

**THE ICON MOVES:  
DIVERSITY THROUGH PRAGMATIC/  
RELIGIOUS AESTHETICS OF THE EUROMAIDAN**

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*ABSTRACT: Ukraine's Minister of Education, Serhiy Kvit, recently wrote about the 2014 EuroMaidan revolution, "Not only political differences but also social and national barriers became secondary on the EuroMaidan. Ethnic Ukrainians waving their flags were joined by Crimean Tatars, Jews, Poles, Belarusians, Georgians, Armenians and others."<sup>1</sup> He goes on to report, "Glory to Ukraine! – Glory to Heroes!" became the Maidan's slogan. It's repeated constantly by representatives of different political ideologies in all regions of Ukraine." Unfortunately, the collaborative movement turned violent, and the EuroMaidan revolution has spawned more war and what some people claim is a hawkish, conservative political agenda. None-the-less, the cultural artifacts of the February 2014 revolution - the flags, slogans, and art – remain as representations of a strong sense of unity through diversity. These artifacts are symbols presenting a democratic spirit motivated by a pluralistic and pragmatic ethos, and in this essay I contrast that consensual, often religious aesthetic, to a humanistic revolutionary spirit as described through my readings of Kant and Arendt. I contend that by viewing the EuroMaidan's people power movement from the perspectives of William James' and John Dewey's thinking on aesthetic experiences, a less ideologically dominate and more inclusively inter-personal mode of emancipation, or struggle for equal rights, is made clear. I investigate Ukraine's revolutionary culture by a textual analysis of pragmatic aesthetics alongside my interpretive study of a particular artifact of the EuroMaidan culture... specifically, the religious icon. I analyze some of the icons that were carried and raised up by the revolutionaries as deterrents to violence, during the clashes in the Kiev square, so as to highlight the value-making qualities of people's beliefs in action. Therefore the icons become philosophical artifacts, communicating a kind of pragmatic community aesthetic James and Dewey thought of in terms of religiousness.*

Ukraine's Minister of Education, Serhiy Kvit, wrote in the Spring of 2014 about the EuroMaidan revolution, "Not only political differences but also social and national barriers became secondary on the EuroMaidan. Ethnic Ukrainians waving their flags were joined by Crimean Tatars, Jews, Poles, Belarusians, Georgians, Armenians and others."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to report, "Glory to Ukraine! – Glory to Heroes!" became the Maidan's slogan. It's repeated constantly by representatives of different political ideologies in all regions of Ukraine." Unfortunately despite his hopes for tolerance, the Maidan revolution has spawned a civil war resulting in thousands of Ukrainians being killed over nationalistic allegiances and geo-political divisions. Many cultural artifacts, however, the flags, slogans, and art, remain as reminders of the ethos of the sharing and inclusive sense of community practiced in Independence Square. The Euromaidan is but one revolutionary event, similar to Occupy Wall Street and World Climate Change protests, which relied on participant's feelings and their relationships with one another as part of collective, forward looking communities focused by art and cultural values.

William James and John Dewey's discussions on religious attitudes offer a philosophical understanding of such events as a means of emancipation. My overarching thesis is that religious attitudes and art as human resources of imaginative feeling, thinking and acting have a strong aesthetic valence in terms of peaceful agency and when used as cultural tools these sensibilities help to counter measures of revolutionary violence. This is a controversial topic in that religion and politics can be a violent mix spawning fanatical movements, even including an anti-Russian, jihad-like

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<sup>1</sup> "Serhiy Kvit: The ideology of the EuroMaidan Revolution", KyivPost, Public Media, <http://www.kyivpost.com>: March 24, 2014, 5:41.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

movement in Kiev.<sup>3</sup> But I describe a peaceful, inclusive sense of religious agency in terms of James' investigations into mystical religious experience and Dewey's understanding of human nature as artistic.<sup>4</sup> Explaining their views allows us to clarify how religious attitudes combined with artistic practices in a setting of community allows for civil inclusiveness, nonviolence and productive, progressive collective political action. I highlight the events in Kiev during February 2014, to give a contemporary example of a political revolution influenced by religious culture and art. I look specifically at Byzantine icons as hermeneutic examples, which although used in all sides of the conflict in the Ukraine were used as symbols of peaceful resistance in the commonplace ethos of Kiev's Independence Square. My discussion helps to better our understandings of the associations between James and Dewey's thinking on religious attitudes, so to further investigations into value-making and peace studies.

To advance my point that religious attitudes can have a productive and strong sense of political prowess I compare Dewey and James's religious aesthetics with Hannah Arendt's thoughts on political praxis based on Kantian aesthetics.<sup>5</sup> I contend that Arendt does not take on board a full range of revolutionary ethos for she does not place any emphasize on value-making through artistic practices, traditions and religious beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Arendt

has an understanding of revolution as a form of thoughtful, critical action, but Kantian aesthetics limits her project because his scheme leaves us with an abstract point of creativity in relation to everyday life.<sup>7</sup> Let us come to Arendt's problems with aesthetic agency after discussing the strong sense of aesthetic agency James and Dewey afford to religious experiences, art and culture.

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namely *religiousness*. Therefore Arendt's views on religion are relevant in that they bear out the fact that although she does not negate the "mood" of revolutionaries altogether, she stresses that human matters must be imbued with a secular attitude. Arendt is however pragmatic when she writes, "Politically, the outstanding characteristic of the Christian era had been that this ancient view of world and man – of mortal men moving in an everlasting or potentially everlasting world – was reversed: men in possession of an everlasting life moved in an ever-changing world whose ultimate fate was death; and the outstanding characteristic of the modern age was that it turned once more to antiquity to find a precedent for its own new preoccupation with the future of the man made world on earth. Obviously the secularity of the world and the worldliness of men in any given age can best be measured by the extent to which preoccupation with the future of the world takes precedence in men's minds over preoccupation with their own ultimate destiny in a hereafter." See Arendt, *On Revolution*, (London: U.K.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), 230. online edition, [https://archive.org/stream/OnRevolution/ArendtOn-revolution\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/OnRevolution/ArendtOn-revolution_djvu.txt), accessed 05/10/2015 11:30 am.

