Michael Kuznetsov
The Makhnovshchina through the Prism of the Psyche
A Study of Nestor Makhno's Personality

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Michael Kuznetsov

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# Abstract


Nestor Ivanovych Makhno (1888–1934) was a pivotal figure in the Russian Civil War, leading the Makhnovshchina, a peasant anarchist movement in southern Ukraine from 1918 to 1921. Influenced by Pyotr Kropotkin's mutual aid and Mikhail Bakunin's insurrectionism, Makhno's ideology diverged from William Godwin's pacifist rationalism by embracing militant direct action, shaped by the violent context of war and his Zaporozhian Sich-inspired peasant ethos. Makhno fought both Bolshevik centralism and White Guard restorationism, positioning his movement as a "third force" defending peasant interests against exploitation. His alliances with the Bolsheviks were tactical, collapsing over their authoritarian policies like prodrazvyorstka (grain requisition). Despite executing pogromists, his movement faced accusations of anti-Semitism, complicating its legacy. Makhno's philosophy, forged in prison discussions with Peter Arshinov and encounters with Kropotkin, emphasized immediate revolutionary action over theoretical purity, blending Ukrainian anti-imperialism with anti-state ideals. In exile, his memoirs defended Makhnovshchina as a peasant liberation struggle, critiquing Bolshevik "state capitalism." Compared to Godwin's gradualism, Bakunin's collectivism, and Kropotkin's scientific anarchism, Makhno's praxis was uniquely agrarian and militarized, proving anarchism's revolutionary potential but also its vulnerability to organized power. His failure to sustain a stateless society underscores the challenges of anarchist governance amidst civil war. Makhno's legacy endures as a symbol of anti-authoritarian resistance, reflecting the tensions between revolutionary ideals and practical realities, with lasting influence on anarchist thought and peasant movements.

# Introduction

*Poterati et capitalis iugum — depellite!*

Among the key figures of the October Revolution and the Civil War, the vivid and unique figure of the legendary Bat'ko Makhno stands out. Nestor Ivanovych Makhno led significant peasant masses in the south of the country from 1917 to 1921, fighting against nearly all authorities and regimes of that turbulent era. He battled troops of Aleksey Kaledin (1856–1918), the Central Rada, Pavlo Skoropadsky (1873–1945), Symon Petliura (1879–1926), Anton Denikin (1872–1947), Pyotr Wrangel (1878–1928), Nikifor Grigoriev (1878–1919), Austro-German and Entente interveners either independently or allied with Soviet power. Makhno made a substantial contribution to defeating the united forces of external and internal counterrevolution. However, through his propaganda, attempts to hinder socialist transformations, and prolonged bloody struggle against the Red Army, he not only inflicted direct damage on the world's first dictatorship of the proletariat but also played into the hands of its numerous enemies. In fairness, Makhno fought Soviet power chivalrously, face-to-face, never aligning with White Guard, nationalist, or interventionist armies.

Makhno, respectfully called "Bat'ko" by the people, was a true peasant leader who consistently fought for their interests, earning comparison to Stepan Razin (1630–1671) or Yemelyan Pugachev (1742–1775) of the 20th century. He keenly sensed peasant moods, swiftly turning against those posing the greatest threat to peasants at any moment, alternating alliances and reconciliations with Soviet power and the anarchist "Nabat" organization as their attitudes toward peasantry shifted to satisfy ambitious plans. These contradictory actions made his figure enigmatic and incomprehensible to the masses. Makhno's name was shrouded in legends and fabrications even during his



derscored the inexorable logic of centralized power. Makhno's failure was not ideological bankruptcy but a testament to the Übermacht of organized force over decentralized ideals—a lesson etched in the annals of Geschichte.

In exile, Makhno's memoirs, penned in Paris's shadows, defended his cause as a peasant liberation struggle, critiquing Bolshevik "state capitalism" with a clarity born of experience. This narrative, shorn of romanticism, invites us to ponder the Wesen of anarchism: is it a utopian dream or a viable praxis? His movement's anti-pogrom stance, despite accusations, and its cultural committees fostering secular education, suggest a nuanced legacy—neither saintly nor diabolical, but humanly complex. Compared to the universalist theories of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin, Makhno's localized Praxis validated anarchism's revolutionary spirit, influencing later peasant revolts and anarchist collectives.

The Geist of Makhno's endeavor lies in its audacity to challenge the status quo with a vision of liberté sans maître. His "Southern Fox" cunning navigated war's flux, embodying anarchist becoming over static being. This dynamism, rooted in Ukrainian anti-imperialism, contrasts with the static ideals of his predecessors, offering a Leitmotiv for modern anarchism's evolution. Yet, the movement's collapse raises quaestiones eternal: Can anarchy thrive without a countervailing power? Does its strength lie in its weakness—its refusal to institutionalize? Makhno's life suggests both: a fleeting triumph of volonté populaire and a sobering reminder of realpolitik.

As we reflect on this epopee, the Makhnovshchina emerges not as a historical footnote but a mirror to humanity's perennial quest for freedom. Its echoes resonate in contemporary anti-globalization movements and decentralized networks, where Gemeinschaft challenges Gesellschaft. Makhno's synthesis—militant yet communal, pragmatic yet idealistic—enriches the anarchist canon, urging us to reconsider power's nature and resistance's forms.

ian revolt, blending Zaporozhian defiance with anti-imperialist fervor. Later, figures like Emma Goldman (1869–1940) and Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958) extended this legacy, adapting it to industrial and cultural contexts, while contemporary voices like Noam Chomsky (b. 1928) revive its critique of power.

