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The Doctrine of the Fathers and Anarchism-Biocosmism

Alexander Svyatogor

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1922

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Pskov, Kiev, Omsk, and Irkutsk, counting the poets E. Grozin, V. Anist, Pavel Ivanicki, Nikolay Degtjarev, B. Gejgo-Uran, and Pyotr Lidin among their members. In 1922, they had organized forty-five poetry readings and debates in Petrograd. In 1923, the Petrograd “northern group” of Biocosmists, led by Yaroslavsky, split from the Creatorium. They led evening lectures on regeneration, eugenics, rejuvenation, and anabiosis, until the journal *Immortality* was shut down by the authorities on charges of pornography. Moving away from the organization, Svyatogor transposed the Biocosmist program into the Free Labor Church, organized by Reverend Ioannikiy Smirnov. He broke off from it in 1923, joined the Central Council of the League of Godless Militants, and began to publish antireligious articles and tracts for the magazine *Antireligioznik*. His last article, published in 1936, was entitled “Missionaries—Agents of Imperialism.” On June 25, 1937, Svyatogor was arrested as a member of an “anti-Soviet mischief group.” On November 4, 1937, he was sentenced to eight years detention in a labor camp, disappearing from history’s tracks.

dorov's philosophical texts, Svyatogor began to investigate questions of immortality and resurrection of the deceased around 1913. He founded the Verticalists group in 1914. In Ukraine, Svyatogor promulgated his tenets of "volcanism," an antecedent to Biocosmism that proclaimed the abolition of death and domination over the universe, under such slogans as "Revaluation of all values!" and "Down with Kant!" After the February Revolution, Svyatogor moved to Moscow, where he befriended the anarchist actor Mamont Victorovich Dal'skii. He spent his time expropriating "bourgeois apartments" until the Bolsheviks appointed him commander of the Black Guards, who were to take part in the events of October 1917 in both Petrograd and Moscow. He joined the group of anarchist-futurists who published the Moscow newspaper *Anarchy* from spring 1918, before briefly returning to Ukraine where he fought against the Austrian and German occupiers. Back in Moscow, Svyatogor wrote for the Bolshevik press and worked for the People's Commissariat. Additionally, he was involved with the Pan-Russian Section of the Anarchists-Universalists, led by Abba Gordin. In December 1920, Svyatogor cofounded the anarchist group of Biocosmists with the poet Alexander Borisovich Yaroslavsky. Profoundly influenced by Fedorov's and Tsiolkovsky's writings, the Biocosmists proclaimed the overcoming of limitations of time and space under the slogan "Immortalism and Interplanetaryism." Wishing to dissociate themselves from the "epigones of ancient anarchism" to form a new "dictatorship of the proletariat," the Biocosmists-Immortalists broke off from the Anarchists-Universalists with the publication of their manifesto in December 1921. To organize the activities of the new group, Svyatogor founded the club Creatorium of Biocosmists, later renamed "Creatorium of the Russian and Moscow Anarchists-Biocosmists." He edited the bimonthly journal *Biocosmist* in Moscow, while Yaroslavsky edited the journal *Immortality* in Petrograd. Groups of Biocosmists-Immortalists were forming in Kharkov,

1

We, who have raised the flag of a new ideology, are interested in the role of anarchism in the Revolution—primarily in the aspects concerning its thought. We will examine the main direction taken by this thought, which is divided into two chronological periods.

During its first period, this thought remains 100 percent faithful to the "doctrine of the fathers." It is, in fact, unequivocally and slavishly subordinate to it. Bound by tradition and uncritical, it stands united. "Unified anarchism" is therefore the right term for this first, uncritical period.

The second, critical period begins as a consequence of the unsuccessful leap into anarchy. Severe revolutionary reality (it could not be otherwise) has led to a revision of the principles of its founding fathers.

Both periods have revealed the inadequacy of the doctrine of the fathers, calling into question the validity of anarchist thought per se and consequently driving it into a state of impasse. We believe that deliverance is possible only through Biocosmism.

2

We will deal with anarchist thought as follows. We are not concerned here with the chiefly national and historical reasons for its main characteristics. Neither will we attempt a causal explanation of its character, or try to justify it from an impartial, historical point of view. It is clear that it proved unworkable during the Revolution and is, therefore, indefensible.

We believe that weakness and immaturity are its main characteristics. It has all the signs of immaturity and its critical side is too weak and underdeveloped. It is absolutely unable to make any independent judgment as to reality and its con-

tent. It is unable to analyze the succession of experiences and events that have occurred, and has no idea of the workings of a whole complex of reasons and great ideas behind them. Its powers of analysis are purely formalistic, as well as superficial and unrealistic. The same is true of its capacity for synthesis.

