

Defending the Cultural Nation before and after 1991: Ivan Dziuba*

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Abstract

The Ukrainian literary and cultural critic Ivan Dziuba (b. 1931) exerted his greatest impact on Ukrainian public life as a dissident in the 1960s and as a public intellectual from the late 1980s onward. Throughout his writings Dziuba has urged state and society to develop Ukrainian culture proactively and to defend it against encroachment by dominant cultures allied to politically and economically dominant powers.

Keywords

Ivan Dziuba, Ukraine, Ukrainian, dissent, culture, nation-building, intellectuals

The question of which political models were available for the conceptual and practical structuring of the independent Ukraine that emerged when the Soviet Union collapsed has received some discussion in the scholarly literature. The consensual view is that the new state was shaped to serve the interests of the old elite, which in its quest for a legitimacy alternative to that of Marxism-Leninism camouflaged itself with the trappings of a national ideology.¹ Such a notion of the continuity of a self-interested power elite makes

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¹⁾ See, e.g., the accounts of this transition in general histories: Paul Robert Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 672–73 and Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), pp. 194 and 200–01. See also Marta Dyczok, *Ukraine: Movement without Change, Change without Movement* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 2000), pp. 55–60 and Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale Nota Bene, 2002), pp. 161–65.

sense insofar as it is coherent with the features of Ukraine's political, social, economic and cultural development that appear most salient: the emergence of a weak state easily co-opted by special interests; the frailty of the nascent legal framework and the parallel institutionalization of corruption and cronyism; and the disingenuousness and ineffectiveness of initiatives for nation-building and cultural decolonization.

Interest in what has actually happened in emergent independent Ukraine has, understandably, overshadowed interest in proposals for its reshaping that have not borne fruit or have had limited impact. Yet the thought of leading exponents of the "national intelligentsia" deserves attention, not only for its own sake, but also as a source of ideas that had some influence on public policy in the 1990s and on the outlook of the part of the educated sector of the population that is Ukrainian-speaking and politically and culturally oriented toward the West. It was this social group among whom the Orange Revolution of 2004 had, perhaps, its most ardent supporters.

It is the intention of this article, therefore, to examine the work of one of the most prolific and highly regarded of Ukraine's intellectuals of the period commencing in the 1960s and continuing into the 2000s, Ivan Dziuba – literary critic and historian, cultural commentator, author of the seminal Ukrainian dissident text of the 1960s *Internationalism or Russification?*², and a consistent contributor to the debate on culture and cultural policy in independent Ukraine.

Dziuba was born in 1931 in a village in the Donbas *oblast*, a part of Ukraine whose bicultural character in the 1930s Dziuba was at pains to emphasize in later years, when the alleged contrast between a culturally Russian East and a culturally Ukrainian West had become one of the dominant topoi of analyses of the Ukrainian cultural and political predicament. Dziuba studied philology at the Donets'k Pedagogical Institute and was a graduate student of the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR in the 1950s. In the 1960s he was one of the most visible, eloquent and charismatic members of the Ukrainian dissent movement.² His condemnation of the arrests of members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia at the premiere of

²⁾ The dissident Ievhen Sverstiuk would write subsequently of Dziuba's centrality to the oppositional movement, "there was no Ukrainian name that was as frequently and ubiquitously invoked" (Sverstiuk, "Ivan Dziuba – talant i dolia," *Kur'ier Kryvbasu*, nos. 85-86 (1997): 53, while Iryna Zhylenko would recall that "we were ready to lay down our lives for Dziuba. He was the master of our thoughts and harbinger of the truth. He was crystal-pure and wholly free of ambition, pose or vanity" (Zhylenko, "Homo feriens," *Suchasnist'* 1 [1995]: 153).

Paradzhanov's film *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in 1964 and his speech at Babyn Yar in Kyiv condemning anti-Semitism were among the most celebrated acts of dissident defiance in Ukraine. *Internationalism or Russification?* was completed in 1965 and published abroad in 1968. Imprisoned in 1972, Dziuba wrote in the following year what most took to be a recantation of his earlier views. Permitted to publish anew from the late 1970s onward, Dziuba wrote mainly literary studies, especially ones dedicated to the non-Russian literatures of the USSR. His work scrupulously conformed to official Soviet nationalities policy until the advent of *glasnost*. From 1986 onward Dziuba's published writings began to return to the themes of the 1960s, advocating universal human rights and values on the one hand and, on the other, condemning the neglect of Ukrainian language and culture by Soviet officialdom and by much of Ukrainian society at large. The long essay, "Do We Conceive of National Culture as a Complete System?" (1988) reflected Dziuba's renewed preoccupation with the obstacles to, and opportunities for, a renascence of Ukrainian culture in a context where political liberalization and official benevolence toward Ukrainian culture would go hand in hand. From November 1992 until August 1994 Dziuba held the post of Minister of Culture of Ukraine, though he was unable to do much to advance the policies that he advocated in his writings. Dziuba's output in the fields of literary history and literary and cultural criticism has continued to be prodigious to the time of the writing of this article (2008).