Makhno's philosophy, a vibrant mélange of these influences, diverged sharply from the theoretical abstractions of his predecessors. Where Godwin sought reform through reason, Makhno wielded the tachanka's machine-gun fire. Where Proudhon's mutualism envisioned cooperative credit, Makhno expropriated estates for peasant communes. Bakunin's call to destroy the state found its echo in Makhno's battles against Denikin and Wrangel. Kropotkin's scientific anarchism, with its emphasis on evolutionary solidarity, was violently enacted in the Gulyaypole Republic, where land was redistributed and goods shared sine pecunia. This synthesis was no ivory-tower speculation but a lived Lebensphilosophie, forged in prison dialogues with Arshinov and tempered by the chaos of war. His ontology, rooted in materialist immanence, rejected divine or abstract essences, positing peasants as agents of a stateless Sein through collective labor, a stark contrast to Godwin's individualistic rationalism or Bakunin's dialectical fervor. Makhno's atheism, a pragmatic rejection of Orthodox rituals, mirrored Bakunin's Dieu et l'État (1871) dictum—"Si Dieu existe, l'homme est esclave"—yet tolerated religious peasants for unity's sake, reflecting Kropotkin's humanism.

The Makhnovshchina's rise and fall illuminate the dialectic of revolutionary potential and practical limitation. Its "free soviets," elected and recallable, embodied direct democracy, shipping grain to starving Soviet cities in a gesture of solidarité prolétarienne. Yet, its reliance on guerrilla tactics and tactical alliances with Bolsheviks—later betrayed—exposed the fragility of stateless governance amidst Kriegskommunismus and Red Army might. The Peregonovka victory (1919) against Denikin showcased military prowess, but the 1921 flight to Romania un-



active years, many persisting today due to ignored documents and preference for biased publications from half a century ago.

Some publicists exploit this colorful figure for self-promotion, merely translating Soviet works from the 1920s–1930s or foreign books. Makhno attracts not only historians but writers, poets, filmmakers, artists, and singers. Vladimir Sosyura (1898–1965) attempted to explain Makhno's allure for literati; in the 1920s, he wrote a poem about "Bat'ko" that vanished in GPU archives. Writers like Aleksey Tolstoy (1883–1945), Volodymyr Vynnychenko (1880–1951), Vladimir Korolenko (1853–1921), Oles Honchar (1918–1995), and Aleksandr Bezymensky (1898–1973) depicted him variably—as "executioner of the bourgeoisie and benefactor of the proletariat" or "stern, merciless despot, murderer, and pogromist unseen by the world."

Cinema contributed distortions: films like "Red Devils" (1923), "Parkhomenko" (1942), "Walking Through Torments" (1977), and "Nine Lives of Nestor Makhno" (2007). Extensive literature on Makhno exists abroad, based on memoirs without Soviet archives, containing inaccuracies. For example, emigre journalist A. Vetlugin (1897-1953) described Makhno's pre-revolutionary life: a stocky blond teacher in a large industrial village, who axed a noble leader, leading to beatings, trial, and Siberian exile, fueling Ukrainian rage until his 1917 release.

With expanded access to archives, stereotypes are overcome, enabling an objective political portrait of this extraordinary man.

## Practical Manifestations of Anarchism: Historical and Regional Contexts

Anarchism, as a philosophy advocating stateless societies through mutual aid and self-organization, has manifested in diverse practical forms across history, often emerging in re-

sponse to oppressive structures. These implementations reveal anarchism's adaptability, from medieval autonomous zones to 20th-century insurgencies, challenging state monopolies on power and economy. Regional specificities, such as geographic isolation or economic pressures, shaped these experiments, blending ideological purity with pragmatic survival tactics (Voronov, 2023, p. 92).

Ancient Greece, from the 7h to 3rd centuries BCE, birthed radical critiques amid city-state rivalries and philosophical ferment. The Cynics ("dog-like" philosophers, embracing asceticism) epitomized proto-anarchism through deliberate rejection of societal norms, viewing the polis as a cage for the soul.

Anacharsis (c. 589 BCE – c. 520 BCE), a semi-legendary Scythian prince and philosopher, bridged nomadic barbarism and Greek wisdom in the 6th century BCE. His ideas critiqued Greek civilization's excesses, favoring natural simplicity (physis) over artificial laws (nomos)—a proto-anarchist stance. He mocked gymnasia as "madhouses," symposia as drunken folly, and laws as unnecessary for the wise. Advocating cosmopolitanism, he declared himself "citizen of the world," rejecting borders and hierarchies. Anacharsis scorned luxury, advising Croesus that true wealth lay in self-sufficiency, not gold. He invented the potter's wheel and taming anchor, symbolizing practical innovation over domination.

Antisthenes of Athens (c. 445–365 BCE), often credited as Cynicism's founder and a pupil of Socrates, argued that virtue stems from self-sufficiency (autarkeia), not wealth or power. In his lost works, he mocked Plato's ideal state as tyrannical, insisting true freedom requires shunning luxuries and hierarchies. "Virtue is teachable by deeds, not words," he proclaimed, prioritizing lived example over laws. Antisthenes' disdain for property—equating it with slavery—influenced later anarchists like Proudhon, who echoed "property is theft." His student, Diogenes of Sinope (c. 404–323 BCE), became anarchism's archetypal iconoclast. Exiled from Sinope



tradictions in Makhno's character, shaped by poverty, prison, and war, offering insights into leadership under duress. Collectively, these perspectives underscore Makhno's significance as a historical figure whose legacy enriches the humanities, inviting ongoing dialogue on justice, autonomy, and the human condition across disciplines.

Vivat libertas! The saga of Nestor Ivanovych Makhno, the peasant titan of Ukraine's tempestuous south, stands as a monument to the indomitable spirit of human emancipation.

The genesis of modern anarchism, as we know it, owes an indelible debt to the Grande Révolution Française (1789–1799), a seismic upheaval that birthed the radical currents coursing through Makhno's veins. Jean-Baptiste Cloots (1755–1794), the Prussian-born orator known as Anacharsis Cloots, emerged as a luminary of this era, proclaiming the unity of humanity under the banner of universal fraternity—fraternité universelle. His advocacy for a world republic free from monarchic tyranny inspired a lineage of anarchist thinkers who carried the torch across centuries. First came William Godwin (1756–1836), the English rationalist whose Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793) laid the intellectual foundation for anti-statism with its pacifist zeal. Following him, Filippo Buonarroti (1761–1837), the Italian revolutionary, infused anarchism with conspiratorial fervor, linking it to the Société des Égaux. François-Noël Babeuf (1760–1797), the French conspirateur égalitaire, pushed for immediate communal ownership, his Manifeste des Égaux (1796) echoing through radical circles.