Immature and weak thinking easily becomes subordinate to authority. The weaker it is, the more subordinate it becomes, with a correspondingly diminished field of vision and sense of independence. Anarchist thought is too dependent on authority. It has raised the fathers' doctrine to the status of *vox Dei* and become a slave to tradition. It is true that it is outwardly active, but its energy is one in which individuality is subservient to doctrine and blindly follows authority to the letter.

It is naturally subordinate, unoriginal, and one-sided because it is weak and repressed, and this has had a drastic effect on its outward form. It wears an eloquent mantle of rhetorical utterances and expressions, but how monotone, hackneyed, stereotypical, and deadpan all these are! Not one word is truly alive, authoritative, and original, able to provoke serious attention or, at the very least, attest to a sense of independent inquiry.

These are the principal characteristics of anarchist thought in the first period. Then, because of the pressure of disappointments, a critical element begins to be voiced, but still cannot free itself from its chief flaw: a belief in the infallibility of its past commandments. Laboring under tradition, it grows weak, its "doctrine" sucking it dry and depriving it of the lifeblood that would enable it to open out independently onto a new path with a wide-open vista before it.

3

We must differentiate between two cycles of "unified anarchism": the Moscow cycle and the Ukrainian cycle. Superfi-

form of coercion is therefore inevitable, but is completely different from the coercion practiced by a bourgeois state. Any objections to the Soviet state as an oppressive system acting to suppress individual freedoms and the like are therefore nonsensical.

The old form of the state is a thing of the past. The new Soviet state has different aims and methods. The Soviet system, which in principle guarantees man's freedom from the yoke of external nature, is even now encouraging the growth of individual awareness by freeing the individual from the yoke of tradition. There is growing awareness of personal freedom and responsibility and, as a result of Sovietization, of new ties between people. The people taking part in the Soviet system are closely linked through their awareness of the importance of the struggle that is taking place—a struggle that requires self-possession and discipline. Men are learning to respect each other and themselves by taking part in the Soviet system whereas bourgeois society—a society of masters and slaves—precludes the need for mutual respect.

We believe that, as the struggle with the old world recedes owing to the victory of the Revolution, the Soviet state will increase its struggle against the natural yoke. Both these forms of struggle opening the path to Biocosmism suggest that the questions of *immortalism* and space travel should already be on the current agenda.

Alexander Fedorovich Agienko (known as **Svyatogor**) (1889–1937) was an anarchist-futurist poet and founder of the Biocosmist movement. His father was a priest living in the Kharkov Governorate. As early as 1909, Svyatogor expressed his futurist ideas in the notorious publication *Vekhi* (Milestones), a collection of seven essays whose contributors were selected by Pyotr Struve. Under the influence of Fe-

22

Our journey toward Biocosmism is dependent on the Revolution itself, and the courage shown by the revolutionary class. Biocosmism was spawned in the storm of revolution; the Revolution is integral to our beliefs and we rely on its support. The Biocosmist order will emerge from the victory of the Revolution. The aim of the Revolution is the destruction of class inequality, which is a necessary prerequisite to the formulation of questions related to Biocosmism in their totality. But Biocosmism, as the maximum program, can already now promote the unity, fervor, and victory of the revolutionary class.⁹

23

While we believe that the state will be eliminated on the way to Biocosmism, we would also emphasize the current need for a positive relationship with the Soviet system. The Soviet state should not be confused with the bourgeois state. The Soviets are a necessary organization within the revolutionary struggle against the old world. They are also instruments in the struggle with nature; that is to say, they have a natural tendency toward Biocosmism.

Of course, in a period of transition, the Soviets cannot act purely as organs of struggle against oppression by nature; they must fulfill their function within the struggle with the old world by assuming the form of a dictatorship (in a transitional phase, dictatorship is both necessary and expedient). Some

⁹ Svyatogor is recasting the “maximum program” previously raised by the anarchists-maximalists, active under the Union of Socialists-Revolutionaries Maximalists until its expulsion from the SR Party after the first Revolution of 1905. The anarchists-maximalists formed an independent political party up until the Revolution of 1917, notoriously resorting to terror and expropriation in the interest of the “maximum” or full socialization of all lands, factories, and means of production.—Ed.

cially, they seem to represent different types of anarchism, but essentially, and especially from the point of view of thought, they are intrinsically connected enough for each one to seem merely one part of a single, organic whole.

The Moscow cycle covers a period of agitation and propaganda. This was the period of anarchist rhetoric, which, owing to the Revolution, received wide publicity through public speeches and newspaper columns. This was also a period when the Soviet regime was verbally criticized. It is true that, at that time, verbal criticism and propaganda went hand in hand with corresponding action. Although action was not of central importance, it was an integral part of rhetoric.