<sup>7</sup> See Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging", *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 124. In Beiner's interpretive essay to Arendt's lessons on Kant's aesthetics and politics he describes the crucial anomaly, in that disinterestedness cannot lead to a sense of culture as a group of political and creative people hoping for a more free and inclusive state of affairs, without making moral judgements the same as political judgements. He does point out though that Arendt was taken by Kant's moment of beauty "purposiveness without purpose" which allows creativity without attaching morality to politics. However, this cannot allow Arendt to move past her conclusions that political and aesthetic movements depend on the judgment of spectators. This is the opposite of what I argue as the essence of artistic, religious and political engagement. Beiner writes: "It is worth noting that the two actualities by which Kant here distinguishes political judgments namely universality and disinterestedness are the very same two outstanding marks of judgment ascribed by Kant to aesthetic taste. This famous passage shows unmistakably that political judgment, like aesthetic judgment is reserved to the spectator."

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<sup>3</sup> Marcin Mamon, "The Cross and the Sword: The Making of a Christian Taliban in Ukraine", *THE//Intercept*, online magazine, <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/03/18/ukraine-part-3/>, 11:30 am CST, 03/18, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this essay I rely heavily on textual analysis of John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1934) and William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1902).

<sup>5</sup> See Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> I concur that public discussions and thinking about collective goals as a matter of concepts and decisions which are methods for peace at the center of Arendt's political philosophy, are also successful tools for nonviolent social change. However religions do structure (through tradition) what is important to this discussion,

Some political theorists refer to ethnic, cultural, and religious differences as pretexts for geo-political agendas pointing to those as the main causes for revolutions. Yet, surely we should take seriously aesthetics, as both the individual's thoughts, sensations, emotions and a collective spirit that is part of believing in ongoing meanings of life, when looking to analyze why people fear cultural and ethical diversity associated with democratic and fair policies. Notably Dewey wrestled with explaining how unifying religious beliefs work with attitudes of democracy, explaining that a sense of personal freedom does not distance people from their cultural milieus or traditions.<sup>8</sup> Both Dewey and James' emphasis on religious attitudes as a matter of cultural understanding and diversity is important in describing democracy. I find that they share views of religious feelings and political agency through two inter-related axioms in this respect: 1) religious/aesthetic experiences are an aspect of our awareness of how we are connected to each other and to our environments, yet they also make clear there are tensions of life. 2) Also such awareness effects people's expansive sense of imagination and creativity, furthering social changes. Accordingly James and Dewey look towards people's liberation from fear and alienation becoming more open to creative possibilities for freer, shared lives and an empowered sense of culture.

Throughout this paper I use the term *religiousness* in the pragmatic sense that Dewey used "religious" in *A Common Faith*. Dewey sought to emancipate collective feelings and

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<sup>8</sup> See John Dewey, "Natural Development and Social Efficiency as Aims", *The Essential Dewey*, Vol 1, ed Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998. 264. In fact Dewey's definition of culture is based not only on education but also on inclusiveness and the broadening of people's views. Dewey writes, "But social efficiency as an educational purpose should mean cultivation of power to join feely and fully in shared or common activities. This is impossible without culture, while it brings a reward in culture, because one cannot share in intercourse with others without learning – without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. And there is perhaps no better definition of culture than that it is the capacity for constantly expanding the range and accuracy of one's perception of meanings."

actions from being thought of as super-natural or institutionally declared or defined.<sup>9</sup> For Dewey being religious is a creative process and such is a matter of feeling, thinking and acting imaginatively as an integral part of larger, cultural environments.<sup>10</sup> As well, people are productive in their communities through artistic practices while relying on their religious attitudes as changes in their environments occur and when they are decidedly focused on cultural and political changes.<sup>11</sup> Dewey includes traditions and longstanding cultural artifacts alongside new contemporary art forms as tools to facilitate such aesthetic agency.

For James existential tension is a private feeling that something is wrong with one's life and this can lead to a

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<sup>9</sup> John Dewey, "Religion versus the Religious: From a Common Faith", *The Essential Dewey*, Vol. 1, ed. Larry Hickman, Thomas Alexander, Indiana University Press, 1998, 401. I have also relied on the following text for my use of the term *religiousness*, Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience and Nature the Horizons of Feeling*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 362. Dewey sums up the connection of both personal and practical relationships between people and imaginative and broad reaching ideas communicated through art and morality. Dewey writes, "Imagination is the chief instrument of the good. It is more or less a commonplace to say that a person's ideas and treatment of his fellows are dependent upon his power to put himself imaginatively in their place. But the primacy of the imagination extends far beyond the scope of direct personal relationships. Except where "ideal" is used in conventional deference or as a name for a sentimental reverie, the ideal factors in every moral outlook and human loyalty are imaginative. The historic alliance of religion and art has its roots in this common quality. Hence it is that art is more moral than moralities."

<sup>11</sup> See Thomas M. Alexander's introduction to *A Common Faith*. Alexander quotes Dewey, "The religious attitude," Dewey says, would be "a sense of the possibilities of existence" and "devotion to the cause of these possibilities" (Late Works 4:242). What Dewey proposes, in other words, is the replace what might be called a "spirituality of the actual" with a "spirituality of the possible." Dewey, "Introduction", *A Common Faith: Second Edition*, Dewey, *A Common Faith*, introduction by Thomas M. Alexander, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. Dewey also directly connects art with revolution, "Moreover, resistance and conflict have always been factors in generating art; and they are, as we have seen, a necessary part of artistic form." *Art as Experience*, 353.

person adapting a religious attitude towards life in general. He thinks that individuals, through realizing that they can feel and express a sense of having an intimate connection to a vaster field of relationships other than their own private circumstances, can resolve their anxieties. In searching for what is better than failed experiences in revealing ultimate truthfulness through abstract thinking, an individual becomes more engaged with the inter-connected relationships of life. James admits that philosophy is hopeless in fully describing this aesthetic connection, while he finds that religions often record these feelings as "a fact of experience".<sup>12</sup> He goes on to explain, "the divine is actually present, religion says, and between it and our relations of give and take are actual".<sup>13</sup> This sense of divinity or interconnected wholeness, although largely ineffable and unexplainable through laws of dualistic causality, has a "plus, a thisness, which "feeling alone can answer for".<sup>14</sup> Religious experience, according to James, is not like Kant's "Transcendental Ego of Apperception" as religious experiences are not abstracted from rational understanding. A religious attitude is felt as relationships between people, environments and even things or objects, religious experience is not transcendental because it never leaves human experience.<sup>15</sup> Religiousness as an attitude is a matter of orienting our minds to the grand scope of relationships in our life's settings. James finds through personal testimonies that religious experiences offer people a sense of shared purpose and intention, but unlike Kant this unity of purpose is not presented to us prior to our lived experiences. Through a religious attitude a person takes up a way of living James thinks of as "healthy

mindedness" and this condition affords an empowered sense of freedom.<sup>16</sup>

