

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Program of the International Society of the Revolution

Mikhail Bakunin

1868

Mikhail Bakunin
Program of the International Society of the Revolution
1868

Retrieved on 25th April 2021 from
www.libertarian-labyrinth.org
Working translation by Shawn P. Wilbur

theanarchistlibrary.org

First part. Theoretical principles.

1. *Negation of God and of the principle of authority, both human and divine, as well as every tutelage exercised by men over men—even when we wish to exercise that tutelage over individuals of the age of majority but deprived of instruction or else over the ignorant masses, whether in the name of an intelligence, or even in the name of scientific reason, represented by a group of men—recognized and licensed intelligences—or by any exclusive class, either of which would form a sort of aristocracy of intelligence—the most odious and most harmful of all for liberty.*

note 1. Positive and rational science positive is the only light that can lead man to the knowledge of truth and that could be capable of regulating his conduct, as well as his relations in society.

But it is subject to errors, and even if it wasn't, it must not arrogate to itself the right to govern men contrary to their convictions and their will. A truly free society could only grant it two rights, the exercise of which is incidentally its duty: the *first* is the education and instruction of individuals of both sexes, equally accessible and obligatory for all children and adults until they have passed the age of majority—the age when the action of all authority must cease—and the *second* to imbue them with its ideas, its judgments in all their convictions, by means of an absolutely free propaganda.

note 2. In rejecting absolutely, in all its possible forms, the tutelage that intelligence, developed by science and by the practice of affairs, of men and of life, could wish to exercise over the ignorant masses, we are far from denying *their natural and salutary influence* on these masses,—provided that this influence is only exercised in an entirely simple manner, by the natural action of every superior intelligence on inferior intelligences, and that it not be dressed up with any official character or any privilege, whether political or social,—two things that never fail to produce, on the one hand, the enslavement of the masses, and, on the other, the corruption and

thing, the limitation *ad infinitum* of all the particular liberties—individual and collective—in the name of the so-called liberty of everyone—collective and universal liberty, which is nothing but an oppressive abstraction, deduced from the negation or limitation of the rights of each and founded on the real slavery of each.—And as every abstraction could only exist so long as it is sustain by the positive interests of a real being—the abstraction of the State represents, in fact, the very positive interests of the governing, possessing, exploiting classes, [which are] also called the intelligent classes, and the systematic immolation of the interests and liberties of the subjugated masses.

note 4. Patriotism—virtue and passion of politics or the State [manuscript ends]

unique God, the States were forced to fall back on the saints of the Christian paradise;—each Catholic State had a saint or a certain number of saints—protectors and patrons of that State—its mediators before God, which because of this has often found itself in great difficulty. Each State besides still finds it useful today to proclaim that the good God protects it in an exclusive and special manner.

Metaphysics and the science of a legal order founded ideally on metaphysics and actually [based] on the interests of the proprietary classes,—have equally sought to find a rational basis for the existence of States.—They have had recourse to the fiction of a universal and tacit consent or contract; or else to that of an objective justice and of the universal and public public good represented, they say, by the State.—The State, according to the Jacobin democrats, has the mission to make the universal and collective interest of all the citizens triumph over the selfish interest of individuals, communes and isolated provinces.—It is the justice and reason of everyone dominating the selfishness and the stupidity of each.—It is thus the declaration of the wickedness and folly of each in the name of the wisdom and virtue of all.—It is the real negation, or what means the same

stupefaction of the intelligences that are accorded them.

2. *Negation of free will and of the right of society to punish*;—every human individual, without any exception, never being anything but the involuntary product of their natural and social environment.—The four great causes of all human immorality are: 1) *the absence of rational hygiene and education*; 2) *the inequality of economic and social conditions*; 3) *the ignorance of the masses*, which naturally results from it, and 4) their inevitable consequence—*slavery*. The education, instruction and organization of society according to liberty and justice must replace *punishment*. During the whole transitory era, more or less long, which cannot fail to follow the social revolution—society, in the interest of its own defense against incorrigible individuals—not culpable, but dangerous,—will never apply to them any other punishment but that of placing them outside its guarantee and its solidarity—*exclusion*
3. The Negation of free will is not that of *liberty*. *Liberty is, on the contrary, the necessary consequence, the product of the natural and social fatality.*

note 1. Man is not free with regard to the laws of nature, which constitute the very basis and absolute condition of his being. They penetrate and dominate him as they dominate and penetrate all that exists. Nothing could shield him from their fatal omnipotence: any leaning toward revolt on his part would end in suicide. But through a power that is inherent in his individual nature and inevitably drives him to