Until the late 1980s it was the apparent breach between Dziuba the dissident and Dziuba the conformist after 1973 that focused the attention of commentators. Yet there is a striking continuity of world-view in Dziuba's writings of all periods.³ Dziuba is a recipient of the heritage of the Enlightenment as filtered through the Marxism-Leninism that underlay his formal education. The central values for Dziuba are always human dignity and happiness, which are to be achieved through the full development of the potential of each human being and every human society. The human being for Dziuba is always individual and fascinating in its uniqueness. Indeed, many of his most memorable publications are his studies of the lives and works of poets and writers. At the same time, the human individual is (and is to different degrees aware of being) a member of many communities. The community to which Dziuba attributes the greatest significance is the nation, a collective that, in his view,

³⁾ This continuity between the pre- and post-1973 Dziuba was already observed by Mykhajlo Savaryn in his discussion, "Why Capitulate?: Ivan Dziuba's Trauma," *Journal of Ukrainian Graduate Studies* 2, no. 2 (1977): 54–61.

is capable of mobilizing the finest capacities of the human being, and yet one that, on the battleground of *Realpolitik*, is often repressed or denied. Not the dominance of one's own culture over others, but its right to a place among equals is the guiding objective of Dziuba's thinking about nation. "My concern is above all for Ukrainian culture," said Dziuba at a conference on Russian-Ukrainian dialogue in 1996, "not because I do not appreciate the interconnectedness of world cultures, but because, of the cultures in question, the Ukrainian is the more threatened. If Russian culture were in this position, my chief concern would be for it."⁴ It is this ideal of equality among the world's nations, large and small, that underlies Dziuba's studies, characteristic of his "conformist" period, of Belarusian, Lithuanian, Armenian, Tajik, Kabardin, Ingush, Yakut, Mansi, and Nanai literatures.

Dziuba's ideas, like those of his other contemporaries among the generation of the "Sixtiers," were imprinted by the Marxism-Leninism of the official culture in whose context they arose. Paradoxically, it is in *Internationalism or Russification?* that Dziuba insists most emphatically on the Leninist basis of his stand on the issue of nationality. Lenin's position on nations and the nationalities problem – or, more precisely, Dziuba's interpretation of this position – served as a basis for Dziuba's critique of Soviet practice with respect to the non-Russian nations, and especially cultures, of the USSR.

Writing about *Internationalism or Russification?* in 1990, Dziuba identified three categories of reader for whom the work had been intended: the party and state leadership that bore responsibility for the implementation of nationalities policy in Ukraine; people who were ostensibly indifferent to the national question, but whose indifference objectively contributed to Russification; and finally, people concerned for the welfare of Ukraine and therefore willing to be informed about the health or otherwise of its nation and culture.⁵ Two other categories of reader, however, turned out to have a more direct influence on Dziuba's fate: foreigners (outside the USSR the work was published in Ukrainian, Russian, English, French, Italian and Chinese), and readers in the Soviet police organs. The publication of the book in the West, as well as the fact that many of its readers there found in it confirmation of their critical

⁴⁾ Ivan Dziuba, "Vzaiemodiia dvokh kul'tur ta stereotypy ii retseptsii," paper presented at the international conference "Diialoh ukrains'koi i rosiis'koi kul'tur iak chynnyk mizhetnichnoi zhody v Ukraini" (Kyiv, October 24–25, 1996), rpt. in Ivan Dziuba, *Mizh kul'turoiu i politykoiu* (Kyiv: Sfera, 1998), pp. 38–46, here p. 46.

⁵⁾ Ivan Dziuba, "Vid avtora: Z vidstani chverti stolittia" [Foreword, 1990], *Internatsionalizm chy rusyfikatsiia?* (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim "KM Akademiia," 1998), pp. 16–20, here pp. 18–19.

attitude toward the USSR, became grounds for accusing Dziuba of anti-Soviet intentions. In retrospect, Dziuba claimed that his aim in writing the treatise was not subversive – rather, it was to draw attention to aspects of the implementation of nationalities policy that required reform.⁶ Be that as it may, *Internationalism or Russification?* constituted a radical challenge to the regime, accusing it of acting to destroy the Ukrainian nation (not only its culture and identity, but also its population), of continuing the Russificatory policies of tsarism, and of distorting the tenets of Leninism in an effort to justify its odious practices.

The treatise covers a wide expanse of subject matter and is complex in its argumentation. At the theoretical level Dziuba condemns as anti-Marxist any apologia of policies to assimilate minorities or deprive them of their national identity. He approves of the Soviet nationalities policy of the 1920s, especially the Ukrainianization policy, praises its achievements and condemns its discontinuation:

This was a truly internationalist Leninist policy which safeguarded the interests and the full development of the socialist Ukrainian nation. But after only a few years this policy came to an end and the men who had been implementing it were removed. [. . .] There began a policy of destroying the achievements of the previous period, a policy of physically destroying the Ukrainian nation, especially its intelligentsia. [. . .] Besides everything else, this Stalinist policy was calculated to knock out of the Ukrainian people any trace of national sentiment and national consciousness. A taboo has weighed upon these for some thirty-five years, so it is not at all surprising that they are so little developed among a considerable part of the Ukrainian population [. . .].⁷

Dziuba objects to a situation where any expression of dissatisfaction with the position of Ukraine in the USSR attracts severe official sanction, while recurrences of Russian chauvinism are tolerated. He challenges the myth of the equality of the nationalities of the Soviet Union, citing evidence of the privileging of Russians and Russian culture. In the print media, Russian materials outweigh non-Russian ones far more than could be justified by the ratio of Russians to non-Russians in the population of the USSR; persons of Russian ethnicity are disproportionately represented in higher education and in professions requiring high qualifications; obstacles are placed in the way of

⁶ Ivan Dziuba, “Z vidstani chverti stolittia” [Afterword, 1990], *Internationalizm chy rusyfikatsiia?* pp. 204–26, here p. 204.