Sounding much like James' description of the anxieties of people's existential crisis' Dewey thinks that people experience enhanced perceptions through wrestling with what is stable and precarious, leading to a sense of the completeness of life's processes. Yet people are also conscious of their own personalities, failures and well-being, while we discern our abilities to sometimes raise above and sometimes below natural processes.<sup>17</sup> Dewey writes that "the religious experience that accompanies intense aesthetic perception" is a moral pursuit as not only do we bring our existential situations into focus but also wholistic religious feelings help us envision our future goals.<sup>18</sup> Religiousness, as an artistic sensibility, would begin for Dewey with an imaginative or experimental attitude, not a set of doctrines or a discipline that restricts creative activities. Dewey explains,

<sup>16</sup> James writes, "In many persons, happiness is congenital and irreclaimable. 'Cosmic emotion' inevitably takes in them the form of enthusiasm and freedom. I speak not only of those who are animally happy. I mean those who, when unhappiness is offered or proposed to them, positively refuse to feel it, as if it were something mean and wrong." *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 79-80.

<sup>17</sup> Dewey writes, "Man excels in complexity and minuteness of differentiations. This very fact constitutes the necessity for many more comprehensive and exact relationships among the constituents of his being. Important as are the distinctions and relations thus made possible, the story does not end here. There are more opportunities for resistance and tension, more drafts upon experimentation and invention, and therefore more novelty in action, greater range and depth of insight and increase of poignancy in feeling. As an organism increases in complexity, the rhythms of struggle and consummation in its relation to its environment are varied and prolonged, and they come to include within themselves an endless variety of sub-rhythms. The designs of living are widened and enriched. Fulfillment is more massive and more subtly shaded." *Art as Experience*, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York City: Penguin Group, 1934, 202.

<sup>12</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 454.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 455.

<sup>15</sup> See James' lines on his pragmatic way of thinking about God's existence and his critique of transcendentalism. "But all facts are particular facts, and the whole interest of the question of "God's existence seems to me to lie in the consequences for particulars which that existence may be expected to entail." *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 522.

The religious attitude signifies something that is bound through imagination to a *general* attitude. This comprehensive attitude, moreover, is much broader than anything indicated by “moral” in its usual sense. The quality of attitude is displayed in art, science and good citizenship.<sup>19</sup>

James also gives a great deal of thought to the practical effects of religious experience, as people can feel and act with a greater sense of involvement and purpose, therefore building their personal sense of character and individual freedoms. He writes,

Religious feeling is thus an absolute addition to the Subject’s range of life. It gives him a new sphere of power. When the outward battle is lost, and the outer world disowns him, it redeems and vivifies an interior world which otherwise would be an empty waste. If religion is to mean anything definite for us, it seems to me that we ought to take it as meaning this added dimension of emotion, this enthusiastic temper of espousal, in regions where morality strictly so called can at best but bow its head and acquiesce. It ought to mean nothing short of this new reach of freedom for us, with the struggle over, the keynote of the universe sounding in our ears, and ever-lasting possession spread before our eyes.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover private religious experiences have real effects in terms of political revolutions, as evidenced by my second point of comparison; that people can effect real and positive changes through religiousness by means of cultural value – making. Tradition may seem like an archaic, useless, and even a destructive word when discussing the challenges of turning over powerful governments and economic systems, because traditions seem to offer a false sense of security. But just as religious attitudes are personal methods of change as aesthetic processes through which beliefs are felt while acting upon them, traditions as creative cultural mediums help us realize that communal values are developed by our living histories. James explains constructive aspects of cultural religiousness and value making,

The world interpreted religiously is not the materialistic world over again, with an altered expression; it must have, over and above the altered expression; a *natural constitution* different at some point from that which a materialistic world would have. It must be such that different events can be expected in it, different conduct must be required.<sup>21</sup>

James contends that moments of truthfulness, trust, shared sacrifice and pleasure are creative and mystical points of invention in a boundless universe of relationships.<sup>22</sup>

Dewey also thought of religious experience as creative and he wanted to emancipate religiousness from religion, breaking with traditions that restricted growth and static ideals presented as universal dogma. Again sounding like James, Dewey thinks of religious ‘factors of experience’ that can never be abstracted from everyday situations and should not be “drafted into supernatural channels.” However he describes how people use religious traditions and cultural artifacts as technologies for value-making, inculcating positive habits and creative practices which embody ongoing meanings. Thereby real effects of religious experiences can be traditional and artifactual while continually reproducing transformative effects, offering new moral possibilities and deepening shared values. As ontological experiences a community’s religious traditions have enduring felt qualities through which people change themselves and their environments. Constructing a world through aesthetic means such as religiousness, artistic practice and scientific inquiry is often a matter of history as imbued with aesthetic meanings. Dewey explains,

There are transient and there are enduring elements in a civilization. – The enduring forces are not separate; they are functions of a multitude of passing incidents as the latter are organized in to the meanings that form minds.

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<sup>19</sup> Dewey, *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1*, ed Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998, 408-409.

<sup>20</sup> James, *Varieties*, 48.

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<sup>21</sup> James, *Varieties*, p 518.

<sup>22</sup> See James, *Varieties*, p 516. James writes, “Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for we are turned into a new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change.”

Art is the great force in effecting this consolidation. The individuals who have minds pass away one by one. The works in which meanings have received objective expressions endure. They become part of the environment, and interaction with this phase of the environment is the axis of continuity in the life of civilization. The ordinances of religion and the power of law are efficacious as they are clothed with a pomp, a dignity and majesty that are the work of imagination. If social customs are more than uniform external modes of action, it is because they are saturated with story and transmitted meaning. Every art in some manner is a medium of this transmission while its products are no inconsiderable part of the saturating matter."<sup>23</sup>

Habits and traditions can be followed without much thought or social critique but Dewey describes a transformation of these experiences when traditions become "funded" by meaning.<sup>24</sup> When there is a problem to be worked out in our environments we use our imaginations to connect our past histories with changing environments as we discern the consequences of our experiences. Religious beliefs and traditions are relevant because religious attitudes do not necessarily shackle people to static dogmas or to a political sense of

<sup>23</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p 340.