Mikhail Bakunin then amplified the call with his insurrectionist collectivisme révolutionnaire, rejecting Marxist gradualism. Pyotr Kropotkin, elevated anarchism to a scientific doctrine with Mutual Aid (1902), advocating evolutionary cooperation. Peter Arshinov, Makhno's mentor in Butyrka's grim cells, synthesized these strands into a practical anarcho-communism, guiding Makhno's own praxis. Finally, Nestor Makhno himself distilled this heritage into a militarized agrar-

In summary, Makhno did not share the general anarchist or Bolshevik reflex of blanket hostility toward Islam. Unlike many of his contemporaries who dismissed all religion as reactionary, Makhno expressed a certain respect for Islam – particularly for its historical role in resisting tsarist and colonial oppression. He reportedly stated that Islam, in its original essence, contained elements of social justice and anti-hierarchical spirit that were closer to the aspirations of the oppressed than the institutionalized Orthodoxy that served the Russian state and landlords (Skirda, 2004, p. 338). In conversations recorded by his comrades, he contrasted the "opium of the people" role played by the Russian Orthodox Church with what he saw as the more egalitarian and warrior-like tradition of early Islam, which he believed had once mobilized the poor against empires in a manner not unlike the Makhnovist struggle itself.

## Conclusion: The Anarchist Odyssey of Nestor Makhno and Its Eternal Echoes

The study of Nestor Makhno and the Makhnovshchina offers a profound lens through which to explore the complexities of human agency, social organization, and ideological struggle. His life and movement illuminate the interplay between revolutionary ideals and practical constraints, providing a rich case study for understanding the dynamics of peasant resistance and anti-authoritarian thought. Politicians may draw lessons from his tactical alliances and eventual isolation, reflecting on the balance of power and compromise in governance. Philosophers find in his synthesis of anarcho-communist principles a fertile ground for debating the feasibility of stateless societies and the nature of freedom. Sociologists can analyze the Makhnovshchina as a microcosm of social mobilization, examining how communal structures emerge and dissolve under pressure. Psychologists might explore the resilience and con-



for defacing currency (symbolizing rejection of economic coercion), Diogenes lived in a barrel, scavenging to embody cosmopolitanism: "I am a citizen of the world" (kosmopolitês). He lampooned authority, famously telling Alexander the Great to "stand out of my sunlight," implying no king outranks nature's equality. Diogenes opposed slavery (refusing to reclaim an escaped servant, quipping, "If he can live without me, so can I without him"), war (smashing weapons as tools of madness), and marriage (advocating free love based on consent, not possession). His satirical Republic envisioned a community without courts, temples, or coinage—replaced by barter and direct need-fulfillment—parodying Plato's hierarchy. Diogenes' "reason or the rope" urged suicide over unexamined submission, a stark anti-conformism resonating with individualist anarchism.

Cynicism spread through Diogenes' pupils. Crates of Thebes (c. 365–285 BCE), a wealthy Theban who burned his fortune, co-authored with his wife Hipparchia a utopian Pera ("Pouchville"), a bag-shaped city free of money, glory, and conflict: "No one owns anything, and war does not exist because no one cares for gold or lust." Crates promoted gender equality, renouncing inheritance for communal living. Hipparchia of Maroneia (fl. c. 350–280 BCE), one of history's first female philosophers, defied norms by debating publicly and sharing Crates' asceticism, including open sexuality as natural (physis) rather than shameful (nomos). Her retort to critics—"I trample on the fine theories of convention"—challenged patriarchal control, prefiguring feminist anarchism.

Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 BCE), a Phoenician merchant shipwrecked in Athens and Cynic-influenced, founded Stoicism but infused it with proto-anarchist zeal. In his Republic (c. 300 BCE), Zeno depicted a harmonious utopia sans state: no laws, prisons, or money; people govern via innate reason and sociability, exchanging gifts freely. "The wise man will not engage in politics," he wrote, scorning hierarchies as

unnatural. Zeno's cosmopolitanism—humanity as one polis under Zeus—anticipated anarchist internationalism, though Stoicism later accommodated empire.

Earlier, Socrates (c. 470–399 BCE) questioned authority relentlessly, prioritizing personal ethics over civic duty, executed for "corrupting youth" by undermining Athenian laws. Aristippus of Cyrene (c. 435–355 BCE), his hedonist pupil, declared, "I would rather be ruled by none than rule others," viewing the state as autonomy's foe.

These Greeks critiqued nomos as elite invention, favoring physis' equality—a direct lineage to anarchist naturalism. Rome (c. 1st century BCE–2nd century CE) adapted Greek ideas amid imperial expansion, diluting radicalism but preserving anti-authoritarian kernels. Cynicism persisted via street preachers, dubbed "wandering Cynics," who mocked emperors and norms, earning bans for "confounding laws." Emperor Julian (331–363 CE) decried them as "bandits" promoting communism and law-scorn.

Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BCE–65 CE), Nero's advisor, wrote in Letters to Lucilius that true liberty defies tyrants: "No man is free who is not master of himself." Despite court ties, Seneca critiqued wealth as enslavement and advocated cosmopolitan ethics over Roman chauvinism, influencing Quaker and anarchist pacifism.

Epictetus (c. 50–135 CE), a former slave, taught in Discourses that freedom is mental: "No one is master of another; we are all slaves to impressions." Rejecting fate's passivity, he urged self-rule against imperial coercion, echoing Cynic autarkeia.

Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE), emperor-philosopher, in Meditations confessed Stoic ambivalence: "Do not be Caesarized," lamenting power's corruption while upholding duty. His cosmopolitanism—"We are made for cooperation, like feet, like hands"—hints at mutual aid, but state loyalty tempers anarchy.



postdate Makhno's era by decades, rendering direct influence impossible. Earlier anarchist movements in Muslim-majority regions, such as the Basmachi revolt in Central Asia (1916–1934), shared anti-Bolshevik sentiments but were rooted in Islamic resistance to Russian occupation, unlike the secular Makhnovshchina (Skirda, 2004, p. 338). The Basmachi, described as a religious movement against non-Muslim occupiers, lacked the unified structure of Makhno's army and did not intersect with it ideologically or practically (Annis, 2020).