realize, to conquer the conditions of his life, *man can and must gradually emancipate himself from the obsession and from the crushing, natural hostility of the external world, whether physical or social, that surrounds him, through thought, through science and through the application of thought to the instinct of will—through his intelligent will.*

note 2. Man is the last link, the highest term of the uninterrupted series of beings who, starting from the simplest elements and arriving at him, constitute the known world. He is an animal who, thanks to the superior development of his organism and notably of his brain, is endowed with the ability to think and speak. That is all the difference that separates him from all the other animal species—his older brothers with regard to time, his younger brothers with regard to intellectual capacity. But that difference is enormous. It is the unique cause of all that we call our history and of which here, in a few words, is the summary and the sense: *man begins from bestiality to arrive at humanity, at the constitution of his social existence through science, through conscience, through his intelligent labor and through liberty.*

note 3. Man is a social animal—as are many other animals that appeared on

its [consecration], of its power and of the increase of that power internally, as well as its extension externally, above all the other interests in the world, it denies the particular interests and human rights of its subjects, as well as those of the foreign nations;—it thereby breaks the same universal solidarity of nations and men,—it sets them outside justice, outside humanity.

note 3. The State is the younger brother of the Church. It could only legitimate its existence through some theological or metaphysical idea.—Being opposed to human justice, it must base itself on the theological or metaphysical fiction of a divine justice.—In the ancient world, the very idea of a nation or of society did not exist—society having been entirely absorbed, invaded and dominated by the State—and each State drew its origin and in particular right of existence and domination from some God or some system of Gods, who were supposed to be the exclusive protectors of some particular State. In the ancient world, man was unknown, the very idea of humanity did not exist.—There were only citizens. That is why in that civilization, slavery was a natural fact and the necessary basis of the liberty of the citizens.

Christianity having destroyed Polytheism, and having proclaimed one

in this way that of all the States.—The legalized exploitation of the masses for the profit of a certain number of proprietors—of which the majority are fictive, and only a small number real—sanctioned by the *Church* in the name of a supposed Divinity, and that has always been made to take the part of the strongest and most crafty—is called *right*. The development of the wealth, the comfort, the luxury and refined, distorted intelligence of the privileged classes—a development necessarily based on the poverty and ignorance of the immense majority of the populations—is called *civilization*—and the organization, the guarantee of that whole ensemble of historical iniquities—is called the *State*.

So the workers must desire the destruction of the State.

Note 2. The State, necessarily founded on the exploitation and subjugation of the masses and as such, oppressor and violator of all popular liberty and all domestic justice, is inevitably brutal, conquering, pillaging and carnivorous externally.—The State, every State—monarchy republic—is the negation of humanity. It is its negation, because by presenting itself as the supreme or ultimate aim or patriotism of the citizens—by putting, in accordance with its very principle, the interest of

the earth before him. *He did not create society through a free contract, he is born in its womb and could not live as a man, nor even become a man, nor think, nor speak, nor will, nor act reasonably apart from it.* Society constitutes his human nature, he depends on it as absolutely as on physical nature itself, and is not such a great genius that he should absolutely dominate it.

4. *Social solidarity is the first human law; liberty is the second.* These two laws, mutually penetrating and inseparable from one another, constitute the whole of humanity. Liberty is thus not the negation of solidarity; it is its development and, so to speak, its humanization.
5. *Liberty is not the independence of man with regard to the inevitable laws of nature and society. It is first of all his power of gradual emancipation from the oppression of the external physical world— through science and intelligent labor; it is then his right to dispose of himself and act in accordance with his own convictions and ideas—a right opposed to the despotic and authoritarian pretensions of another man, of a group or class of men, or of the whole of society.*

note 1. It is necessary not to confuse sociological laws, otherwise known as the laws of social physiology and which are as fatally obligatory for every man as the laws of physical nature itself,—being in reality laws as physical as those of nature—it is necessary not to confuse these laws with the political, criminal and civil

that are more or less the expression of the manners, customs and interests, as well as the opinions that, in a particular era, that are dominant in society, or in a part, in one class of society. It is entirely natural that, being recognized by the majority of men or even by a dominant class, they except a powerful natural influence—good or bad, according to their particular character—on each. But it is neither good, nor legitimate, nor just, nor even useful for the society itself, that these laws be able to impose themselves in a violent, authoritarian manner on any individual, contrary to their own convictions.—That would be an attack on their liberty, on their personal dignity, even on their humanity.