<sup>24</sup> Dewey explains an important connection between values, meaning, history and art. "For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction: or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination. Interaction of a living being with an environment is found in vegetative and animal life. But the experience enacted is human and conscious only as that which is given here and now is extended by meanings and values drawn from what is absent in fact and present only imaginatively." He goes on to say, "There is always a gap between the here and now of direct interaction and the past interactions whose funded result constitutes the meaning with which we grasp and understand what is now occurring. Because of this gap, all conscious perception involves a risk; it is a venture into the unknown, for as it assimilates the present to the past it also brings about some reconstruction of that past." *Art as Experience*, 283-284.

nationalistic exclusivity. As value-laden artifacts traditions can be practiced artistically and they can be conduits for assimilating history and memories to the present and as a means for re-valuation. Such re-valuation includes thinking about more expansive fields of civil inclusion as people think about their integrated yet on-going futures.

Hannah Arendt also thought about aesthetics and citizenship as catalysts for social change and revolution. In difference to James and Dewey, she thought of aesthetics in direct relation to Kantian phenomenology. Her approach to aesthetics is that a person develops their thoughtfulness and autonomy as a spectator using one's imagination, which is a faculty of the mind, thereby able to judge social situations in consideration of other perspectives (i.e. disinterestedness is integrated with *sensus communis*). Aesthetics for Arendt and Kant is the rationalizing of feelings non-determinately and imaginatively, yet they both leave out an active sense of religious culture.

In terms of democracy and revolution, Arendt's idea of praxis is that political actions are motivated by creative and reflective thoughts, and these thoughts have their foundation in the workings of the imagination and communicability.<sup>25</sup> Culturally for Arendt, individuals realize values, or human rights, in light of the historical epochs they are born into. For Arendt, Modernity is devoid of the most natural states of being, those being when people were doers and makers, and intuitively social or political.

<sup>25</sup> Arendt denied that judging and being creative was completely rational, yet she contradicted herself as is noted by Ronald Beiner in his interpretative essay in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Beiner writes, "We have already mentioned that in "What is Freedom?" Arendt aligns judgment with intellect or cognition, in stark contrast to her eventual denial that judgment is an intellectual faculty or is indeed cognitive at all." He goes on to write, "So we see that it was only gradually that Arendt came to regard judging as a separate mental activity, distinct from both intellect and will; and, by the time she had settled this question in her own mind, she had come to reformulate the very relation between judgment and politics – between "the life of the mind" and "the world of appearances." P 139.

How to reconnect people as homo-faber and zoon politikon was Arendt's moral project.<sup>26</sup> She saw the answer as being concerned with political discussions by communities in times and spaces cleared from the inequalities and prejudices of everyday life. Dialog for Arendt is the most effective form of political action.

So we can see some connection here with art, democracy and social change, as with the pragmatists, but aesthetically Arendt does not really contribute to solving the problem of a modern disconnect of judging our world and being involved in the on-going development of it, because through her Kantian aesthetics a person only comes to think imaginatively and therefore democratically through self-conscious reflection, and their conceptual *disinterestedness* leaves a gap between them and culture.<sup>27</sup> A person's imagination is blocked from the on-going traditions of collectively funded, emotional experiences. Theoretically this gap would mean positing an individual subject and an outside object, which they reflect about, even though Arendt insists that Kant was dedicated to "interplay and cooperation of sensibility and intellect".<sup>28</sup> As said, to bridge this gap creatively Arendt posits that people's political orientations are a matter of rational discussion while Kant allows for special genius talents.<sup>29</sup> Kant's program to find *sensus communis* as *apriori* reflective thinking is part of Arendt's political theory of the spectator as an interpretative and imaginative judge marking history.

However, my view is that a spectator cannot possibly be effective aesthetically in that they are not directly, emotionally involved with their living histories. With Arendt's philosophy there is a conceptual gap between a

spectator and culture, and also a distance between critical intellectuals and activists in revolutions.<sup>30</sup> So when employing Arendt's social tools of *praxis* and political debate there is a theoretical distance of intellectuals from the hearts and minds of people protesting and calling from the commonplace for social change. As well, when considering the diversity of political and religious feelings and traditions among people any theoretical universal rule of law is doomed to being over-ridden by differing personal and cultural perspectives, even though convergence and discussion is possible. But through people's attitudes of religiousness, social changes carry understandings of inter-connected values that are vehicles for broadening cultures' norms.

James emphasizes social transformations as a matter of ideals and value-making through using one's religious attitudes. In his 1892 lecture *What Makes a Life Significant* he clarifies that allowing a person or community to understand another perspective than one's own is paramount to solving social problems.<sup>31</sup> James said,

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<sup>30</sup> Arendt does admit that Kant never thought in terms of cultural plurality but this is not the problem pragmatically. The problem with Arendt and Kant is that creativity and aesthetic imagination is conceptually unavailable to everyone. Arendt interprets Kant in a political context when she agrees with his aesthetics of the spectator, "Only what touches, affects, one in representation, when one is uninvolved, like the spectator who was uninvolved in the actual doings of the French Revolution – can be judged or ugly, or something in between. One then speaks of judgment and no longer of taste because, though it still affects one like a matter of taste, one now has, by means of representation, established the proper distance, the remoteness or uninvolvedness or disinterestedness, that is requisite for approbation and disapprobation, for evaluating something at its proper worth. By removing the object, one has established the conditions for impartiality." P 67.

<sup>31</sup> Original lecture given at Bryn Mawr in 1892 and published in 1900 (New York: Henry Holt and Company), <http://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/articles/jameslife-a.pdf>, accessed 20/02/15, 11:30 AM.

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<sup>26</sup> See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago, Press, 1958, p 27-29.

<sup>27</sup> "Disinterestedness" is required for Kant's universal subjectivity. It means being free from desire. See Emmanuel Kant, 1790. *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Meredith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928, 42-50.

<sup>28</sup> Arendt, *Kant Lectures*, p 27.

<sup>29</sup> Kant, 307.