⁷ Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?: A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, 3rd ed. (New York: Monad Press, 1974), p. 53.

bringing to public attention the historical and contemporary achievements of cultures of the USSR other than the Russian; as far as language use is concerned, Ukrainian is discouraged in all prestige-conferring contexts, while Russian is encouraged.

The treatise gained much force from Dziuba's systematic appeal to the authority of Marxist-Leninist thought combined with a wealth of empirical material gathered through painstaking research.⁸ The fragmentary experience of intellectuals who confronted instances of Russification on a daily basis could now be understood as symptomatic of a general phenomenon. What further added to the persuasiveness of the treatise was the sociological breadth and historical depth of its argument, as well as the author's readiness to breach taboos by giving shocking names to phenomena that were not supposed to exist in the USSR: "Russification" and "Russian great-state chauvinism." The topicality of *Internationalism or Russification?* did not diminish over the decades following its composition. The main motifs of Ukrainian protest journalism of the period of *glasnost* in many instances sounded like paraphrases of Dziuba's classical study.

No longer explicitly claiming a connection to Marxism in the 1980s and 1990s, Dziuba nevertheless continued in his analyses of texts and other cultural phenomena to pay attention to social and economic context and to apply the category of class. He remained a critic of the excesses of the free market and an advocate of the leading role of the state in the planning and guidance of human affairs. Later his scepticism would extend to the phenomenon of economic and cultural globalization.⁹ He remained, throughout, an adherent of the idea of the transformation of human beings and human society and the fullest possible development of their potential.

Such transformations could be achieved, Dziuba believed, if they were grounded in rational and general principles and if, in pursuit of these achievements, humans were guided by generally agreed norms that were also maintained and defended by society's leading institutions. In the 1960s Dziuba demanded that this role be performed by the Soviet state and the Communist Party, in the 1990s – by the newly-independent Ukrainian state. Dziuba's harshest invective is reserved for instances where the state acts illegally or in

⁸ Dziuba outlined the methods by means of which he and numerous collaborators gathered the material on which *Internationalism or Russification?* was based in an interview for the *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 13, no. 2 (1988): 8-9.

⁹ See, especially, Ivan Dziuba, "Hlobalizatsiia i maibutnie kul'tury," *Slovo i chas*, 9 (2008): 23-30.

contravention of the principles that, in Dziuba's view, it should uphold. In 1963, when the authorities disrupted the nonconformist intelligentsia's commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the writer and dramatist Lesia Ukrainka, Dziuba condemned the state's contempt for "normal civic and administrative procedures" and the "norms of civil life."¹⁰ In *Internationalism or Russification?* Dziuba viewed the domination of the Russian culture over the Ukrainian in Ukraine as an aberration from proper Leninist norms and from the practices of the golden age of Ukrainization in the 1920s which, as he saw it, instantiated those norms. Likewise, the failure of many citizens of independent Ukraine to support the Ukrainian language by employing it in their lives, and the failure of governments in independent Ukraine to create conditions favourable to an efflorescence of Ukrainian culture, were criticized by Dziuba in the 1980s and 1990s as actions and behaviors that were wrong according to criteria that he regarded as objective.

At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s the main value upheld by Dziuba's systematic thinking, as well as his criticism and polemics, was *tsilisnist* – "wholeness" or "completeness." Phenomena had value if they possessed a systemic quality – if their variety and complexity were harmonized into a coherent whole, each of whose parts had meaning in relation to the others. A culture that possessed "completeness" displayed a fullness of interrelationships between its elements (rather than each element of that culture having its primary points of reference in some other culture); it was a source of autonomous values and criteria; and it possessed its own identity and participated on equal terms with other cultures in the overarching culture of humankind. Such completeness, in Dziuba's view, is threatened by totalitarianism and colonialism, and cultures emerging from the thrall of these evils typically aim to restore it.

A first step toward the restoration of the completeness of a culture is the destruction of stereotypes of its inferiority. Dziuba favors the comparative study of cultural phenomena because it undermines such evaluative hierarchies. He studies Shevchenko in the context of Schiller and Victor Hugo,¹¹ Olha Kobylianska in the tradition of Madame de Staël and George

¹⁰) "Do Spilky Radians'kykh Pys'mennykh Ukrainy (Poiasniuval'na zapyska pro vechir pam'iaty Lesi Ukrainky v Tsentral'nomu parku kul'tury i vidpochynku m. Kyieva – 31 lypnia 1963 roku)," *Suchasnist'*, 8 (1968): 87-94.

¹¹) The second volume of Dziuba's collected works, *Z krynytsi lit* (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim "Kyievo-Mohylans'ka Akademiia," 2006), commences with essays that examine Shevchenko in relation to Sándor Petőfi (1965), Aleksei Khomiakov (1989), Friedrich Schiller (1996), Victor Hugo (1997) and Juliusz Słowacki (2000).

