

**IN THE  
MOMENT  
OF YOUR  
PASSAGE**

Essays in Ethics:  
the Aesthetic,  
the Metaphysical,  
and the Interpretive

**PETER McCORMICK**

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**PETER McCORMICK**



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For the Younger Scholars  
and Students of Ethics in Ukraine



You ask: Is this how everything vanishes,  
in this thin haze of memories?  
Is every destiny fulfilled  
In the torpid hour or the breaker's sigh?  
I would like to tell you: No. For you  
the moment of your passage out of time  
is near...

*Eugenio Montale*





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## PREFACE

After several years of widespread consultations and intense preparations, in March 2013, Professor Volodymyr Turchynovskyy of the Philosophy Department of the Ukrainian Catholic University formally established the International Institute of Ethics and Contemporary Issues and became its first Director.

At the same time Professor Turchynovskyy also established an Executive Board of Governors composed of international known scholars from Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Ukraine under the direction of the distinguished Ukrainian historian, former Rector, and now President of the Ukrainian Catholic University, Bishop Borys Gudziak. As an essential academic complement Professor Martin Cajthaml of the Palacky University at Olomouc in the Czech Republic became the Director of an Eastern European Ethics Network to work in close cooperation with the International Institute and to help ensure its wider but closely related centres of interest.

Not least among the several rationales for the new Institute was a growing and deeply serious preoccupation among many reflective persons in Ukraine about the several possible near futures of the largest of Eastern Europe's post-communist societies, whether in closest cooperation with the European Union or with Russia. This preoccupation arose not just from political concerns but from social ones as well.

This preoccupation increased dramatically after three strongly controversial and quite widely contested decisions of Ukraine's president. His first decision came in late November 2013 not to join Moldavia and Georgia in signing the Eastern European Initiative of the European Union. The second was his decision instead in December 2013 to sign a formal, wide-ranging agreement with Russia. Finally, at least for now as I write, came his decision in mid-January 2014 to sign into law, after

a highly irregular parliamentary vote, numerous, extremely repressive, and thoroughly undemocratic measures on all of Ukraine's citizens.

Unlike several other such societies in Central Europe such as those in East Germany, Hungary, and Poland, Ukraine's society today continues to struggle not just with extremely widespread corruption of all kinds, a continually uncertain rule of law, and profound confusions about human values. Among post-communist societies Ukraine alone still carries the as yet unmastered historical catastrophe of Stalin's intentionally organized mass famines of the 1930s, the *Holodomor*. According to the best estimates today, these massive and still largely unacknowledged crimes against humanity murdered roughly one out of every ten Ukrainians of the time, that is, ca. 3 million persons.

An essential part of this radical uprooting and destruction of Ukrainian society involved a systematic destruction of traditional intellectual, ethical, and religious values and the murderous suppression of all religious practices.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, one of the major objectives of the newly founded International Institute for Ethics and Contemporary Issues was to establish as influential public as well as academic forum as soon as possible for investigating, in different domains and with the help of different media and varied participants, the manifold

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers here are from the international distinguished historian, N. Werth's recent article, "*Comment Staline décida d'affamer son peuple*," *Histoire* 384 (Décembre 2013), 8-18. For a selection of the key texts see *L'État soviétique contre les paysans*, ed. N. Werth and B. Berelowitch (Paris: Talandier, 2011). For the pioneer historical investigations see R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, first published in 1968, substantially revised in 1990 with the help of newly accessible sources, and then reissued as *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* in 2007 with a substantial new Preface (New York: OUP), and J. E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine 1918-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983). Cf. especially T. Snyder, *Bloodlines: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 187-223. An extraordinary exhibition of the Ukrainian famines was held most recently in January 2013 in Kyiv.

and persisting ethical dimensions of current issues in today's increasingly turbulent Ukraine.

With this background in mind, the simple purpose of the revised and extensively documented essays selected here, *In the Moment of Your Passage*, and in its companion volume, *Of Three Minds*, is to be, if I can, of some small service at a critical moment for Ukraine.

These essays then are mainly for the younger Ukrainian scholars and post-graduate students. The hope is of their being of some modest help in these younger talented person's thinking carefully through their so much needed considered reflections today on positively, and practically, influencing the rapidly evolving – and quite dangerous – situation of the contemporary Ukrainian society.

For their extraordinary example, their friendship, and their encouragements I sincerely thank Bishop Borys Gudziak, Professors E. Alam, J. Casanova, A. J. Buch, C. Porebski, O. Turiy, and A. Kostiuk, and the colleagues and students of the Ukrainian Catholic University. I thank Orysya Bila, Oksana Kushnir, Wawa Baczynskyj, Rostyslav Rybchanskyi, and Oleh Pelenychka for their invaluable help in the preparation of the manuscript. I would especially like to thank Professor Vlodymyr Turchynovskyy for his confidence in this work, and for his patience with these reflections.

May these two modest collections of essays in philosophical ethics be of some service today – and tomorrow.

*Peter McCormick*  
*Paris, January 2014*