And, when you ask how much sympathy you ought to bestow, although the amount is, truly enough, a matter of ideal on your own part, yet in this notion of the combination of ideals with active virtues you have a rough standard for shaping your decision. In any case, your imagination is extended. You divine in the world about you matter for a little more humility on your own part, and tolerance, reverence, and love for others; and you gain a certain inner joyfulness at the increased importance of our common life. Such joyfulness is a religious inspiration and an element of spiritual health, and worth more than large amounts of that sort of technical and accurate information, which we professors are supposed to be able to impart.<sup>32</sup>

Dewey will add to this that art, traditions and habits are the very medium of our imaginations, imperative to our changing, integrated natures. Viewing religion and traditions as closed systems is a matter of not understanding the synthetic discrete and continuous qualities of cultures. Dewey thinks of religious feelings and traditions as powerful tools for community building as well as for wide social exchanges and transformations.<sup>33</sup> So Kant's concepts of the imagination are nonexistent because even as a person imagines political freedom through a critical space of reflection, this space must be recognized to be already effective and having developmental consequences in one's culture. Moreover "thinking without a banister" which for Arendt is thinking, imagining, and communicating without static traditions, religions or public opinions cannot come to a just way of judgment without people's value-making attitudes that can be traditional as well as civilly inclusive and historically developing.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 347. Dewey writes about the discrete and continuous nature of cultures, "Each culture has its own individuality and has a pattern that binds its parts together. Nevertheless, when the art of another culture enters into attitudes that determine our experience genuine continuity is effected. Our own experience does not thereby lose its individuality but it takes unto itself and weds elements that expand its significance." Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 349.

My point is that thinking of the imagination as a form of universal subjectivity separated from real time traditions, habits, religious feelings and events is a dangerous philosophy, placing revolutionaries into limited and often elitist positions. Such a setting is antithetical to Arendt's own project of spreading eradicating totalitarianism through concerted action. In contrast, imagination as part of religious faith is a real contributing factor to the wholeness of experience that people strive for, although imagining an infinite variety of perspectives is beyond people's capabilities if they are separated from others, so traditions are needed. Traditions and religious beliefs can bear a strong sense of aesthetic agency if people avoid using traditions as ends in them-selves. To ignore that self-reflective value-making is embodied in people's emotive traditions and expressive cultural artifacts cuts people off from truly communicating with others who hold different values and who offer new and sometimes challenging aesthetic experiences.

Thus far we have followed a distinction made clear by understanding James and Dewey's ideas on religious and artistic experiences between concepts that are abstracted from communal practices and imaginative ideas and meaningful beliefs that are felt and *in the making*, so now we can more clearly discern the connection between religiousness and democracy.

The Ukrainians while fighting in the Maidan used their religious traditions and collectively funded histories as means for revolution and community building without demanding static sets of rules, institutional Church doctrines or exclusive national boundaries. The Maidan's ethos was one of respect for diversity. Amidst harsh winter days and nights there was raging conflict, while Orthodox Christian priests of many denominations wearing sacramental robes, stood within range of gunfire and Molotov cocktails, shoulder to shoulder, forming a line between the anti-government protesters and

security police, praying for peace.<sup>34</sup> Priests raised crosses while praying for peace on rosary beads in demonstration against governmental corruption and oppression. Many of the older women of Kiev brought icons from their homes, holding them like shields against aggression on either side of the barricades.<sup>35</sup> They pointed to their Saints, so that people on both sides of the conflict might use their faith in the Christian Holy Spirit as a means for acting with beatitude. This was one of the most radical uses of traditional art in recent history, and it was part of the Majdan's art explosion that also included contemporary art projects.

Eastern Orthodox icons have brought people together in prayer, tradition, and revolution throughout history. Icons are symbolic of the fates of their communities, regions, and nations carrying with them the stories of the tumultuous events of people standing against oppressive authoritative governments. Through the reverence of icons individuals have shared a spiritual sense of importance and equality comparable to the priests of the hierarchical structured Church.<sup>36</sup> An

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<sup>34</sup> See Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Role of the Churches in the Ukrainian Revolution*, ABC Religion and Ethics, Updated 7 Mar 2014 (First Posted 6 Mar 2014) <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2014/03/06/3958163.htm>, accessed January 2, 2015, 1:30 pm.

<sup>35</sup> The pro-Russian separatists also held icons and priests supported both sides of the conflict. For a full description of the Ukrainian clash of religions, cultures, politics from the pro-European perspective See:

<http://maidantranslations.com/2014/04/13/inside-sloviansk-april-13-2014/>, accessed 04/20/15, 12:30 pm.

An example of the influence of religious icons on contemporary socio-political affairs is the art exhibition: "Iconart: Visions of a World Unseen, Contemporary Sacred Art from Ukraine": The Ukrainian Institute of America is pleased to announce a group exhibition of 18 artists from Ukraine, "Iconart: Visions of a World Unseen". Organized in cooperation with Iconart Gallery of Contemporary Sacred Art, located in Lviv, Ukraine, the exhibition draws from the work of Ukrainian artists associated with the Gallery. Independently working in different media, the artists focus on spiritual and religious concerns within the contemporary cultural context in which they live.

<http://iconart.com.ua/ua/events/111>, accessed 02/11/2015, 1:30 pm.

<sup>36</sup> For a scholarly account of the religious factions at play

example is the 1905 Russian peasant revolution when icons were used to try to secure basic human rights. On "Bloody Sunday" January 22 of that year Father Georgi Gapon, who was born into a peasant family in a region that is now Ukraine, led thousands of workers and their families to petition the Tsar in St Petersburg for equal rights and better working conditions. The people held icons at the frontlines of their protest to show the Tsar their common faith. Despite their show of peace many were shot and killed that day by the Tsar's Imperial Guard. Stories of Gapon's bravery as a revolutionary are told alongside accounts of Nicholas Tsar's struggle to retain ultimate authority over his empire and his elitist attitude to the struggles of the Russian people. Nicholas thought of his family supremely blessed as he was an extremely devote Christian and a renowned collector of icons. Gapon and Nicholas used the same means for binding the Russian people together, namely religion and art. However, the Tsar's hopes for unity under supreme authority were forever dashed by the 1917 October revolution and a restrictive form of communist ideology replaced Gapon's hopes for human rights. The communist revolution sought to replace religion with political and social bureaucracy and laws but people continued to struggle for a more intimate as well as communal sense of thinking and acting. This paradoxical use of icons can be read as an example of the differences Dewey spoke of between *being religious* as an attitude of creative personal and communal development and religion as an uninformative, unproductive type of dogma.

But what was is the nature of the icon tradition that remains as a productive source of religiousness, revolution and liberation? Leonid Oupensky was a Russian icon painter and historian, who wrote, along with his colleague Vladimir Lossky, about the making of

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in the Russian Revolution and how the common people both supported and split from those factions see: Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

icons and the theology behind icons. Ouspensky explains that revering icons is not a transcendental supernatural experience but a catalyst for an attitude, helping viewers to focus on a visionary world that is authentically felt, making it present. He writes in *The Theology of Icons*, "The icon does not represent the divinity. Rather, it indicates man's participation in the divine life."