The liquidation of the Moscow unified anarchist organizations certainly did not mean the liquidation of the ideas and actions of united anarchism per se. Although it proved unsuccessful in Moscow, unified anarchism spread to Ukraine, where it became part of the petty bourgeois movement, which was particularly receptive to the anarchist experiment. Whereas in Russia its character was primarily rhetorical, in Ukraine it became active. The idea behind it remained the same, however. It is a utopian project to immediately establish the “kingdom of freedom.”

4

Moscow’s “unified anarchism” immediately revealed all the characteristics of anarchist thought, including its internal weaknesses and a slavish subordination to doctrine. In October it emerged from a period of silence and proceeded down the path prescribed by the doctrine of the founding fathers. It did not stop to investigate the reality in which it had to act. It was not that there was no time to think, but rather that there was no need. In fact, thinking betrayed an inadmissible lack of trust in the doctrine. It did not come

to independently and intelligently analyze and build—taking time and place into consideration. Instead, it came with a ready-made set of principles and anachronistic measures as well as the determination to act according to its dictates. This is why there was no room for independent criticism. It was, in fact, the doctrinaires themselves who criticized the Soviet authorities by rehashing appropriate passages from Bakunin and Kropotkin, rather than exercising any form of independent judgment.¹

The fathers maintained that, when revolution came, everything would fall neatly into place due to man's natural sense of solidarity (Kropotkin), or justice (Proudhon), or because he had clarified the meaning of universal gain (Fourier). Everything should be left to its own devices and anarchy would automatically emerge triumphant from the maelstrom of revolution, like a powerful and merciful queen, ultimately gaining a foothold on Earth. The fathers remained true to Manilov's way of thinking, and it was the same for their obedient servant.² She did not realize that the situation demanded different ways of thinking and acting and failed to grasp the obvious truth that any attempt to change the existing order would cause those who were committed to its preservation to react and that, therefore, any rhetoric concerning humanity's nat-

¹ Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842–1921) was a revolutionary anarchist, scientist, and philosopher. Born into a family of high Russian nobility, Kropotkin gave up his princely title early on to endorse republican ideas and advocate for the emancipation of serfs. An important member of European anarchist circles, he lived in exile for a considerable part of his life, his activism often leading to his arrest and imprisonment. Upon his return to Russia after the 1917 Revolution, Kropotkin remained critical of the authoritarian socialism he attributed to the Bolsheviks, all the while promoting his notion of an ethically oriented anarchist philosophy.—Ed.

² Manilov, a character from Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842), is portrayed as a sentimental serf owner whose self-esteem, noble, and well-educated nature disguises a profound lack of personality and willfulness. Manilov stands as a caricature of a European-influenced Russian nobility lost to superficial philosophizing and mere obliviousness.—Ed.

Resurrection is the only area where we overlap, but it is really only a matter of *superficial terminology*, and essentially we have about as much in common with Fedorov as with any priest talking *in his own way* about immortality, which is to say, absolutely nothing. His understanding of resurrection is very naive and takes on a very crude form of materialism—atomism—an arch-utopian collection of scattered atoms “in the bodies of our forefathers, which they possessed at the time of death” (an idea that does not essentially rule out the death of the resurrected bodies, the reconstruction of which is his Sisyphian task). It involves a mechanical, rather than a creative, reconstruction. Our ideas of creativity are entirely different from Fedorov's. Biocosmism, which is not restricted to working within the confines of existing laws and material properties, aims at a change to the very laws of existence and material through man's creative powers (without Solovyov's, Trubetskoy's, and Bely's grace from above). [Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov (1853–1900), Russian religious philosopher and publicist; Prince Sergej Nikolaevic Trubeckoj (1862–1905), Russian philosopher, representative of “concrete idealism,” pupil and friend of V. Solovyov; Andrey Bely (actually Boris Nikolaevic Bugaev, 1880–1934), Russian symbolist poet and writer.—Ed.] Because it is devoid of any ideas concerning creativity, Fedorov's utopia is organically alien to us. This difference is also reflected in our rejection of the “brotherhood” so dear to Fedorov, essentially an uncreative relationship between people, and in our espousal of *the work collective*.

His vision of two worlds—divine and human—led Fedorov to a complete justification of tsarism. His “philosophy” is the last (fairly archaic) attempt to save tsarism and the Orthodox Church. Fedorov's ideas, which are derived from the Orthodox Church and tsarism, took the form of a simple and muddled local teacher's program. He based his entire “philosophy” on this program, which included provincial school theology and a slim acquaintance with the natural sciences. The divine and the human were blended into an insoluble contradiction and anomaly, of which he remained unaware.

The Revolution has revealed all the absurdity of Fedorov's attempt to rescue tsarism and the Orthodox Church. Nothing would have remained of his “philosophy” if it had not included among its followers living corpses from the intelligentsia dismally playing on the pipe of national-cadet “philosophy” and a few “Fedorovites.” Whereas, for the former, Fedorov's ideas were used as only one of the arguments to support their “program,” for others, as his imitators, he represented a shaky bible condemning them to a hopeless balancing act between the Orthodox Church and atomism.