Sand and in the context of Ibsen, Carlyle, Ruskin and Nietzsche,¹² demonstrating that works of Ukrainian literature not only participated in European dialogues and debates, but also sustain analysis and judgment by the same criteria as works belonging to better known European traditions. At the same time, the idea of the normative completeness of cultures throws into bold relief the phenomenon of the *incompleteness* imposed upon cultures by external causes: in the Ukrainian case, by tsarist prohibitions of Ukrainian-language publishing in 1863 and 1876, by the murder of a generation of creative people in the 1930s, and by the intimidation and persecution of the most original and principled writers, artists and intellectuals throughout the Soviet period.

Awareness of these travails, according to Dziuba, imposes upon activists of Ukrainian culture an obligation to restore its completeness. The focus of such activity must be language, which Dziuba considers to be the essential attribute of a nation and the seat of its difference from others. He demands proactive government policies to encourage citizens of Ukraine to speak Ukrainian; he appeals directly to his readers to become vehicles for the renascence of the Ukrainian language; he satirizes those who are indifferent to their native language.¹³ Dziuba's prioritization of language as a key element of the post-Soviet transformation of Ukrainian society is nowhere explicitly justified, but it can be read as part, on the one hand, of his overall commitment to the restoration of historical justice and of equality among nations and, on the other, of his essentially Herderian conviction that nations possess personalities shaped by common historical experiences and expressed in their unique cultures.

In one way or another, the notion of completeness figures in almost all of Dziuba's works of the late 1980s and 1990s. His writing during this period belongs to two main genres: studies of the works and lives of activists of Ukrainian culture, especially those of his own generation; and broad inquiries into cultural and social questions that often culminate in proposals for implementation by officialdom and in calls to the well-disposed public to modify its cultural behavior.

After his long detour through studies of the less well known literatures of the Soviet Union, Dziuba returned to the theme of Ukrainian writers and

¹²⁾ Ivan Dziuba, "Chytaiuchy Ol'hu Kobylians'ku (Kil'ka zistavlen')," *Z krynytsi lit*, Vol. III (Kyiv: Vydavnychi dim "Kyievo-Mohylans'ka Akademiiia," 2007), pp. 223–53. The article was written in 1965. Part of it was first published in *Suchasnist'* 5 (1969). The version printed in *Z krynytsi lit* is identified there as the first complete publication.

¹³⁾ See, above all, Ivan Dziuba, *Bo to ne prosto mova, zvuky . . .* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1990).

artists, especially those of his own generation. His essay on Mykola Vinhranovskyi, one of the poets who rose to prominence in the 1960s, contains a memorable description of the Sixtiers' generation. It was characterized, according to Dziuba, by "an inimitable, heartbreakingly touching and pathetic mixture of misery, great ambitions, naïveté, tenacious energy, low material expectations and possibilities but high spiritual ones, minimal claims on life but elevated ideals, and a craving for beauty and truth."¹⁴ Dziuba's studies of the life, work and thought of members of this generation, previously known to the Soviet public only through those of their works that did not conflict with Soviet norms, may be read as part of his strategy to restore the completeness of the culture that the Soviet experience had so destructively truncated. Thus, among the figures to whom Dziuba devoted attention were Ivan Svitlychnyi, the literary critic who, by general consensus, was the focal point of dissent in Kyiv in the 1960s; the poet Ivan Drach, also a literary debutant of the 1960s, who became a significant political player on the eve of, and following, Ukraine's declaration of independence; the prose writer Yevhen Hutsalo; the poet Vasyl Stus, one of the most principled of dissidents, who perished in the Gulag in 1985; and Oles Berdnyk, an eccentric writer and political dissident whose science fiction offended Soviet propriety by sailing too close to the shoals of mysticism. The priority of completeness may be discerned as one of the drivers behind Dziuba's decisions to research earlier writers who had been overlooked by Soviet scholarship (e.g., the poet Volodymyr Svidzinsky) or ignored as enemies of the Soviet state (e.g., the poet, translator and critic Mykhailo Drai-Khmara and the émigré prose writer and journalist Ivan Bahriany). Dziuba's quest for completeness was also in keeping with his participation in the collective authorship of the new *History of Ukrainian Literature in the 20th Century*, a large survey work whose editor, Vitalii Donchyk, declared its objective to be, "apart from achieving completeness and objectivity, [. . .] the representation of Ukrainian literature [. . .] as a whole, not cut up into class and other 'camps.'"¹⁵ The chapters that Dziuba contributed to this *History* included the survey of the period of Ukrainianization, when Ukrainian literature, written in the Ukrainian SSR, in Poland and in the emigration, was more than ever characterized by a wealth of often conflicting movements and by heated ideological and theoretical disputes. For Dziuba

¹⁴⁾ Ivan Dziuba, "Dukhovna mira talantu," in Mykola Vinhranov'skyi, *Výbrani tvory* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986), p. 6.