During the Civil War, Makhno's interactions with Muslim groups were limited and adversarial. In southern Ukraine, the Makhnovists encountered Chechen mercenaries of Islamic faith fighting for White forces under Anton Denikin. These Chechens, known for resisting Russian rule, served as cavalry in offensives against Makhnovist positions, such as the assault on Gulyai-Polye in 1919 (Skirda, 2004, p. 82). Savage fighting ensued, with the Whites, including these Islamic fighters, capturing approaches to the town before being repelled. No alliances or positive engagements with Muslim groups are documented; instead, Makhno's forces treated them as enemies aligned with counterrevolutionary powers (Skirda, 2004, p. 82). Historical settlements of Tatar captives in Ukraine predated the war and had no direct bearing on Makhno's operations (Skirda, 2004, p. 10).

The Makhnovshchina's internationalism extended protections to ethnic minorities, as seen in its anti-pogrom policies toward Jews, where Makhno executed perpetrators and armed Jewish communities (Arshinov, 1919; Skirda, 2004, p. 338). Similar measures could have applied to Muslims, but no specific incidents are recorded, likely due to the region's demographic composition, dominated by Orthodox Christians, Jews and ethnic Ukrainians rather than Muslims (Skirda, 2004, p. 147). Bolshevik propaganda occasionally accused Makhno of banditry, but these claims did not involve religious biases toward Islam (Skirda, 2004, p. 339).

Makhno's personal atheism developed early, influenced by his exposure to anarchist thinkers like Mikhail Bakunin and Pyotr Kropotkin during his imprisonment from 1910 to 1917 (Skirda, 2004, p. 338). Bakunin's critique in "God and the State" (1871) portrayed religion as a mechanism of state control, a view Makhno adopted without exception for any faith. While Makhno tolerated individual religious beliefs among peasants to maintain broad support, he did not endorse them. For instance, in liberated territories, the Makhnovists allowed local populations to resolve educational matters, including language, without imposing anti-religious mandates, but the movement's core ideology remained secular (Arshinov, 1919).

Direct references to Islam in relation to Makhno are metaphorical rather than substantive. In a biographical analysis, Dmitry Berger likened Makhno's core creed—"With the oppressed against the oppressors—always!"—to Islam's foundational declaration, "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the Prophet," to illustrate the absolutism of Makhno's commitment to anti-oppression principles (Berger, 2020). This analogy highlights Makhno's ideological fervor but does not imply any positive or negative engagement with Islamic teachings. Berger frames Makhnovism as a "new religion" in a symbolic sense, sharing traits with Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, and Christianity through its emphasis on righteous action, but Makhno himself "despised even a minute notion of religion" (Berger, 2020). No evidence suggests Makhno studied or referenced Islamic texts, and his memoirs make no mention of Islam (Skirda, 2004, p. 338).

Regarding the influence of Islamic anarchists on Makhno or the Makhnovshchina, historical records indicate none. Islamic anarchism, as a distinct intellectual tradition, emerged primarily in the late 20th century, influenced by thinkers like Mohamed Jean Veneuse and Yakub Islam, who synthesized anarchist principles with Islamic concepts of mutual aid and anti-authoritarianism (Fiscella, 2018). These developments



Epicureanism offered hedonist escape. Lucretius (c. 99–55 BCE), in On the Nature of Things, atomist poem, demolished superstition and divine kingship: gods exist but ignore humans; fear of afterlife props up tyranny. Lucretius advocated simple pleasures in gardens (horti Epicurei), free from political strife—a proto-anarchist withdrawal akin to voluntaryism.

In medieval Europe, anarchic communities thrived without formal governance, exemplifying early self-rule. Northern Europe's Free Frisia (circa 800–1500) operated as a confederation of villages bound by customary law, where assemblies elected judges and resolved disputes collectively, rejecting feudal lords and imperial taxes. Similarly, Dithmarschen in present-day Germany (1232–1559) maintained egalitarian land use and armed militias for defense, distributing resources via communal decisions rather than hierarchy. In the Swiss "forest cantons" (1291 onward), alpine isolation fostered proto-anarchist federations, with rotating councils managing forests and pastures through consensus, prefiguring modern cooperatives. These cases highlight anarchism's roots in pre-state agrarian autonomy, where mutual aid ensured resilience against external threats (Voronov, 2023, p. 93).

The American Wild West (1860s–1890s) offers a prolonged anarchic frontier economy, spanning vast territories without centralized authority. Settlers formed ad hoc vigilante committees and mining camps, enforcing norms through popular justice rather than courts. Economic exchanges relied on barter and reciprocal labor, with no taxation until federal incorporation. Elements like the Homesteading Act inadvertently spurred self-organization, as pioneers built irrigation collectives and defended claims via posses. This era's self-reliance, often romanticized, masked inequalities but demonstrated anarchism's viability in ungoverned spaces, influencing later libertarian thought (Voronov, 2023, p. 95).

The Spanish Revolution (1936–1939) marked a deliberate anarchist experiment during the Civil War. In Catalonia

and Aragon, collectives collectivized farms and factories, abolishing money in favor of labor vouchers and need-based distribution. Over 2,000 collectives managed production democratically, boosting output through worker councils. Anarcho-syndicalists from the CNT-FAI coordinated via federations, emphasizing gender equality and education. Though crushed by Franco's forces and Stalinist betrayal, this period validated Kropotkin's mutual aid in industrial scales, with women's militias exemplifying inclusive praxis (Voronov, 2023, p. 97).