20

Biocosmist society is supremely free. Our task requires terrifying freedom for man. Man (humanity) is never left to his own devices as he is in Biocosmism. He does not pin his hopes on God or on life after death. He faces death as a commonplace reality and must conquer this evil alone without external help (from above), by taking his own completely authentic path.

21

In Biocosmism, people unite as coworkers, and the work collective is the most creative form of relationship. The work collective is the opposite of brotherhood since the latter is an uncreative relationship. In brotherhood, relationships are arranged in advance and are naturally predetermined, so there is no creativity involved. In the work collective nothing is arranged, but everything is achieved and created. Brotherhood is conservative, uncreative, and historically obsolete. In our energetic thrust forward into immortality and space, we support not brotherhood but the work collective.⁸

⁸ Ignorant people, who have secondhand knowledge of Nikolai Fedorov's "philosophy," and our enemies, criticize us for our proximity to Fedorov. Leaving Fedorov's "philosophy" aside for a special analysis, suffice it to say here that Biocosmism came into being entirely independently without any knowledge of this "philosophy" and that, later on, when we did become acquainted with it, we saw that it was totally different.

Fedorov, who adheres to a religious and platonic dualism that is alien to us, affirms the existence of two worlds: a perfect, divine world, and a human world, into which—according to the Bible—death entered, with man's task involving a struggle with evil and death, which takes the form of resurrecting the dust of our forefathers. But recognizing one, real, infinite world, we start by realizing the personal immortality of the living and *interplanetaryism*, on which our "common task" is based, with resurrection being relegated to third place. *As far as Fedorov is concerned, the problems of realizing personal immortality (central to Biocosmism) do not exist—everything is centered around resurrection, and is reduced to and governed by it.*

ural solidarity and universal love—and this at a time of a decisive struggle between two worlds—was tantamount to the most harmful illusion. Weak and subservient to tradition, she was incapable of independently assessing reality and questioning the relevance of past teachings.

The fact that the founding fathers were opposed to dictatorship meant that dictatorship was both unnecessary and harmful. The fact that they rejected any form of authority also meant that revolutionary power was automatically put on par with any other power. The anarchists, who adhered to their principles to the letter, rejected any measures taken by the Soviet regime. They opposed the revolutionary discipline of work, the organization of the village poor and the army, showing a complete lack of understanding of the aims of the Revolution.

And so the anarchists remained true to form. At that time, there was not a single person capable either of reflecting independently on the new reality, or able to assess whether the old doctrines suited it. The doctrinal pressure was such that it squashed individuality, so that nothing remained except a tongue singing to the general tune. This is why we never encounter original, independently minded people among the unified anarchists. They are like a flock driven along before us, containing at best only shallow individuals who are almost indistinguishable from the general human masses.

5

It was impossible to reconcile oneself with unified anarchism and to tolerate it patiently in a revolutionary situation, especially when it behaved—intentionally or unintentionally—as a cover for thugs or white guard elements. But, after it had failed in Russia, it spread to Ukraine, where it was taken to absurd lengths, finally exhausting itself both as an idea and as a course of action.

Unified anarchism in Ukraine was a decisive attempt to put the fathers' doctrine into practice and create an anarchist order. Undoubtedly, it was the bourgeois nature of the social class (the wealthy peasantry) that forced it to cultivate anarchy. The anarchists followed their theoreticians in this respect. Not only did Bakunin show a particular affection for obsolescent forms of Russian communal economy, but so did Proudhon and Reclus. This affection was undoubtedly reactionary.

It is of note here that the experience of anarchy led to its being construed, aptly, and not without a hint of sarcasm, as "powerless power." The experience of anarchism led to a regime of power that contradicted its doctrine's very prophecies and was very decisively at variance with that doctrine. This indicated that that doctrine was null and void because it was unsatisfactory in practice, finally exposing its utopianism. The ship that had been built by Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others, and steered by the anarchist church, was smashed to smithereens on the rocks of anarchism under Nestor Makhno.³ It was destroyed not by external obstacles, but by its very nature.

The ship was wrecked and the bell of old anarchism sank to the bottom. And so it was that a lone anarchist (neo-nihilist) voice rang out like a dirge in the pages of the anarchist press: "I am deeply convinced that anarchist ideology is splitting at the

³ Nestor Ivanovych Makhno (1888–1934) was a Ukrainian anarcho-communist who commanded the independent Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine (also known as the Black Army) during the Russian Civil War of 1917–1922. Maintaining a stateless anarchist society organized around libertarian communes of workers and peasants, the Makhnovists defended the Free Territory of southern Ukraine against Imperial German and Austro-German occupants and Ukrainian nationalists. In opposing the Bolshevik regime, which he deemed dictatorial, Makhno was forced into exile soon after siding with the Red Army in 1920 to defeat the White Army. He joined a group of Russian anarchists in Paris, contributing to the journal *Delo Truda* (Workers' cause) and copublishing the pamphlet "The Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists" in 1926.—Ed.