¹⁵⁾ Vitalii Donchyk, "Vstup," in *Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury XX stolittia* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1993), 1: 3-8, here p. 7.

this variety was evidence, not of fragmentation, but of the fact that Ukrainian literature at the time was conceived of by its makers as part of a shared, if variegated, project: the development of a national culture as part of the development of the good society. It was driven by an “energy of national self-affirmation that historical circumstances did not dissipate.”¹⁶

The vision of the 1920s as a golden age for Ukrainian literature underlies much of Dziuba’s theoretical writing of this period, especially the long essay “Do We Conceive of National Culture as a Complete System?” (1988). The title is a rhetorical question, as was the case in *Internationalism or Russification?* – and the self-evident answer is in the negative: of course we do not (and that is a bad thing). Dziuba commences his analysis with a qualification. It is a truism that every thing can be regarded either as complete in itself, or as part of some other whole, and thus any culture can be regarded, trivially, as a whole – as a sum of the phenomena that comprise it. Dziuba, of course, wants a more demanding definition of cultural wholeness: he believes that such wholeness is present if the various components of a culture can be regarded as interacting and influencing each other. Dziuba identifies six “levels” (*rivni*) at which the completeness of a culture may be discerned. In all six, he judges Ukrainian culture to lack completeness. In fact, Dziuba’s levels do not form a logical hierarchy, but are a framework for reflection on diverse, if related, issues. The first four are connections and mutual influences between the various arts. The fifth level of completeness comes into being when “the whole artistic sphere is affected by certain deep and necessary tendencies,” as was the case in Ukraine in the Baroque period and again in the 1920s. The sixth is achieved when the national culture functions as a system, that is, when it is expressed not only through art and high culture, but also through “the everyday life of words and thoughts, through countless acts of the spirit in the word.”¹⁷ This distinctly Hegelian relationship between a spirit and its presentations in cultural phenomena has failed to come into being in the Ukrainian case due to the destructive consequences of colonialism. Dziuba implies that Ukrainian culture does not possess completeness because completeness has been monopolized in its milieu by Soviet culture – or, to be precise, Russian culture in its Soviet inflection. The incompleteness of a culture is a symptom of the incompleteness of the nation to which it belongs, and incompleteness

¹⁶ Ivan Dziuba, “Khudozhhii protses: 20-30-ti roky,” in *Istoriia ukrains’koi literatury XX stolittia* (Kyiv: Lybid’, 1993), 1: 134.

¹⁷ Ivan Dziuba, “Chy usvidomliuemo natsional’nu kul’turu iak tsilisnist?,” *Ukraina: Nauka i kul’tura*, 22 (1988): 313.

is a step toward non-being. Awareness of this, Dziuba believes, imposes a mission upon the Ukrainian intelligentsia:

... those who identify themselves as activists of Ukrainian culture must not neglect defending its national distinctiveness, for what is at stake is the historical fate of the people – because only the national distinctiveness of a culture guarantees the future of a people as a nation.¹⁸

The term used here, *vyznachenist* (“distinctiveness”), signals a concern with difference, separateness and maintaining boundaries. Dziuba is worried about the inadequacy of the links between the parts of the Ukrainian cultural whole, especially when compared to the weight of their links to the culture of the colonial centre; these links to the old metropolis ignore the cultural specificity of Ukraine and contribute to its erasure. A significant part of the essay is dedicated to enumerating elements of this imbalance: the shrinkage of the functional sphere of the Ukrainian language, the growing dominance of Russian over Ukrainian in the print media, the reluctance of artists to draw on native folk sources, the absence of national characteristics in architecture, the scarcity of Ukrainian theatre and cinema, the lack of a Ukrainian-language mass culture or youth subculture, and the rift between villages, where Ukrainian is still spoken, and the Russian-speaking cities. The essay concludes with a list of concrete initiatives that might counteract this decay of national cultural completeness. The agent of these initiatives must be the state: it had introduced Ukrainianization in the 1920s, it had been for decades the only active force in society, and it remains, in Dziuba’s view, the sole institution capable of driving cultural change.

Other essays by Dziuba from this period (“The Cultural Heritage and the Cultural Future,” “Independent Ukraine and Problems of Culture,” “Ukraine on the Path of State Formation”)¹⁹ have a similar structure: a description of the cultural (and therefore national) malaise and the identification of colonialism as its cause are followed by a list of proposals. What is to be done? First of all, clarity must be reached about the real assets of Ukrainian culture (as distinct

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹⁹ Ivan Dziuba, “Kul’turna spadshchyna i kul’turne maibuttia,” *Ukraina: Nauka i kul’tura* 24 (1990): 9-106; Ivan Dziuba, “Nezalezhnist’ Ukrayni i problemy kul’tury,” in *Ukraine in the 1990s: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Ukrainian Studies Association of Australia, Monash University, 24-26 January 1992*, ed. Marko Pavlyshyn and J.E.M. Clarke (Melbourne: Monash Univ., Slavic Section, 1992), pp. 3-26; Ivan Dziuba, “Ukraina na shliakhakh derzhavotvorenia,” *Literaturna Ukraina*, Aug. 27, 1992, pp. 1-2.

from its colonial image, which trivializes even those cultural achievements that have been possible in a thoroughly uncongenial environment). Second, there is a need to recover the cultural heritage, bringing back into the public ken the cultural treasures that have been proscribed, destroyed, or deliberately ignored. Mechanisms for the publication and diffusion of these formerly repressed components of the culture need to be established. There is a need to reassess, not only the elements of culture that have thus been returned, but also those that commanded reverence in the Soviet period. In this process of re-evaluation it is necessary to purge oneself of the stereotypical images of one's culture that have been engendered in the process of colonial dominion: the stereotypes of Ukrainian culture as predominantly rural, bookish, archaic, bereft of an elite stratum, and derivative.²⁰ Later Dziuba would point to the fact that the problem lies not in self-stereotypes alone, but in stereotypes of Ukrainianness in the collective imagination of the former colonial master.²¹