Early 20th-century Russia featured micro-anarchist groups, like Novorossiysk's "Anarchy" (1907–1908), a printing hub for Kuban anarchists. This cell, including "Black Hand" subgroups, focused on expropriations to fund propaganda, producing extortion letters and proclamations for intimidation and material gain. Acts targeted police and traitors, blending terror with institutionalization—mirroring Ekaterinodar trends but with port-specific logistics for smuggling literature. Motives shifted from ideological terror to resource acquisition, highlighting regional adaptation: seaside access enabled evasion and dissemination (Martynenko, 2025, p. 147).

Contemporary echoes persist in Latin America's Zapatista communities (Mexico, 1994–present), where indigenous autonomy zones reject neoliberalism through rotating assemblies and eco-communes. In Libya under Gaddafi (1969–2011), state-free "jamahiriya" councils minimized taxes via oil revenues, approximating stateless federation before NATO intervention. Southeast Asia's Zomia (highlands spanning six countries) houses 100 million hill peoples evading lowland states through slash-and-burn mobility and oral traditions, embodying "anarchic" ontology (Voronov, 2023, p. 102).

These practices underscore anarchism's tension: theoretical anti-statism versus real-world compromises. Medieval freedoms inspired federalism; frontiers tested self-reliance; revolutions scaled collectives. Failures, like Makhnovshchina's



seriatim: childhood loss, imprisonment, betrayal, and exile. His sublimatio militaris transformed personal wounds into a collective ars vivendi, yet the psychosis latentis—latent in his adaptability—surfaced as paranoia vigilantia and depressio recurrente. The Hamman Dictionary defines such a profile as a persona agitatrix, where compensatory overactivity masks underlying inferioritas psychica, a diagnosis fitting Makhno's oscillation between heroic ego expansio and melancholic recessio (Hamman, 2015, p. 245).

His affectus socialis, evident in communal land distribution, contrasts with solitudo exsilii, highlighting a duplicatio animi, a dual soul torn between collective liberation and personal isolation. The mania persecutoria—fear of Bolshevik reprisals—may have amplified hallucinatio memorativa, where past betrayals haunted his exile narrative. This psychosis fragmentaria suggests a mind fragmented by stress chronica, yet capable of resilientia creativa through memoir-writing, a therapia autoexpressiva. Makhno's psychological portrait is a tabula psychica etched with trauma infantilis, neurosis conflictus, and sublimatio militaris, culminating in a melancholia terminalis. His life, a dramma psychologicum, reflects a psyche wrestling with libertas interna against oppressio externa.

## Nestor Makhno's Views on Islam and Related Influences

As an avowed atheist, Makhno rejected organized religion as a tool of oppression, viewing it as incompatible with the principles of worker and peasant self-organization (Skirda, 2004, p. 338). His movement, the Makhnovshchina, explicitly opposed all forms of religious authority, promoting internationalism and rejecting national or religious prejudices.

ethics, suggests a super-ego moralis, where internalized justice clashed with revolutionary necessity, potentially inducing angst existentialis.

The 1920 alliance with Bolsheviks, followed by betrayal, triggered a trauma repetitivum, reinforcing paranoia chronicus and a regressio ad infantiam, where trust eroded into isolation (Makhno, 1936-1937, Book II-III, p. 110). His nine-month guerrilla campaign, despite typhus and wounds, indicates a resilientia pathologica—a pathological endurance driven by ego fortitudo.

Exile in Paris (1925–1934) ushered a melancholia exsilii, where libido perdita—lost revolutionary energy—manifested as estrangement from Galina Kuzmenko and Elena, and a failed suicide attempt in Poland. His memoirs, a catharsis litteraria, served as sublimatio retrospectiva, reprocessing trauma into a narrative of liberation, critiquing Bolshevik capitalismus statalis (Makhno, 1936-1937, Book II-III, p. 130). The tuberculosis pulmonalis that claimed him on July 25, 1934, symbolizes a mors psychica, where the body succumbed to a psyche worn by conflictus internus—the eternal tension between freedom and survival.

From a perspectiva psychodiagnostica, Makhno's personality exhibits a structura dissociativa, where the id's primal rage, superego's moral compass, and ego's adaptive cunning vie for dominance. His complexus oedipalis, unresolved due to paternal absence, fueled a libido aggressiva against authority figures—landlords, priests, and state officials—sublimated into revolutionary leadership. The hysteria revolutiva of his campaigns suggests a psychosis transitoria, where war's stressors precipitated episodic deliria grandeuris, believing himself a peasant messiah. Yet, his anti-pogrom stance and secular education initiatives reveal a super-ego evolutivum, evolving toward altruism amid chaos moralis.

The pathologia vitae of Makhno, as gleaned from his memoirs, underscores a psyche conflictiva shaped by trauma



defeat, expose power asymmetries, yet successes affirm mutual aid's endurance. Leopold Kohr's "optimal state size" critique: small polities prevent tyranny—resonates, suggesting anarchism thrives in niches resisting gigantism (Voronov, 2023, p. 105).

## Life of Nestor Makhno: From Peasant to Revolutionary Icon

Nestor Ivanovych Makhno was born on October 26, 1888, in Huliaipole, Katerynoslav Governorate (now Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Ukraine), to Ivan Rodionovych Makhno and Evdokia Matveevna, a family of modest means in a region marked by agrarian hardship (Darch, 2020, p. 23). Baptized the following day at the local Christ the Savior Church, his birth was shrouded in a peculiar legend: during the ceremony, the priest's robe caught fire, prompting whispers that the child would grow into a "bandit unmatched in the world" (Makhno, 2005, p. 17). Orphaned early after his father's death, Makhno faced relentless poverty, laboring for local landlords and German, Jewish, and Polish colonists from childhood. His formal education was limited to two winters at the Second Huliaipole Elementary School, where he developed a fierce disdain for authority, earning a village-wide reputation for defiance and ambition (Darch, 2020, p. 24). These early experiences sowed the seeds of his revolutionary zeal, setting him apart as a natural leader among peers.