18

In the new society, people will unite not because of coercion, but rather because achieving society's great aims gives them a sense of community. A society that tries to achieve *interplanetaryism*, individual immortality, and the resurrection of the dead is universally accepted because it works toward the greatest common good. This shared, supreme goal precludes any individual betrayal on behalf of another goal, since it is bound to be a lesser one. There is therefore no need to negotiate loyalty to this society contractually (Proudhon et al.), since individual will and action are infinitely repeated in comradeship and, at the same time, individual strength is enhanced by every step taken toward achieving Biocosmism. This society is "the tool and sword with which you hone your natural strength." We support the individual and the sense of community more than anyone else. A pendulum's swing on one side is as great as the corresponding pendulum swing on the other, so that the more resolutely individualist we are, the more socially active we become.

19

The new society is not made up of small communities or groups, which "do not feel the need to expand their boundaries" (Godwin et al.). The old, erroneous bias toward small units must be rejected in order to overcome atavism and the legacy of the Dark Ages. Maximal space comes first and foremost (or else it's the petty bourgeoisie). The union of all people can only carry out its tasks in large units. Biocosmist society encompasses the whole world and is interplanetary.

The old society is disintegrating. It is experiencing an “Indian summer” and retreating into the shadows, with the horror of night awaiting it. Our task is to build a new life, a new existence, and a new culture founded on the great goals of Biocosmism.

Modern (bourgeois) society leads to death and is based on it. Because the individual is essentially mortal, it proclaims death as the individual’s ultimate fate. Bourgeois society is deeply corrupted by the conviction that “death is inevitable.” Religion and old scientific consciousness sanction this conviction, stifling man’s spirit of revolt against death. Modern society sanctions all the evils by affirming death and localizing space. If this continues, a complete moral and physical degeneration threatens mankind. Such a society must be destroyed right down to its very foundations.

Society must be built on Biocosmist foundations. By supporting the basic right of every one of us to eternal life, Biocosmist society rules out any division into exploiters and exploited, into slaves and masters. It will guarantee supreme individual development and self-fulfillment. It will become supremely harmonious through the unified ideal of its members. When Biocosmist ideas become the conviction of each one of us (another option is impossible), there will be no need for force, and everyone will willingly carry out the ideas that govern society.

We affirm the unity of all in respect to our great aim. The struggle for individual immortality—for life in the cosmos—manifests the universal will. Restriction in time (death) and space cannot be overcome through individual effort; therefore, collective effort is required. Only solidarity for the sake of our great aim will guarantee victory over death and cosmic space. The struggle for immortality and life in the cosmos is the true basis of the new social order.

seams, that there is no one to patch or darn its tattered remains and that it would be pointless anyway.”

6

That this critical period was necessary is all too obvious. The failures were too serious, even for thinking that was subordinate to authority. The failure of unified anarchism in Moscow was already cause for this period of critique. When it had begun to unfold in Ukraine, it was already being criticized in Moscow, and the fact that these things occurred simultaneously had a negative impact on this criticism. Thinking that was tottering shakily down a revisionist path could not avoid following what was happening in Ukraine. This was why, when the death knell to Makhnovism had been sounded, more resolute voices began to be heard among its critics.

In the first period, anarchist thought is characterized principally by its stubborn adherence to doctrine, subordination to authority, and inert fanaticism, and, in the second period, by the manifestation of its internal weakness and impotence. In the first period, it is resolute in its actions, and, in the second, paralyzed by criticism—becoming diffident, cowardly, and devoid of creative impetus.

Anarchist thought took the path of criticism not because of a deep-seated disillusionment concerning the rightness of its ideology, but because of pressure from external circumstances. The ideological cracks in unified anarchism caused by its failure in Moscow did not form without a hope for their repair. Further setbacks were necessary before a few individuals finally concluded that “anarchist ideology was splitting at the seams.” However, when the final setbacks had occurred, anarchist thought still did not manage to summon the strength it needed. Realizing that the old ideology had collapsed—at least

as far as a few individuals were concerned—anarchist thought remains in a state of impasse to this day.

7

Attempts at criticism can be divided into two groups according to their starting points. The first is in favor of retaining the old ideology, with any criticism focusing on tactical revision. The second covers a number of opinions based on the need not only for substantial tactical revision, but also calling for a complete overhaul of the old ideology. The ideas of both groups proved unworkable. The first demonstrated that its critical assumptions were ineffectual, and the second pointed out the worthlessness of its conclusions.