In order to combat old and pernicious ideas, new and better ones are needed. The complex of such ideas Dziuba calls a new conception of Ukrainian culture. This conception is not normative in the narrow sense of the word. It does not comprise a set of prescriptions for the content and forms of an ideal Ukrainian culture. Rather, it is a list of attributes that, from Dziuba's perspective, would be desirable for the Ukrainian culture that is in the process of being formed. This culture should be aware of the whole of its history; it should be open to, and ready for dialogue with, the rest of the world; it should be able to generate objects of aesthetic value "that have meaning for humankind as a whole: this last, in particular, is the sign of the maturity of an ethnos."²² In order for such a conception to have a chance of being translated into reality, an "infrastructure" provided by the state is necessary: legislation should ensure sufficient budgetary support for state initiatives to support Ukrainian culture and should defend the producers of Ukrainian culture against excessively powerful competitors.

Such recommendations, of a piece with the cultural protectionism practised in many parts of the world, might seem reasonable for a recently independent country seeking to shrug off the burden of colonialism. In Ukraine, however, even during the brief period of Dziuba's tenure of the post of minister of culture, they proved impossible to implement – in part due to the weakness, both financial and political, of the nascent Ukrainian state, in part

²⁰ Ivan Dziuba, "Nezalezhnist' Ukrayny i problemy kul'tury," pp. 13–20.

²¹ Ivan Dziuba, "Vzaiemodia dvokh kul'tur ta stereotypy ii retseptsii," pp. 39–42.

²² Ivan Dziuba, "Nezalezhnist' Ukrayny i problemy kul'tury," p. 21.

because of the lack of a sufficiently broad social consensus, and therefore of political will, in their favor.

Culture in the new Ukrainian state experienced changes in its social role that had not been anticipated by the generation of the Sixtiers. Its members welcomed the demise of the cultural monologue sanctioned by the party-state. But many new developments they found deplorable: the collapse of the close relationship that the cultural sector had enjoyed with the state; the appearance of a rift between “serious” culture and mass culture and the declining authority of the former; the subjection of culture – especially popular culture – to market forces and, accordingly, the burgeoning influence of American and Russian mass culture; and even the fragmentation of the now reduced and marginalized cohort of friends of “high” culture into bickering cliques divided by ideological and stylistic orientation or even by birthplace or age.

In these circumstance, were one to apply Dziuba’s criteria, Ukrainian culture would appear not merely to have failed to establish itself as complete, but to have rejected completeness as a value altogether. And yet, Dziuba did not add his voice to the choir of neoconservative denunciations of the new cultural environment, perhaps because he found interesting and engaging many of the works generated by the “incomplete” (or perhaps merely multifarious) Ukrainian culture of the 1990s. However that might be, it is a fact that under Dziuba’s editorship the journal *Suchasnist*, which moved its place of publication from New York to Kyiv in 1992, remained one of the leading forums for challenging works of the new high culture and for cultural critique based on non-traditional theoretical models.

Dziuba’s writings of the second half of the 1990s and 2000s indicated that he was alert to the shifts in the role of culture that accompanied and followed the demise of the Soviet system. In the ideologically monopolist state, culture, though subordinate to the needs of propaganda, had at least been unquestionably *important*. This state of affairs could not survive a transition to more pluralist arrangements, where not the state, but the tastes of the statistical majority began to determine the supply of cultural goods. In cultured Ukrainian circles there was widespread chagrin at the popularity of Russian-language pulp (*chtyvo*) and low-brow cultural products generally (*popsa*). Such disapproval, however, reflected not so much a negative aesthetic or even political assessment of the phenomena in question, but bewilderment in the face of the decline of the social authority of high culture. This decline was especially unnerving, as it signalled a radical reduction of high culture’s capacity to contribute to the nation-building project. In the meantime it became clear that

under certain circumstances phenomena of popular culture – Ruslana's victory in the Eurovision Song Contest of 2004, the Europe-wide popularity of the boxers Volodymyr and Vitalii Klychko, or the unexpected successes of Ukraine in the football World Cup of 2006 – could contribute to the evolution of a sense of national solidarity. This solidarity, however, had little in common with a national identity rooted in a shared veneration of the monuments of a national high culture.

Another shift, no less momentous, affected the social role of the intellectual. The classical function of the European intellectual was to be an articulate member of civil society, a contributor to the communications within the Habermasian public sphere that generated consensus as to the social good and the strategies for achieving it. In the imperial polities of Eastern and Central Europe during the nineteenth century, all of them more or less illiberal, intellectuals were more often than not adversarial in their relationship to the state. In the Soviet Union the mainstream intellectual was reduced to a service function, but the traditional role of critiquing the status quo remained the prerogative of the few who defined themselves as dissident. The coming of independence presented Ukrainian intellectuals with a dilemma: should they switch from opposition to the role of supporting the new mainstream (as suggested, after all, by the logic of their former position) in the hope of helping shape a polity congruent with their vision of the good society and state, or should they remain in opposition, reacting critically to the ever more troubling behaviours of the new country's political leadership? For Dziuba the dilemma was especially acute. His critical and polemical brilliance notwithstanding, his primary impulse was constructive: to contribute to the building of the good society. Clearing away the intellectual debris of the old structure was important, but more important still was the task of producing blueprints for the new one. Dziuba found that he could preserve both of these components of the intellectual's brief by focussing on a new key concept: that of identity. If in the early days of independence the object to be constructed had presented itself to him as culture in its condition of completeness, this now seemed a premature ambition, and a preliminary operation, the production of a national identity in the community at large, would command Dziuba's expository and polemical skills.