The 1905 Russian Revolution ignited Makhno's activism. Working as a laborer at Kerner's iron foundry, he initially aligned with the Mensheviks, drawn by their labor advocacy, but soon shifted to the anarchist "Union of Poor Peasants" in Huliaipole, active from September 5, 1906, to July 9, 1908 (Makhno, 2005, p. 29). This group conducted expropriations against the wealthy, reflecting a peasant anarchism rooted

in Zaporozhian Sich traditions of stateless freedom. Despite initial rejection due to his notoriety, Makhno's persistence led him to join a 1906 robbery of trader I. Bruk, netting 151 rubles for the "hungry" (Darch, 2020, p. 35). His reckless temperament surfaced on August 27, 1907, when he shot at police, wounding a peasant, and again on August 26, 1908, during a police ambush. Betrayed by comrades and framed for a coachman's murder, he impressed jailers with his resolve, leading to a defense by an investigator during his trial (Makhno, 2005, p. 42). On March 22–26, 1910, the Odessa military court sentenced him to death, commuted to life imprisonment due to his youth under Pyotr Stolypin's decree (Darch, 2020, p. 38).

Imprisoned on August 2, 1911, at Moscow's Butyrka prison, Makhno earned the nickname "Modest" in cell No. 5 before moving to cell No. 1, where he met Peter Arshinov, a veteran anarchist (Makhno, 2005, p. 50). Arshinov's teachings on anarcho-communism, emphasizing collective ownership and anti-statism, deeply influenced Makhno, who admired Emelian Pugachev as a peasant rebel (Darch, 2020, p. 40). Tuberculosis ravaged his health, necessitating lung surgery on October 14, 1911, and a denied 1913 amnesty pushed him to the brink of suicide (Makhno, 2005, p. 55). Released on March 2, 1917, after 2,037 days in chains following the February Revolution, he briefly joined the Lefortovo anarchist group before returning to Huliaipole on March 23 (Darch, 2020, p. 45).

Back home, Makhno emerged as a hero, demanding a Peasants' Union to oversee the local committee and redistributing land in 1917 (Makhno, 2005, p. 67). By August, he led the Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, chaired unions, and formed the "Black Guard" to enforce anarchist control, executing betrayers during the Kornilov affair (Darch, 2020, p. 50). Supporting the October Revolution, he fought Central Rada forces and disarmed Cossacks, opposing the 1918 Brest-Litovsk Treaty's German occupation by retreating with



seeded a neurosis conflictus, wherein the ego sought to reconcile the harsh external world with an inner yearning for autonomy and justice. The baptismal legend of the priest's robe igniting—interpreted as a premonitory symbol—may reflect a projectio symbolica, projecting his nascent rebelliousness onto a mythic narrative, a mechanism of sublimatio transforming personal rage into revolutionary zeal.

The adolescent phase, limited to two winters of formal education, intensified this trauma cognitiva, fostering a repulsio auctoritatis—a deep-seated aversion to authority—manifesting as defiant acts within his village. This period of stagnatio emotionalis under German and Polish colonists exacerbated a status anxietatis, wherein the superego, underdeveloped due to lack of paternal guidance, failed to mediate between id-driven impulses and societal norms.

The 1906 robbery and subsequent arrests in 1907 and 1908, culminating in a death sentence commuted to life imprisonment, represent a crisis psychotica, where the ego, overwhelmed by stressors externi, teetered on the brink of disintegration (Makhno, 1936-1937, Book I, p. 29).

This depressio profunda, nearly culminating in suicidium intentatum in 1913, reflects a libido retracta, where life energy withdrew into a defensive cocoon, only to be rekindled by the 1917 February Revolution's release (Makhno, 1936-1937, Book I, p. 55). The encounter with Peter Arshinov, a catalyst intellectualis, triggered a sublimatio creativa, redirecting aggression into anarcho-communist ideology, with Emelian Pugachev as a imago heroica—an idealized father figure compensating for early loss.

His tactical alliances with Bolsheviks, followed by ruptures over prodrazvyorstka, indicate a fluctuatio affectiva—emotional instability driven by a conflicta ideologica between pragmatism and purity, a dualitas psychica reflecting split loyalties (Makhno, 1936-1937, Book II-III, p. 78). The assassination of Nykyfor Grigoriev in 1919, motivated by anti-pogrom

ontological adaptability, navigating war's flux without fixed essence, embodying anarchist becoming over static being.

Makhno's atheism was integral to his anarchism, viewing religion as a tool of authority akin to the state. Bakunin's God and the State (1871) resonated: "If God exists, man is a slave." Makhno, raised in poverty amid Orthodox rituals, rejected faith early; the baptism legend of a "bandit" foretold by a flaming robe symbolized defiance against divine predestination (Volkovinsky, 1992, p. 4). In prison, studying materialist texts, he embraced atheism as liberation from alienation. Kushnirenko notes Makhno's anti-clerical actions: executing priests seen as collaborators, while promoting secular education in communes (Kushnirenko, 2013, p. 8). Yet, his atheism was pragmatic, not dogmatic; he tolerated religious peasants if they supported the cause, reflecting Kropotkin's humanism. In exile, memoirs critiqued Bolshevik "state capitalism" without invoking God, affirming atheistic materialism. Makhno's faith was in peasant solidarity, ontology of mutual aid supplanting theology.

## Psychological Portrait of Nestor Makhno: A Study in the Depths of the Psyche

Anima et corpus, the intertwined essence of soul and body, reveals itself in the complex psychological edifice of Nestor Ivanovych Makhno, a figure whose life oscillates between the tumult of revolutionary fervor and the shadowed recesses of a fractured mind.

Makhno, his early years were marked by trauma infantilis the loss of his father in childhood plunged him into a state of privatio economica, fostering a latent complexus inferioritatis that would shape his compensatory drive for dominance and recognition (Makhno, 1936-1937, Book I, p. 17). This initial deprivation, coupled with labor under exploitative landlords,



Red Guards (Makhno, 2005, p. 78). Disguised as a Hetmanate officer, he returned to lead uprisings, meeting Kropotkin and Lenin in Moscow to discuss peasant soviets, an encounter that reinforced his anti-authoritarian stance (Darch, 2020, p. 60).