According to Ouspensky human nature takes part in divine life through people imagining and acting as a part of a more autonomously felt spiritual world. This phenomenon happens in heightened aesthetics experiences, as the feelings of those praying to an icon are very real. Theologically there is a paradox in both the Orthodox and Catholic religions in that they hold that Christ, whose presence on earth is made clear through viewing the icon, has two natures; divine and human. But the Holy Spirit, as an earthly ethos or cultural attitude, is communicated through icons by uniting those natures. In Eastern Orthodox religion there is no division between material and spiritual so a material object can be divinely endowed. Ouspensky writes: "All reality, including the physical, has the potential to be sacred." So what does *sacred* mean for the zoography (an icon maker)? It means that icons express the divine wisdom of God instead of the wills of the artists or viewers. In fact icon viewing is meant to be a means for personal transformation from being and acting from an individual perspective to having a broader understanding through feelings and thoughts of divine love and charity for all people.

When viewing the icon it is not the icon that is venerated but the depiction of Christ or the Saint. Unlike portraits, icons depict people for the purpose of presenting a living presence not as a matter of homage. The icon is a receptacle for veneration as the divinity of God presents itself through the viewer. Through the veneration of icons a person melds the material world with the spiritual, thereby uniting feelings with practical aims for a more shared experience of life.

What is important about the icon's appearance is that it emancipates physical matter from any division from spiritual beliefs. In the modern era icons have been painted with layers of tempura and plaster, while ancient icons were modeled with a wax technique, called encaustic painting. The features of the icon's figures however have remained the same, as they are the most important aspects of the paintings. The eyes, ears, and mouths are idealized so as to downplay specific traits of beauty and as artifacts of worship people are shown that their prayers are free to be actualized as working beliefs and values which transverse pre-set cultural boundaries.

Intriguingly, Dewey draws from the art traditions of the Byzantine Churches to expand his notions about freedom in *Art as Experience*, leaving open an area for hermeneutic study. Dewey did not think there are two natures of experience, although he does explain that "Nature" as our physical environment is in confluence, but not always in direct correspondence, with the developmental nature of human feelings, thoughts and actions. Subsequently, Dewey makes a contribution to understanding icons. He explains that understanding ideas concerning cultural diversity and inclusiveness are integral to the purpose of an icon, because while viewing icons we perceive our inter-personal natures as expansive and as part of natural processes toward greater diversity. Dewey illuminates the connection between art theory and theology by explaining that Byzantine art inspires a conscious embodied experience of the wholeness of varied perspectives.<sup>37</sup> Dewey explains,

In reference to Byzantine art, I put the term nature in quotation marks. I did so because the word "nature; has a special meaning in esthetic literature, indicated especially by the use of the adjective "naturalistic." But "Nature" also has a

<sup>37</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p 352, "From one point of view the problem of recovering an organic place for art in civilization is like the problem of reorganizing our heritage from the past and the insights of present knowledge into a coherent and integrated imaginative union.

meaning in which it includes the whole scheme of things- in which it has the force of the imaginative and emotional word "universe." In experience, human relations, institutions, and traditions are as much a part of the nature in which and by which we live as is the physical world. Nature in this meaning is not "outside." It is in us and we are in and of it. But there are multitudes of ways of participating in it and these ways are characteristic not only of various experiences of the same individual, but of attitudes of inspiration, need and achievement that belong to civilizations in their collective aspect. Works of art are means, by which we enter, through imagination and the emotions they evoke, into other forms of relationship and participation than our own.<sup>38</sup>

Icons are inspirational by a sense of our integrated natures and through inspiring openness to new relationships. Icons are not made to transport people out of reality but to bring into view our multicultural aesthetic involvement with the world.<sup>39</sup> Human relationships communicated with such religious feelings inspire sympathetic understanding and equality through value-making. When praying in front of the icon, the individual comes to experience the divine within oneself, and so experiences a sense of co-passion, which Oupensky talks about using the language of Orthodox theology, as divine grace. This transformative quality of

icon worship does not get lost in relation to people's attitudes toward each other and our hopes for a better future.

Icons are living artifacts because of the re-valuation they inspire in many communities. There are three major Orthodox churches in Ukraine, together they involve the majority of religious people in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church comprise the minority of Christians, and there is also a religious minority of Sunni Muslims, Protestants, and Jews. The Moscow Patriarchate has declared itself the Orthodox mother church and as the only true successor to the ancient Kievan See, which was established in the tenth century. Moscow's recent movements to unify all Orthodox Christian followers in Eastern Europe, has been talked about as being a deterrent to Ukrainian nationalistic movements. What this has meant in the past is both an intensification of political religious tensions and a general distraction from the unifying aesthetics that are inherent in religious experiences. Yet with the current political crisis many of the various leaders of the Orthodox churches have come together in their opposition to all forms of violence.<sup>40</sup>

Although religion is often immersed with national identity, yet despite the initial political basis of conflicts, religiousness once evoked often takes precedence. Being religious is not a matter of race, and it is not commanded nationalistically by birth or privilege as religious feelings and thoughts often supersede political agendas, money, power or the ownership of land. James remarks, "Among the buildings-out of religion which the mind spontaneously indulges in, the aesthetic motive must never be forgotten."<sup>41</sup> Accordingly churches are not

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<sup>38</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 346.

<sup>39</sup> William Dean, "Radical Empiricism and Religious Art", *The Journal of Religion*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press), Vol. 61, No. 2 (April, 1981): 168-187. Dean's thoughts on religious art and radical empiricism are relevant here. He thinks that the judge the inter-persona and creative value to religious/aesthetic experiences one must look to its effects. Dean writes about religious art as a matter of its effects in the world and this helps explain how spirituality is reality through art. Dean makes a point about the phenomenology of religious art, in that he thinks it brings to the surface what is deep within our consciousness, without losing the mystery and unknown qualities, and it shows us those qualities as feelings and values that are evidentially real. Dean explains, "Finally, however, from the perspective of radical empiricism, religious art is most important for what it shows empirically about the world rather than for what it accomplishes subjectively for the beholder. Religious art is important not primarily because it engenders a uniquely two-faceted experience in the self, but because it defines that in the world which can engender that experience and because it can do so without clarity."

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<sup>40</sup> See: Lydia S. Tonoyan & Daniel P. Payne (2010) The Visit of Patriarch Kirill to Ukraine in 2009 and its Significance in Ukraine's Political and Religious Life, *Religion, State and Society*, 38:3, 253-264, DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2010.49928, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2010.499283>, Accessed 06/12/14, 11:30 am.