8

The syndicalists were the first to abandon the empty rhetoric of unified anarchism. They decided to embark on a positive course of action to build a new society and initiate a mass workers' movement. But in order to do this, they believed that they should remain faithful "to the precepts of their mentors, Mikhail Bakunin and Pyotr Kropotkin."

This led to contradiction. The positive building of a new society required an important premise: the acceptance of a dictatorship that could secure this building process. But the founding fathers believed that dictatorship was totally unacceptable.

This contradiction could have been resolved by acknowledging that their mentors belonged to an era when they could scarcely have had any objective knowledge of how a new society should be built. Instead, the syndicalists resolved the opposition by agreeing to adhere to their mentors' precepts, which the events in Ukraine merely served to reinforce.

16

The supreme good is immortal life in the cosmos. The supreme evil is death. We mean real life and real death here. All other goods belong to life, and every evil is rooted in death. Biocosmism, which proclaims freedom from "natural necessity" and humanity's right to eternal existence in the cosmos, manifests the supreme freedom and supreme right of the individual.

The supreme good should be realized by the maximum in creativity. We place particular emphasis on the creative moment in Biocosmism. Personal immortality is not a given, but must be won, realized, created. It is not the restoration of what is lost, as in the Bible, but the creation of what is yet to be. It is not a matter of renewal, but of creativity. The same is true for conquering the cosmos. *Immortalism* and *interplanetaryism* are the maximal—but not the ultimate—aim. They represent stages and means to an immeasurably great creativity. But this goal lies before us and is, for this reason, the greatest of all.

Our goal (the realization of personal immortality, life in the cosmos, resurrection) precludes mysticism, which throws everything into chaos, into a void. It involves the realization of rational consciousness. But we do not identify our goals with reality, nor do we base our ideas entirely on what is given; otherwise we would be forced to abandon freedom, creativity, and individuality.

Biocosmism also precludes skepticism and unleashes human creativity, giving it incredible power and a mighty scope. This beacon toward which humanity is moving is the foundation and guiding thread for both individual and social activity. It covers the whole breadth of human action. It is Biocosmism, and only Biocosmism, that is capable of defining and regulating a perfect society.

instinct for immortality and the thirst for eternal life and creativity are the individual's basic characteristics. The individual will develop his creative forces until he establishes himself in immortality and in the cosmos. This new concept must equate to the discovery and affirmation not of an abstraction, but of a real living human being.

Man is not an insignificant being with amusing pretensions to all-embracing endlessness, which was what Kropotkin believed in his time, proving it quasi-scientifically with ideas based on the Copernican revolution in astronomy (the Slavophile Nikolai Danilevsky⁶ believed the same thing, as does, nowadays, the much-talked-of Oswald Spengler). New horizons are opening out in front of humanity; they are vast and unprecedented. The struggle with death is, in principle, no longer impossible (as confirmed by Steinach, Andreev, Kravkov, et al.).⁷ We can already prove the possibility of individual immortality (*immortalism*) scientifically, and achievements in physics and technology give scientific credence to the problem of cosmic space (*interplanetarism*).

⁶ Nikola Jakovlevic Danilevsky (1822–1885) was a naturalist and cultural philosopher. A representative of Pan-Slavism, he designed a biology-oriented cultural theory in his work *Rossija i Evropa* (In Russia and in Europe, 1869), which anticipated the ideas of Oswald Spengler.—Ed.

⁷ Eugen Steinach (1861–1944), an Austrian physiologist, was on the board of the physiological department of the Biological Experimental Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna. Steinach attracted worldwide attention for his attempts to “artificially rejuvenate” testes and ovaries, and for his use of x-rays and vasoligature, which he carried out on animals and humans. In addition to Tsiolkovsky, Steinach was the most important hope-bearer for the Biocosmists. Nikola Pavlovic Kravkov (1865–1924), a pharmacologist, and a professor at the Military Medical Academy in Petrograd, operated experiments to revive dead tissue.—Ed.

Their fathers' word reigned supreme both in theory and in practice, and their good intentions came to nothing. The enterprise was doomed since, in its attempt at criticism, anarchist thought chose to ignore the very question that it had raised.

