same time he creates his codex of thirteen rules and looks for the sources of power in India and Tibet. He

see: Halyna Syvachenko, *Poshuk mozhlyvykh alternatyv* [A Search for Possible Alternatives], in *Nova zapovid* by Volodymyr Vynnychenko (Kyiv: Znannia, 2011), 341.

61 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 136.

62 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 123.

63 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 154.

64 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 133.

insists on a non-hierarchical structure of human nature, removing the mind from governance. At the same time, he praises the subconscious, claiming that it is the most powerful in the body.

Vynnychenko consistently protests against religion, priests, and superstition, favoring science and experimentation. Meanwhile, he writes with respect about spiritualism, telepathy, and ancient Atlantes. His anthropology is based on ideas about supernatural power and the energy of the universe. As Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky points out: “Perhaps it is because he rejected the idea of a transcendent Absolute so vehemently that he could not do without the belief in an earthly divinity, in the image of an ideal future society.”⁶⁵

The heavy influence of pagan concepts is evident when Vynnychenko persists in claiming the following: “The fact of the balance and concord of forces is absolute and universal law.”⁶⁶ The “jealousy of gods” in paganism consists exactly in the idea of saving the balance: “The ethics of paganism are not the ethics of personal choice but the ethics of a cosmic balance of forces.”⁶⁷ The same influence of a pagan worldview can be seen in totalitarian propaganda proclaiming eternal “laws of history” or “laws of nature.” In analyzing Bolshevik and Nazi insistence on scientific prophecy, Hannah Arendt points out that the ideological origins of socialism and racism can be clearly seen, “when their spokesmen pretend that they have discovered the hidden forces that will bring them good fortune in the chain of fatality.”⁶⁸ Tamara Hundorova also stresses the links between the conception of concordism, socialist ideology, and the religious sphere:

Generally, it is worth mentioning the gnostic and anthroposophical foundations of Vynnychenko’s philosophy, which were popular among socialist men of letters, Russians in particular, in the early 20th century. Ideas of a new man and a new anthropos as well as his birth — which could come from alchemy, a test tube, laboratory experiment or a dismembered social body — became a topical issue in the context of socialist slogans regarding the “new man’s” education and birth. In addition, aestheticism, voluntarism, and biologism were most often united in the socialist search for an organic model of the new world, while visual and metaphorical thinking naturally dominated. In this paradigm, Vynnychenko’s concordism is a consistent manifestation of such a socialist philosophy.⁶⁹

Conclusion

As Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky remarked, Volodymyr Vynnychenko was the most typical representative of the “omnilateralists,” the social utopians, who formed an influential political trend during the National Liberation Struggle in 1917–1919. His writings displayed not only his ideas, their

65 Rudnytsky, “Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s Ideas.”

66 Vynnychenko, *Konkordyzm*, 33.

67 Sergei Averintsev, “Yazychestvo [Paganism],” in *Sofia-Logos. Slovar*, ed. Natalia Averintseva et al. (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2000), 523.

68 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 345.

69 Hundorova, *Konkordyzm*, 18.

aspirations as well as his political bankruptcy, but were also an illustrative example of the whole Ukrainian national-communist camp's political failure. "Disdaining statehood 'like that of other people' ... they contributed to the outcome that Ukrainians, whom they loved and whom they wished well, fell into a condition of truly total national and social servitude."⁷⁰ Perplexed by "Vynnychenko's doctrinaire naiveté," Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky explains it by a lack of understanding of Marxist theory and some intellectual characteristics. "It appears that in Vynnychenko's mind realistic and doctrinaire tendencies opposed each other in a perennial, unconscious conflict, and it was the latter that usually prevailed in the long run."⁷¹

Nevertheless, these astute observations are not exhaustive. One more issue should be taken into account. The factor which made possible "Vynnychenko's doctrinaire naiveté" and "intellectual defect" was his religious attitude of mind. As Alain Besançon amply demonstrated, the ideological (Marxist-Leninist) way of thinking is a "contradictory *compound*" of faith and rationally proven theory,⁷² which has many parallels with ancient gnostic doctrines.⁷³ Furthermore, in an attempt to elaborate his doctrine of concordism, Vynnychenko combined elements of different systems of thought and belief: secular humanism (denial of the notion of original sin, the concept of initially good human nature), Marxism (classless society), Nietzsche's philosophy (new morality), psychoanalysis (the power of instincts, the subconscious), pagan cosmology and ethics (becoming one with the cosmos, concord with the universal law, balance of forces).

Criticizing "religious people," Volodymyr Vynnychenko, however, stayed in a frame of religious discourse throughout his life. This is, for instance, evidenced by the titles of his works: *Dysharmoniia* (Disharmony, 1906), *Velykyi Molokh* (The Big Molokh, 1907), *Memento* (Memento, 1909), *Brekhnia* (The Lie, 1910), *Bozhky* (Small Gods, 1914), *Pryhvozhdeni* (The Crucified, 1916), *Hrikkh* (The Sin, 1920), *Pisnia Izraila* (The Song of Israel, 1921–1922), *Zakon* (The Law, 1922), *Prorok* (The Prophet, 1929), *Nouveau Commandement*, 1949.⁷⁴ Such a tendency can probably be best explained through the words of Henri de Lubac: "Man is a 'theotropic' being. Violently attacked on all sides, faith is indestructible in his heart."⁷⁵

70 Rudnytsky, "Volodymyr Vynnychenko's Ideas."

71 Rudnytsky, "Volodymyr Vynnychenko's Ideas."

72 Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 5.

73 In view of this, Alain Besançon indicates: "But the comparison cannot be taken very far. It is only persuasive so long as one limits it to the general structures of thought, to the state of mind, and perhaps to the psychological disposition. If one starts to look at the doctrines in detail, any similarity vanishes." Besançon, *The Rise of Gulag*, 16–17.

74 On a chronological list of Volodymyr Vynnychenko's works, see: Mykola Soroka, *Faces of Displacement: The Writings of Volodymyr Vynnychenko* (Montreal & Kinston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's Press, 2012), 179–184.

75 Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Edith M. Riley, Ann Englund Nash and Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 344.

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