In Ukraine, Makhno founded the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Ukraine (RIAU) in 1918, employing tachankas for guerrilla warfare (Makhno, 2005, p. 90). The RIAU, allied with Bolsheviks in 1919, captured towns like Berdiansk but broke over authoritarian policies, notably after assassinating Nykyfor Hryhoriv for pogroms on July 27, 1919 (Darch, 2020, p. 75). His 1919 victory at Peregonovka halted Denikin's advance, and a 1920 Bolshevik alliance defeated Wrangel, though betrayal followed with attacks on Huliaipole (Makhno, 2005, p. 110). Waging guerrilla war, Makhno fled to Romania in August 1921 with 100 followers after a nine-month campaign (Darch, 2020, p. 85).

In exile, Makhno faced internment in Romania and a 1923 Polish trial, acquitted due to lack of evidence (Makhno, 2005, p. 130). Settling in Paris in 1925, he lived modestly, publishing memoirs in *Delo Truda* and defending his anti-pogrom stance, though estranged from Galina Kuzmenko and Elena (Darch, 2020, p. 90). His health declined with tuberculosis, marked by a failed suicide attempt in Poland, leading to his death on July 25, 1934, in a Paris hospital. Cremated on July 28, his ashes rest at Père Lachaise Cemetery, mourned by global anarchists (Makhno, 2005, p. 145).

Makhno's life encapsulated a peasant revolutionary's paradox: a champion of stateless freedom entangled in war's violence. His Makhnovshchina movement resisted Bolshevik and White oppression, leaving a legacy as an anti-authoritarian symbol (Darch, 2020, p. 95).

## Nestor Makhno's Anarchist Philosophy

His philosophy, often termed "peasant anarchism" or anarcho-communism, was less a systematic doctrine than a practical response to oppression, blending anti-authoritarian ideals with the traditions of Ukrainian rural life. Makhnovshchina movement (1918–1921) sought to establish anarchist communism in southern Ukraine, emphasizing land redistribution, worker-peasant councils, and armed resistance against both Bolshevik centralism and White Guard restorationism. Unlike abstract theorists, Makhno's philosophy was forged in insurgency: he prioritized direct action, punishing pogroms and counterrevolutionaries while promoting mutual aid among the toiling masses. His anti-intellectual streak—dismissing urban anarchists as betrayers—rooted his ideas in the Zaporozhian Sich's Cossack traditions of egalitarian autonomy, making anarchism a tool for peasant liberation rather than elite discourse.

In Ukraine's Makhnovshchina (1918–1921), peasant insurgents under Nestor Makhno created a de facto anarchist republic amid civil war chaos. Emerging as a reaction to Bolshevik grain requisitions and Cheka abuses, the movement advocated "free soviets" for local self-governance, rejecting party control. Makhno's army, a mobile force on tachankas, allied tactically with Reds against Whites but clashed over "war communism," prioritizing communal land redistribution and anti-pogrom policies. Regional congresses elected leaders, implementing voluntary cooperatives that shipped aid to Soviet cities. Unlike banditry claims, it was a mass peasant insurgency against both restoration and centralism, forming a regular army that halted Denikin's advance at Peregonovka (1919). Ideologically rooted in anarcho-communism, it blended Cossack traditions with federalism, proving anarchism's military efficacy yet vulnerability to state suppression (Kondrashin, 2024, p. 138; Voronov, 2023, p. 100).



communist theory to a de facto "Gulyaypole Republic," where Huliaipole became a hub of stateless experimentation (Kushnirenko, 2013, p. 5). Makhno's philosophy drew heavily from Pyotr Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, emphasizing mutual aid, federalism, and direct action. Makhno's vision of communes distributing goods "from each according to ability, to each according to need," without wages or hierarchy (Kushnirenko, 2013, p. 6). He rejected Bakunin's collectivism for full communism, but shared his insurrectionism, criticizing Marxist statism as a new dictatorship. Proudhon's mutualism influenced early expropriations by the "Union of Poor Peasants," blending Zaporozhian Cossack traditions of egalitarian autonomy with anti-capitalist revolt. Makhno's praxis was agrarian-focused, adapting urban anarchism to rural Ukraine: land redistribution, worker councils, and armed defense against requisitions like Bolshevik prodrazvyorstka. His politics evolved from pure theory to practical governance in liberated zones, where congresses like Oleksandrivsk (1919) declared "free soviets" independent of parties (Volkovinsky, 1992, p. 12). Ontologically, Makhno's worldview was materialist and immanent, rejecting transcendental ideals for a reality grounded in labor and nature. Influenced by Kropotkin's scientific anarchism, he saw human existence as shaped by evolutionary mutual aid, not divine or abstract essences. Ontology here implied a being-in-the-world through collective action: peasants as ontological agents creating stateless society from the ground up. Kushnirenko highlights Makhno's shift from ideological purity to republican structures in Gulyaypole, where ontology became practical—being as communal self-organization against hierarchical "being" imposed by states (Kushnirenko, 2013, p. 7). This contrasted Godwin's rational individualism, favoring Bakunin's dialectical materialism: destruction as creative urge. Makhno's "Southern Fox" cunning reflected an

tion, and worker control in liberated territories, embodying Kropotkin's vision of anarchist communism amid revolution. Their 1918 Moscow meeting was pivotal; Kropotkin inspired Makhno's rural focus, seeing peasants as natural communists. Both critiqued Bolshevik "state capitalism" for betraying the masses. Similarities abound: Makhno's anti-pogrom stance aligned with Kropotkin's humanism, and his "Nabat" confederation mirrored Kropotkin's federated communes. However, divergences stem from temperament and context. Kropotkin was a scientist-theorist, advocating peaceful evolution where possible, though supporting revolutionary means; Makhno was a warrior, his anarchism militarized by civil war, with tachankas (machine-gun carts) symbolizing armed defense. Kropotkin's internationalism contrasted Makhno's Ukrainian peasant ethos, rooted in Sich traditions. While Kropotkin theorized mutual aid as biological, Makhno practiced it in survivalist terms, executing deserters and collaborators. Makhno's movement, though inspired by Kropotkin, faced accusations of banditry, diluting its ideological purity—issues Kropotkin warned against in urban anarchism.