<sup>41</sup> James, *Varieties*, 334.

miracle factories, religious artifacts are not talisman, and revolutions are not a replacement for constructive community action, and to build the values these human endeavors carry with them, religions, art, and revolution must be participated in and responded to, to be productive and progressive.

In this respect, the icons carried into the Majdan Square were beliefs in action. They were not the priceless icons housed in the Khanenko National Museum of Arts in Kiev. However, the icons used on the front lines of the conflict had been encoded artistically to evoke the history of older icons and they are comparable to the museum antiques that date back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Made in the late antique Christian era, the Khanenko relics are from a time, when people extended their material reality into what they believed spiritually through their commonplace objects, and modern distinctions between materiality and spirituality did not apply. The presence of the divine on earth was spread through the physical qualities of icons.

An example is an icon, which has been prayed to since those times, *Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus*. It dates from the Sixth Century, and being a small panel, approximately 28 by 42 cm, it was probably a lid for a reliquary box.<sup>42</sup> The figures are painted and sculpted by encaustic wax and it has contemporarily been immaculately restored. Its visual qualities are reflective - the gold leaf of the halos, the ashen whites of the robes, and cornelian reds of the honorary sashes - giving off light to the objects around it. The Saint's divine images are depicted in head and shoulders posture, together filling the complete picture field. The two figures sit side by side, and as soldier Saints they have donned their military costumes. They wear Roman toques as necklaces denoting their honor and bravery. Each toque bears three large painted jewels, symbolizing the Trinity of

Christ. Their countenances are humble and compassionate, as the two soldiers have characteristically iconic features of closed mouths and luminescent eyes. In the upper register of the panel, between the two Saints, a much smaller circular icon of Jesus Christ intersects their halos. The relic is comparable to marriage portraits of its time, with the icon of Christ taking the place of the pronubus or best man. But both the two Saints are men, for this is an early example of same sex friendships within church iconography. Sergius and Bacchus were comrades but their own army - persecuted because they would not make cultic sacrifices to pagan Gods, martyred them. Contemporarily the icon has become a symbol of tolerance towards homosexuality, although as Saints they were asexual and divine in life as in death.<sup>43</sup>

The faithful are called to meditate on the icon's presentation of spiritual rewards after persecution. As well, the icon's symbolism brings into stark reality the contemporary cultural struggles in Kiev, as there is a deeper aesthetic dimension to its revolutionary semiotics, through which the viewer has visual proof of a world where tolerance and acceptance of difference is a better way forward for communities.

Coming from a critical perspective Slavoj Žižek wonders how Ukraine can become successful if it joins the EU, because of the grip of global neo-liberal agendas and inauthentic political motivations on the part of Ukraine's institutional churches. As well, the European Union, according to Žižek, needs to be saved from itself, as it continues to ignore the plights of immigrant's worldwide, and of disadvantaged communities that are all but forgotten by global financiers and religious leaders.<sup>44</sup> He asks how churches can continually turn a

<sup>42</sup> *Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus*, Original found at Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt, now housed at the [Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts](#), Kiev, Ukraine.

<sup>43</sup> See John Boswell, *Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1994).

<sup>44</sup> See Slavoj Žižek, "What Europe should learn from Ukraine" *Blog Da Boitempo*, 31/03/2014, <http://blogdaboitempo.com.br/2014/03/31/zizek-what-europe-should-learn-from-ukraine/>, Accessed January

blind eye to diversity and immigration problems, while setting up distractions from religiousness by struggling for political power among themselves. He thinks Eastern European churches are forsaking the very religious aesthetic/values of inclusiveness on which they have been founded.<sup>45</sup> He finds that under the current conditions Europe and Ukraine are lost until they disengage from “The New World Order,” which continually propagates a human nature that is money and power rich for some, yet spiritually and resource wise impoverishing for many more. Žižek thinks that answers lie in breaching ethnic and nationalistic lines of authority and division.

Žižek fears not that Ukraine doesn't know what it is getting into by emancipating itself so as to join Europe, but that Europeans in general remain hesitant to continue to develop and engage with a inclusive culture of equality. In regards to politics, this is disappointing in that Europeans fought hard for humanistic rights over the centuries. The spirit of liberté that helped drive the revolutionaries of the Maidan was reminiscent of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, French revolution. But as the situation slips

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10, 2015, 11:30 pm. And “Why both the left and the right have got it wrong on Ukraine”, *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/10/ukraine-slavoj-zizek-lenin>, Tuesday 10 June 2014, 05.00 EDT.

<sup>45</sup> See Žižek, “What Europe should learn from Ukraine” *Blog Da Boitempo*, 31/03/2014, <http://blogdaboitempo.com.br/2014/03/31/zizek-what-europe-should-learn-from-ukraine/>, Accessed January 10, 2015, 11:30 pm. He writes in his ongoing blog, “The Ukrainian Rightist nationalism is part of a renewed anti-immigrant populist vogue which presents itself as the defense of Europe. The danger of this new Right was clearly perceived a century ago by G.K. Chesterton who, in his *Orthodoxy*, deployed the fundamental deadlock of the critics of religion: “Men who begin to fight the Church for the sake of freedom and humanity end by flinging away freedom and humanity if only they may fight the Church.” Does the same not hold for the advocates of religion themselves? How many fanatical defenders of religion started with ferociously attacking the contemporary secular culture and ended up forsaking any meaningful religious experience? And does the same not hold also for the recent rise of the defenders of Europe against the immigrant threat? In their zeal to protect Christian legacy, the new zealots are ready to forsake the true heart of this legacy.”

back into one of continued conflict, one realizes that political ideals and dialog is not enough, as we saw with the philosophy of Arendt. At the current Ukrainian impasse with Russian separatists, I think Europeans should think more about Žižek's criticism and continue emphasize the inter-relational aspects of their communities and by using religiousness as an inter-cultural tool to avoid further violence.

In *Art as Experience* Dewey explains that the aesthetics of worshipping icons changed after the 787 A.D. Second Council of Nicea. It was then that Christian churches begin to censor the symbolization of icons, consequently the liberal Christian culture entered a more politicized and elitist aesthetic era.<sup>46</sup> Dewey's main thesis in *Art as Experience* is that art motivates people's embodied feelings of religiousness through the everyday relationships of culture and community, which have been in modern times abstracted from everyday experience. Dewey placed great emphasis on everyday experiences, not calling for them to be only political, in relation to values and community building but to be artistic. Compatibly to his ideas commonplace icons are not considered by the faithful as being any less genuinely inspirational or aesthetically motivating, then their rarified museum counterparts.

