

Letter to Pavel Bakunin

Mikhail Bakunin

1845

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Paris, France

I am the same as before, a declared enemy of existing reality, with only this difference: that I have ceased to be a theorist, that I have finally conquered metaphysics and philosophy within myself, and that I have thrown myself entirely, with all my soul, into the practical world, the world of real fact.

Believe me, friend, life is beautiful; I now have every right to say so, because I have long since ceased to view it through theoretical constructions and to know it only in fantasy, because I have actually experienced many of its bitternesses, I have suffered much, and I have often fallen into despair.

I love, Pavel, I love passionately: I don't know if I can be loved as I would like to be, but I don't despair; I know at least that there is great sympathy for me; I must and want to deserve the love of the one I love, loving her religiously, that is, actively; She is subjected to the most terrible and infamous slavery, and I must free her by fighting her oppressors and kindling in her heart a sense of her own dignity, arousing in her the love and need for freedom, the instincts of rebellion and independence, reminding her of the sense of her strength and her rights.

To love is to desire freedom, the complete independence of another; the first act of true love is the complete emancipation of the object of one's love; one can truly love only a being who is perfectly free, independent, not only of all others, but even and above all of the one from whom one is loved and whom one loves.

This is my profession of political, social, and religious faith; this is the intimate meaning not only of my actions and political tendencies, but also, as far as I can, of my particular and individual existence; because the time in which these two kinds of action could be separated is far behind us; now, man desires freedom in all the meanings and applications of that word, or he does not desire it at all; to desire dependence on the one one loves is to love a thing and not a human being, because the human being is distinguished from the thing only by freedom; and if love also implied dependence, it would be the most dangerous and infamous thing in the world, because it would then be an inexhaustible source of slavery and brutalization for humanity.

Everything that emancipates men, everything that, by bringing them back to themselves, awakens in them the principle of their own life, of their original and truly independent activ-

ity, everything that gives them the strength to be themselves, is true; everything else is false, liberticidal, absurd. To emancipate man, that is the only legitimate and beneficial influence.

Down with all religious and philosophical dogmas—they are nothing but lies; truth is not a theory, but a fact; life itself is the community of free and independent men, it is the holy unity of love that springs from the mysterious and infinite depths of individual freedom.

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El amor libre. Eros y anarquía, Osvaldo Baigorria. Page 25–26.
A letter from Bakunin to his younger brother Pavel about love.

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