In comparing these thinkers, Makhno's philosophy emerges as a synthesis: Godwin's anti-statism without his pacifism, Proudhon's mutualism adapted to agrarian self-management, Bakunin's insurrectionism with added peasant grit, and Kropotkin's communism applied violently. Core similarities include rejection of authority, communal economics, and human solidarity. Differences lie in method—Godwin's rationalism and Proudhon's reformism vs. Makhno's warfare—and focus: theoretical universality (Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin) vs. Makhno's localized praxis. Makhno's anarchism failed due to Bolshevik might, but it validated these ideas in action, influencing later movements.

Makhno keenly sensed peasant moods, swiftly turning against threats, making his figure enigmatic and adaptable (Volkovinsky, 1992, p. 3). This evolution from anarcho-



William Godwin (1756–1836), often hailed as the founder of philosophical anarchism, provides a stark contrast to Makhno's militant praxis. In his seminal Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793), Godwin argued that government is inherently corrupting, stifling human reason and moral progress. His anarchism was utilitarian and pacifist: society should evolve through education, rational discourse, and voluntary cooperation, without coercion or violence. Godwin envisioned a world where private property is abolished gradually, replaced by communal sharing based on need, and where individuals, guided by enlightened self-interest, form loose associations. He rejected revolution as chaotic, believing truth would prevail through persuasion alone. Makhno, however, diverged sharply in method and context. While both opposed the state as an obstacle to human flourishing—Godwin seeing it as a barrier to intellectual equality, Makhno as a tool of exploitation—the Ukrainian leader embraced armed struggle as essential. Makhno's philosophy was revolutionary and immediate, born of civil war's exigencies, where expropriations and partisan warfare were means to dismantle authority. Godwin's emphasis on non-violence and gradualism would have seemed naive to Makhno, who faced German occupiers, Bolshevik requisitions, and White armies. Yet similarities exist: both advocated for a society without hierarchy, where resources are distributed according to need. However, Makhno's peasant-centric focus, infused with anti-Semitic undercurrents in his ranks (despite his personal opposition), lacked Godwin's universalist humanism. Godwin's ideas influenced later anarchists, but Makhno applied a more visceral, class-war version, adapting them to rural insurgency rather than Enlightenment salons.

Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), the fiery Russian revolutionary, offers closer parallels to Makhno, as both championed collectivist anarchism through insurrection. Bakunin's philosophy, outlined in works like God and the State (1871), posited

the state and religion as twin evils, perpetuating exploitation. He advocated federalism—a bottom-up network of communes and workers' associations—over centralized power, criticizing Karl Marx's authoritarian socialism for risking a new dictatorship. Bakunin's materialism emphasized human solidarity as innate, suppressed by authority, and called for spontaneous revolts to abolish private property and establish collective ownership of production means. Atheism and anti-clericalism were core, viewing God as a projection of human alienation. Makhno's thought aligns here: his movement embodied Bakunin's "destructive urge" as creative, with partisan armies smashing state structures in favor of peasant councils. Like Bakunin, Makhno distrusted intellectuals and parliaments, seeing them as bourgeois traps, and prioritized the peasantry's revolutionary potential over urban proletariat. Both rejected Marxist statism; Makhno's breaks with Bolsheviks mirrored Bakunin's split from the First International. However, differences arise in scope and sophistication. Bakunin was a theoretician with pan-European vision, blending Hegelian dialectics with naturalism, while Makhno was pragmatic, his philosophy emerging from Gulyaypole's fields rather than philosophical salons. Bakunin's collectivism allowed for remuneration based on labor, whereas Makhno leaned toward full communism, distributing goods by need amid war scarcity. Makhno's Ukrainian nationalism—framed as anti-imperial resistance—added a layer absent in Bakunin's internationalism. Yet Bakunin's influence on Makhno is evident: Arshinov introduced him to Bakunin's ideas in prison, shaping his anti-state fervor. In essence, Makhno operationalized Bakunin's revolutionary anarchism in a localized, agrarian context, proving its viability in chaos but also its vulnerabilities to military defeat.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), the French philosopher and printer, is often hailed as the father of modern anarchism. In his seminal work "What is Property?" (1840), he famously declared "Property is theft," critiquing private



ownership as exploitative while advocating "possession" based on use. Proudhon's mutualism envisioned a society of worker cooperatives, federalist structures, and reciprocal exchange via a people's bank, eliminating interest and profit. Anti-state and anti-capitalist, he rejected violent revolution for gradual reform through education and association. His federalism influenced later thinkers, emphasizing decentralized governance and gender equality, though controversially patriarchal in views. Proudhon's philosophy was theoretical, rooted in moral justice and labor value, opposing both communism's collectivism and liberalism's individualism.

However, differences abound: Proudhon was intellectual and pacifist, focusing on economic mutual aid; Makhno was pragmatic and revolutionary, adapting theory to rural warfare amid chaos. Proudhon's federalism was abstract, while Makhno's was lived—congresses electing recallable leaders. Ontologically, Proudhon emphasized justice as eternal; Makhno saw freedom in material struggle. Proudhon's atheism critiqued religion as authority; Makhno's was practical, tolerating believers in ranks. Ultimately, Proudhon laid foundations Makhno tested in action, highlighting anarchism's tension between theory and praxis.

Pyotr Kropotkin, the "anarchist prince," represents the closest ideological kin to Makhno, as both espoused anarcho-communism grounded in mutual aid. In The Conquest of Bread (1892) and Mutual Aid (1902), Kropotkin argued that evolution favors cooperation over competition, advocating a stateless society where communes produce and distribute goods communally, without wages or hierarchy. His federalism envisioned voluntary associations of producers, emphasizing science and decentralization to prevent authority's resurgence. Kropotkin rejected collectivism's labor vouchers, pushing for "from each according to ability, to each according to need." Makhno's philosophy echoes this: his Revolutionary Insurgent Army implemented communal land use, free educa-