During the heyday of the Maidan, artists working with a myriad of mediums immersed themselves into their revolutionary ethos. Jon Lee Anderson, a journalist for the New York Times arrived on the scene after the fall of Yanukovich's government. The photographer Monteleone, who documented the everyday iconography of the revolution accompanied him.<sup>47</sup> Anderson describes how Monteleone's pictures - which feature objects from the camp, in high relief, shot with a single reflex camera, and using an intense color sensitive

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<sup>46</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 343.

<sup>47</sup> Jon Lee Anderson, “Revolutionary Relics”, *New Yorker*, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/revolutionary-relics>, May 1, 2014, Accessed June 15, 2014, 11:30 am.

film, represent the co-passionate, collective spirit of the camp. Although he titles his article "Revolutionary Relic," Anderson does not talk about Monteleone's photographs of icons found amongst the camp's artifacts as religious, instead he presents the photos as material culture, a hand painted helmet, a book, a glove, bullets, a pillow.

One of the photos is of a miniature icon that carries an immense collective cultural history, although it is in its humble, commonplace presence that it seems exceptionally inspirational. The small icon is a Theotokos, Birth-Giver of God, and it is rendered in cross-stitch embroidery, on a piece of cloth that is lined on its upper and lower edges by tiny seed pearls. This cloth is mounted on muslin covered foam board behind its 2 ½ by 3-½ inch gold painted frame. The image is familiar, as it is a duplicate of a well-known icon of The Holy Mother. Her figure is always bordered in purple, the color of Creation, and stars that in the Maidan embroidered icon have been stitched over a lapis blue ground surround her. Her body is robed in red, the color of human vigor, and her gold halo is outlined in white, the color of divine light, which is symbolic of her immaculate holiness and closeness to God. Her poised frontal figure seems understated as it blends into the blue field, but her slim face is detailed with finely stitched golden threads. Her head is tilted in reverence, though her expression is not downcast but direct with focused and entrancing eyes. Her hands are crossed in supplication and from her fingers emanate the seven rays of wisdom, which are the symbolic tools of the Holy Spirit. In Monteleone's photograph the icon is suspended on a black ground, as are all the other common-place objects from the Maidan camp. Yet all of the objects, including the gaze of the Theotokos reach out to the viewer visually across the layers of representation and mediums; the computer screen, the photograph, the framed icon, the embroidered cloth, the designed configuration of the portrayal, to meet the onlooker's gaze.

This tiny, personal icon would have been carried in someone's coat or purse throughout the difficult days in the Square, but Monteleone employs it as a public call to arms, not only for contemplation but also for interpretation. If a person is devotedly Orthodox or Catholic they would know that the little piece of stitch work is the same image as its more illustrious sister icon, the Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn, housed in the morning chapel at the Medieval Gate of the Vilnius Cathedral in Lithuania. The Cathedral is both a holy site, drawing pilgrims from all over the world, and a symbol of Lithuania's centuries old struggle for independence, which was finally achieved in 1990. The Cathedral's and the icon's history and their part in Europe's history is too complex to recount, but there is one aspect that is particularly relevant. The icon is for Lithuanians and Poles a reminder of their joint uprising to free their Commonwealth from Russian rule in 1795. A Polish revolutionary from that uprising, General Tadeuze Kosciuszko, who was also a General and military engineer in the American Revolution, lead the Commonwealth's insurrection. Kosciuszko initiated the campaign by writing a landmark proclamation, (the Proclamation of Potaniec), which was circulated throughout the Commonwealth and Europe. It abolished serfdom and granted civil liberties to all peasants. This was the first official manifesto of its kind in Eastern European history.<sup>48</sup> However Maksym Zaluzniak a Ukrainian hero of the people who fought against the Polish aristocracy and the Russian government in 1768, had first put ideas for equal humanitarian rights. The Ukrainian and Polish/Lithuanian revolutions failed at that time but the uprisings are considered the beginning of the spread of Modern Political thought throughout Eastern Europe. The Vilnius icon is considered a source of strength in the face of unbeatable odds for these cultures. The icon is replicated in Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches alike, in many countries around the

<sup>48</sup> István Rév, *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of Post-communism*, (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 98.

world from Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Turkey, Brazil, United Kingdom, and the United States. As well as being symbolic of previous revolutions and humanitarian theories, *Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn* is also distinct because the image of the Holy Mother is without child, and this icon stands out as a strong feminine statement. The icon can be thought of as inspirational in relation to more dynamic roles for women in Orthodox and Catholic churches.

*Égaliberté* in Europe meant freedom-in-equality, and that idea stands out in the passages of history as a unique and great contribution of Europe to the global political imagination.<sup>49</sup> But a political nationalistic idea of freedom is not enough to create just and safe states. To be more fully effective in our belief in democracy we must realize values of inclusiveness that are made everyday through our common relationships with each other. Liberty is better realized as a religious feeling of personal and cultural inclusiveness and wholeness than as a pre-conceptualized scheme or an idealized theme for discussion. Likewise, people around the world deserve better than a limited, static freedom based on consumerism and inauthentic images of our communities. We all deserve to be valued, as we are all boundless and free as participants in divine experiences.

Yet it is true that political and religious institutions have separated religiousness from aesthetics modes of action. Many religious leaders remain caught in static and immobile public positions, and just as many continue to vie for power through statehood. Religion, not religiousness is often used as an institutional structure of control to embody immovable, intractable positions of power. It is no wonder that prayerful communion is often thought of just a continuation of the forces of politics and economics. But through understanding religious aesthetics as *presenting* us with a better, more equal and just world, which we can feel and act on, our values and motivations can change moving us closer to forging peaceful and community-minded solutions to political problems.

For in the coat pocket of a activist fighting for freedom, on the front line, the icon image is not a stand-in for a political ideology, or a conceptualized critical theory, it is not a strategic weapon, nor a work of art that will soon be put up for auction; but it is, as Dewey said, a saturated image of who we are culturally. For our feelings and perceptions radically transfigure our values, and those values are re-presented through our collective traditions and histories, hopefully allowing our compassion and openness for an diverse world including many people's hopes and beliefs for the future, to win over violence and separatism time and time again.

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<sup>49</sup> Žižek, "Why both the left and the right have got it wrong on Ukraine", *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/10/ukrain-e-slavoj-zizek-lenin>, Tuesday 10 June 2014, 05.00 EDT.