9

The universalists went a little further. They understood that there should be “a different approach to the Soviet state,” and, because of this, they asked the question: “What is the purpose of anarchism in a socialist state, and what should its methods be?” They acknowledged that the old form of anarchism had neither tried to find, nor clarified, “a course of anarchist action and anarchist practice within a socialist society,” and that this was why anarchism, with its empty universal slogans, seemed defenseless in the current revolution. The question was, then, how to find a new “method” that “would not duplicate the old method, because there was a different environment, different circumstances, and a different power structure.” Rather than “pinning its hopes on foreign comrades” or seeking a solution to the problem in “former literature,” it had to decide on an independent course of action.⁴

These questions were formulated fairly clearly, but their terms were insufficiently defined for any satisfactory answers to emerge. For example, a bare statement such as “the method must be synthetic” or “its concomitant elements potentially consisting of syndicalism, cooperativism, class struggle, and

⁴ The anarchists-universalists (also known as inter-individualists) organization evolved out of the Moscow Federation of Anarchists in 1920, under the leadership of theorist Abba Gordin. Espousing a pan-anarchist view, the universalists aimed at the establishment of a worldwide and transnational anarchist society united under the banner of an international communist revolution. Gordin and his followers stood against all national-level parliamentary and democratic systems of government, promoting cosmopolitanism and cosmo-economism.—Ed.

communism” did not constitute a positive answer. How and on what basis can the elements of such a “hodgepodge” be reconciled, and do they not smack of “unified anarchism”? It was the same with “the approach to the Soviet state.” A necessary approach was not formulated ideologically.

Universalist thought revealed itself as weak because its essential point of departure was the same as the syndicalists’: the doctrine of the fathers first and foremost. The universalists answered the question as to why the anarchists were weak and getting nowhere by stating: “At any rate, it is not because anarchist ideology has reached the crisis point.” Terrified of introducing anything new, the universalists declared that universalism was definitely not a new doctrine and that the old ideology would remain.

The doctrine of the fathers prevailed, and any attempts to remedy the situation proved fruitless. The universalists could not find a new “method,” nor were they able to negotiate a satisfactory relationship with the Soviet authorities or, indeed, play a valid part in the creation of a new life. Their method seemed naive and their relationship with the government indecisive. As a minority in the universalist organization, we—the Biocosmists—have been at pains to point out that only a new ideology can provide precise answers to the questions raised by experience. The old way of thinking remained, however, essentially redundant and mesmerized by tradition, and its response to our affirmations was purely hostile.

10

The first of the critical attempts of the second type belongs to the aforementioned neo-nihilist, and the second to the anarchist Darani.

The neo-nihilist thought long and hard about the theory and practice of anarchism, eventually coming to the conclusion

individual that was too one-sided and superficial. A sociopolitical figure, an egoist (Stirner), and an altruist (Godwin) were substitutes for the living individual. Kropotkin reduced the individual, as though scientifically, to an “insignificant man,” or he was construed as a rebel, a destroyer, and his positive side—his creative potential—downplayed. In short, anarchism did not take the full individual into account, but rather produced its one-sided abstraction.

The individual was understood in his static form within a narrowly defined cycle from birth to death, and not in his dynamic sense or in terms of his creative forces. Death became firmly established in all the anarchist doctrines (it is odd that anarchist thought, which protested against all authorities, did not take up arms against the authority of “natural death”). The individual was considered outside his unquenchable thirst for immortality and, thus, outside of genuine creativity.

The old form of anarchism took an essentially negative view of the individual. It appeared to affirm individuality but, in reality, denied it, suggested a bad opinion of it, left it in the shadows, and replaced it with an abstraction. Anarchism belittled man and, at the same time, left him too much to his own destiny, ultimately bringing him to individual and social catastrophe.

This is a fundamental flaw in all anarchist ideas. Its core was too weak and its ideas correspondingly weak, one-sided, abstract, lifeless, and utopian.

15

We do not believe in the naked individual consciousness, the sociopolitical figure, the egoist or the altruist, the mask or the abstraction, but in the living human individual. We cannot settle the matter entirely by resorting to egoism or altruism, or by placing the individual within any abstract framework. The

correct appraisal of the situation, can resolve the crisis, create a new concept, and, thus, resolve the current impasse.

We believe that Biocosmism is a decisive, courageous, and sound way of thinking. It is an antidote to cowardly and weak-willed contemporary anarchist thought, and represents a new concept to replace the doctrine of the past. Of course, we dare not hope that weak anarchist thought, despite the fact that it questions the founding fathers, will actually turn to us—to Biocosmism. It is too cowardly and pathetically self-involved for that! But we have grounds to hope that fresh, strong, optimistic anarchist forces that have experienced the Revolution will turn to Biocosmism and are, in fact, already doing so.

13

In the heat of the Revolution, the old anarchist structure did not withstand scrutiny. But its essential core—the living human individual—was not reduced to ashes, and never will be. Even if the ideological structures built on this foundation crumbled when exposed to fire, the foundation itself will always remain in place for new structures. More spacious and impressive buildings replace the old, demolished buildings to suit the times and, more importantly, the individual (and society).

14

New structures require the expansion of existing foundations. All the abstract concepts in the old form of anarchism define the individual too narrowly. This restricted notion is a fundamental flaw in the anarchist doctrines, rendering them intrinsically unsound from their inception. It has taken time to prove that they are, in fact, essentially illusory.