Though culture played a central role in Dziuba's writings from the 1960s onward, he never attended explicitly to its definition. It is clear, however, that the term "culture" for Dziuba subsumes two related, but distinct, concepts. At times, "culture" means the sum of human behaviours learnt in the process of socialization. More often, however, "culture" is high culture – those parts of

literature and the other arts that require for their production and reception a certain level of education, and that are deemed to have meaning and purpose beyond the function of entertainment, which is the domain of popular culture. It is to high culture that Dziuba ascribes a determining role in the creation of the nation. The terms “culture” and “nation” acquire in Dziuba’s writings after 2000 a mystical patina reminiscent of writings of the Romantic period:

Culture becomes a means for expressing national identity and for making manifest the meaning of a people’s existence. Moreover, culture is the self-reproduction of the nation in time and space. [. . .] The culture of a particular nation is the creative process through which, using nature and history as materials, it recognizes and asserts itself; it is, in the most general terms, the embodiment of its historical destiny.²³

The genealogy of such reflections includes Herder with his ideas of the unrepeatable genius and equal dignity of nations and Hegel, for whom nations, alongside other expressions of the human, are expressions of Spirit on its path toward consciousness of itself. For Dziuba, however, the Romantic notion of culture as the collective property of a nation is augmented by the idea that this shared culture imbues the thought and feeling of each individual member of that nation. Culture is, to be sure, a product of the people, but at the same time, “at the deepest, most fundamental level, it is the motive force of individual behaviour.”²⁴ Culture is “not merely the collective product of spiritual activity, but a deeply individual, profoundly intimate phenomenon. The creation of culture is the most organic form of the self-realization of the personality, and the ability of human beings to move freely within the sphere of culture is the most reliable guarantee of their spiritual sovereignty.”²⁵

It is from such formulations that Dziuba’s understanding of identity can be abstracted. Human identity is so wholly integrated with culture, and culture so firmly connected to nation, that every discussion of identity for Dziuba becomes a discussion of *national* identity. Dziuba concedes in his article “Ukraine in Quest of a New Identity” (2002) that identity is “multifaceted, mutable and dynamic,”²⁶ and yet the aspects of identity that he names

²³⁾ Ivan Dziuba, “Iakym bude mistse ukrains’koi kul’tury v Ukraini?,” in Ivan Dziuba, *Sprava* (Kyiv: Ukrains’kyi svit, 2001), pp. 135–240, here pp. 224–25.

²⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

²⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²⁶⁾ Ivan Dziuba, “Ukraina v poshukakh novoi identychnosti,” in Ivan Dziuba, *Ukraina: Kam’ianystyi shliakh do demokratii* (Kyiv: Zapovit, 2002), pp. 5–35, here p. 5.

here – the historical, political, territorial, linguistic and cultural – are components not of human identity in general, but of national identity. Such a point of view is, of course, idiosyncratic: national identity, important though it is in the opening decade of the twenty-first century, is but one of the possible layers of human identity. Furthermore, as a broad literature has demonstrated, national identities arose in particular historical circumstances in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; national identity is not given to human beings *a priori*. But it is national identity that Dziuba presents to his imaginary interlocutor as identity *per se*.

Given this starting point, it is scarcely surprising that what Dziuba perceives as the absence or inadequate development of national identity he judges to be a defect. Dziuba repeatedly offers historical explanations for such “incompleteness” of identity among many of his compatriots, returning to the narrative of tsarist and Soviet measures against Ukrainian culture and, especially, against its key symbol, the Ukrainian language. These narratives are generally offered in partial exculpation of the carriers of such imperfect – from Dziuba’s standpoint – identities. At the same time – and this, too, is as characteristic of Dziuba’s texts of the 2000s as it was of his writings in the late 1980s and early 1990s – Dziuba repeatedly plies his chief implied addressee, the Ukrainian state, with lists of what needs to be undertaken to promote Ukrainian national identity among citizens of Ukraine: initiatives in education and media policy, and moderate protectionism with respect to Ukrainian-language publishing and other parts of the Ukrainian culture industry. As in the past, Dziuba continues to see the state, for all its weakness, as the sole plausible instrument for strengthening national identity. The state’s primary function, from the Dziubian perspective, is to further the dignity of the nation and bring to realization its potential; this can occur only through culture, which, in turn, exists through the works and acts of people endowed with an adequate sense of national identity. The belief that this may actually happen is grounded in Dziuba’s fundamental social optimism: “the social mechanism has great reserves of self-healing,” he wrote in 2001.²⁷

But, in addition to forms of national identity able to propel the transformation of culture, nation and state, there also exist forms of identity inadequate to this task. In Dziuba’s texts, and in reference to the Ukrainian situation, we encounter evaluative labels for them: *malorosiistvo* (“Little Russianness,” the

²⁷⁾ Ivan Dziuba, *Ukraina pered Sfinksom maibutn’oho* (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim “KM Akademii,” 2001), p. 29.

sense of provincial inferiority relative to an imagined Russian metropolitan culture), *zrusyfikovanist* (the condition of having appropriated a Russian identity), *zdeukrainizovanist* (the condition of having lost an originally Ukrainian identity), *nedosformovanist* (the condition of not having a fully formed identity). Also regrettable is the fact that “there exists a large mass of humanity that is permanently inert with respect to culture in any form.” Such people in the Ukrainian context, according to Dziuba, often use a hybridized Russian-Ukrainian form of speech, the “so-called *surzhyk*.²⁸ A situation where a significant proportion of the population of Ukraine regards itself as having a relationship to Russian culture is problematic for Dziuba; Russian identity should be based in what Dziuba would concede to be an adequate and appropriate grasp of Russian culture. “Only a few individuals in Ukraine,” he asserts,

... have an adequate apprehension of Russian culture and ‘have the right’ (an essential right, as distinct from a psychologically grounded subjective one) to identify themselves with it. ... The remainder of those who orientate themselves toward Russian culture do so in a state of sweet self-delusion, satisfying themselves with random contacts and accidental impressions.²⁹

Such passages illustrate Ivan Dziuba’s normative pathos. The acceptance of things as they are would mean, for him, accepting as natural and legitimate the consequences of historical injustice and violence. Over two centuries, an imperial culture was artificially, strategically and maliciously imposed in pursuit of particular state interests. The cultural consequences of such colonial oppression are in no way “natural,” though they may well be widespread and widely apprehended as natural. For this reason it is the duty of the Ukrainian state, and of people of good will, to create for the autochthonous culture conditions at least equal to those that continue to exist for the culture of the former colonizer.

And yet, there are passages in Dziuba’s writings where the struggle between the ideal norm and the imperfect reality on the front of national culture is temporarily suspended. One such place is Dziuba’s memoir “A Life Viewed Not In Isolation” (2006), where the description of images of childhood and youth spent in the Donbas brings to light, in a non-judgmental way, different combinations of the (national) identities discussed above: only Ukrainian,

²⁸⁾ Ivan Dziuba, *Spraha*, p. 143.

²⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

only Russian, and various permutations and intensities of the two.³⁰ Dziuba incorporates into his memoir texts authored by him at this time – some in Russian, others in Ukrainian. Perhaps this unusual neutrality is a concession to the experience of the Orange Revolution of 2004, which vividly illustrated the ability of people of different cultures to conceive of themselves as members of a single political nation.

This, however, is one of the exceptions that throw the rule into even sharper relief. In general, the guiding thesis of Dziuba's work is the fusion of the destinies of individual and nation, and its guiding imperative – the full development of both through the full development of national culture. Nowhere is this union more profoundly embodied for Dziuba than in the life and works of the most venerated figure of Ukrainian culture, Taras Shevchenko. Placing Shevchenko into historical context and disclosing the relevance of his opus for present times was a task to which Dziuba repeatedly returned. In 1989, when it was still politically risky to do so, Dziuba discussed the relationship between Shevchenko and nineteenth-century Russian nationalism³¹; in 1995, in the aftermath of the Russian-Chechen war, he offered a brilliant political reading of Shevchenko's satirical masterpiece, "The Caucasus."³² Finally, in 2005, there appeared Dziuba's 700-page treatise *Taras Shevchenko*, dedicated to the task of revising the tradition of Soviet Shevchenko scholarship and placing at the centre of attention a dimension of the poet's work and influence which that tradition had denied or ignored: Shevchenko's impact on the evolution of Ukrainian national identity. In his book on Shevchenko Dziuba brought into play the two devices that had always served him well: the broad presentation of context, based on profound erudition and research; and detailed attention to the words of texts. At the same time, Dziuba avoided giving rise to the impression that his treatise belongs to the narrow field of literary scholarship. The implied reader is the ordinary person, armed with common sense and a curiosity about things of contemporary importance. Likewise, the implied author does not for a moment conceal his political engagement behind a mask of scholarly objectivity. He writes about Shevchenko because, from his

³⁰ Ivan Dziuba, "Ne okremo vziate zhyttia. Dokumental'na povist'," *Kyiv* 1 (2006): 15-137 and 2 (2006): 33-113.

³¹ Ivan Dziuba, *U vsiakoho svoia dolia (Epizod iz stosunkiv Shevchenka zi slov'ianofilamy)* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1989).

³² Ivan Dziuba, "'Zastukaly serdeshnu voliu . . .' (Shevchenkiv 'Kavkaz' na tli nepromynal'noho mynuloho)," *Suchasnist'* 3 (1995): 80-94 and 4 (1995): 96-112.

perspective, the narrative of the maker of a unifying Ukrainian national identity is a narrative of the twenty-first century no less than of the nineteenth.

Besides symbolising the union of the individual and the national, Shevchenko embodies for Dziuba the identity of the national and the universal, which becomes evident when the fruits of a fully developed national culture need no mediation to take their place as elements of world culture: “Shevchenko belongs not to Ukraine alone, but to humanity at large, though every word of his is about Ukraine.”³³ No sentence could more simply or compactly express Ivan Dziuba’s fundamental beliefs and explain his historical, aesthetic and moral judgments: the entity that commands highest respect and calls for constant development is triune, and its three facets are the person, the nation, and humanity.

³³⁾ Ivan Dziuba, *Taras Shevchenko* (Kyiv: Al’ternatyvy, 2005), p. 698.