The old form of anarchism never properly resolved the problem of the individual. Its concepts were based on an idea of the

that anarchism-communism “is closing its eyes to practical existence and its approach to it is irrational,” that syndicalism “is on a downward spiral ... is squandering anarchism’s last resources,” and that individualism is utopian. Under Makhno’s leadership and “powerless power,” anarchism was united “as a synthesis of these different strands left anarchism in a vacuum.” As a result, the neo-nihilist “was deeply convinced” that “anarchist ideology was splitting at the seams.” The old anarchist’s confessions are of the utmost significance.

This is a reasonable basis for rejecting the fathers and building a new ideology on the original foundation of anarchist thought—namely, individuality. But, even then, anarchist thought remained true to itself. Having ascertained that “there was no one to patch or darn its tattered remains and that it would be pointless anyway,” the neo-nihilist immediately slid into a vulgar form of Stirner’s ideas, rekindling interest in them by employing the prefix “neo.” The lack of creative potential in this type of thought is already apparent in its prefix; its qualities exist only in its grandiloquent title.

11

Darani’s attempt to resolve the situation was more serious. Clearly, in his view, “the present moment had completely uncovered all the flaws in the old form of anarchism” so that “every area of anarchism needs to be revisited, including its theory, practice, and organizational matters.” Theoretically speaking, there is, to this day, no “balanced, unified anarchist worldview.” “The most recent facts from the sociological and economic sciences, and social psychology,” “are apparently completely useless to us.” “The scientific and philosophical foundations of political anarchism are therefore particularly shaky. Theories concerning the class nature of anarchism are undeveloped, leading to a complete lack of clarity concerning

the position of anarchism among the other sociological sciences.” “The criticism of contemporary reality alone, without any clear idea of the work involved, is therefore inadequate.” “The lack of agreement concerning the position of an anarchist society within the historical development of human society and the objective conditions of its implementation mean that a clear formulation of particular and urgent problems, and questions of social and economic order, is impossible.” Matters were every bit as bad from the point of view of anarchist attitudes toward organization. Such were “the universal flaws in the old form of anarchism.” These had to be clearly emphasized so that they could be overcome, said Darani, otherwise “we will have a poor, pathetic substitute for anarchism.”⁵

Darani did not just emphasize anarchism’s flaws. He believed that, since they were predominantly theoretical, he had to plan a suitable exit strategy. The most important thing was to underpin anarchism with proper philosophical foundations. In fact, the old form of anarchism is no stranger to philosophy, but it still adheres to the legacy of eighteenth-century rationalism. Darani believed that this legacy should be discarded and replaced by contemporary intuitive philosophy.

Of course, he was right: it *was* absurd to still be living according to eighteenth-century philosophy. But isn’t an escape into intuitivism the same as entering the sphere that is presently occupied by the modern Western spiritual quest—a sign of the destruction of the foundations of an old order shaken by the spirit of revolution? The old ideals are disintegrating and the minds that professed them are unable to accept anything new and robust, striving for spiritual deliverance and a fusion with the absolute. This modern spiritual quest fits nicely with philosophical intuitivism, and is supported by it. Seeing intuitivism as

⁵ Svyatogor’s citations come from an article by an anarchist-universalist named Darani, published in 1921 in *Универсал* [Universal], the journal of the anarchists-universalists, under the title “V chem krizis anarkhizma?” [“Why is anarchism in crisis?”].—Ed.

anarchism’s way of getting out of its impasse definitely means coming down on the side that is oppositional to the revolutionary class with its shrewd, vigorous, realistic, and positive type of consciousness.

The impotence of anarchist thought surfaces once again in Darani’s quest, which, contaminated by a blend of intuitive mysticism, bears all the hallmarks of the moribund generation of intelligentsia.

12

The quarrel between anarchist thought and the Revolution was essentially one between utopianism and realism. That utopianism lost is only natural. The Revolution dealt a blow to those who supported the doctrine of the fathers, primarily from a tactical point of view. But as they had their doubts about tactics, it was only natural that they should also have their doubts about theory. Anarchist thought went one step further by embarking on an ideological revision, and was ultimately forced to admit that its doctrine was “splitting at the seams.” Restoration and reform would, therefore, be useless. However, anarchist thought was too dependent on authority to allow for any independent creativity. It found a lifeline in its doctrine, which saved it from its inherent weaknesses. Because it was weak and subordinate to authority, it was unable to escape from its state of impasse.

The Revolution meant the collapse of modern anarchist thought and the end of historic anarchism; the new spirit was disillusioned with old concepts that were narrow and backward. The Revolution also meant the need for a new form of anarchism (both in theory and in practice). But only someone who is independent, free from tradition and authority, who is able to bring revolutionary courage to creativity and offer a