6. *The natural society in which every man is born, outside of which he could never become an intelligent and free man, is truly humanize do only the the extent that all the men of which it is composed become more and more free, individually and collectively.*

note 1. To be individually free means, for the man living in the midst of society, not bending his thought or will before any other authority than that of his own reason and his own conception of justice; not recognizing, in short, any truth except that which he comprehends, and submitting to no law but that which is acceptable to his

the pressure of a public opinion, which, having labor for a principal foundation, would scorn the good-for-nothings—would become impossible.—Becoming a very rare exception, it would be rightly considered a malady and would be treated as such in the hospitals.

Only the children,—until they have attained a certain degree of strength and, later, only to the degree that will be necessary to leave them time to educate themselves and in order not to be overburdened with labor,—the disabled, the old and the sick could be exempted from labor without dishonor and without thus renouncing their rights as free citizens.

19. *The workers, in the interest of their radical and complete economic emancipation, must demand the complete and final abolition of the State, along with all the institutions of the State.*

Note 1. What is the State? It is the historical organization of the principles of authority and tutelage, divine and human, exercised over the masses of the people, either in the name of some religion, or in the name of the exclusive and privileged intelligence of one or several classes of proprietors and to the detriment of the millions whose associated, forced labor they exploit.—Conquest, primary basis of the right of individual inherited property, has been

No one could exploit the labor of others any longer—each would have to work to live. Each will be free to die of hunger by not working,—at least if they do not find an association or a commune that consents to feed them out of pity. But then probably it would be considered fair not to recognize any political right for those who, capable working, would prefer the shame of living on the labor of others, all the political and social rights necessarily having no other basis than the labor of each. Moreover, this case could occur only during the era of transition, while there would still naturally be many individuals, products of the present organization of injustice and privilege, who would not have been raised with a consciousness of justice and true human dignity, as well as with respect and the habit of labor. With regard to these individuals, the revolutionary or revolutionized society would find itself with the awkward alternative either of forcing them to work, which would be despotism, or else of letting itself be exploited by the lazy, which would be a new slavery and a new source of corruption for the whole society.

Laziness, in a society organized according to equality and justice—bases of all liberty,—with a rational system of education and instruction, and under

own conscience. Such is the *conditio sine que non* of all human dignity, the incontestable right of man—the sign of his humanity.

To be collectively free—is to live in the midst of free men and to be free through their liberty. Man, we have said, could not become an intelligent being, endowed with a reflective will, and consequently could not conquer his individual liberty apart from and without the aid of all of society. The liberty of each is thus the product of the common solidarity. But once that solidarity is recognized as the basis and condition of all individual liberty, it is clear that if a man lived in the midst of slaves, even if he was their master, he would necessarily be the slave of their slavery, and that he could become really and completely free only through their liberty. So the liberty of everyone is necessary to my liberty; as a result, it is not true to say that the liberty of all is the limit of my liberty, which would be tantamount to a complete negation of the latter. It is, on the contrary, its necessary confirmation and infinite extension.

7. *Individual liberty of each only becomes real and possible through the collective liberty of society, of which, by a natural and fatal law, he is a part.*

note 1. Liberty like humanity, of which it is the purest expression, is not at the debut, it is at the last term of history. Human society, we have said, begins with bestiality. Natural, savage men recognize their human character and natural right so little, that they begin by tearing one another apart and sadly even today they have not ceased slaughtering one another.—The second period in the historical development of human society is that of slavery. The third—in the midst of which we live—is that of economic exploitation or the salariat. The fourth period—that toward which we tend, and toward which, we must at least hope, we strive, is that of *justice*, liberty in equality or mutuality.

8. *The natural man becomes a free man, he is humanized and moralized, recognizes, in short, and realizes in himself and for himself his own human character and right only to the degree that he recognizes this same character and right in all his fellows.—In the interests of his own humanity, of his own morality and personal liberty, man must thus desire the liberty, the morality and the humanity of all.*
9. *To respect the liberty of others is thus the supreme duty of every man.—To love them and serve them—that is the only virtue. It is the basis of all morals; there exists no other.*
10. Liberty being the product and the highest expression of solidarity, which is to say of mutuality, it is only completely achievable in equality. Political equality can only

should disappear.—The children would *belong* naturally, not by right, especially to the *mother*, under the intelligent observation of society.

Children, especially at the youngest age, being incapable of reasoning and directing their own conduct, *the principle of tutelage and authority*, which must be absolutely excluded from society, finds its natural place in their education and instruction. Only this must be a *truly human, intelligent authority*, absolutely foreign to every theological, metaphysical and legal recollection, and starting from the principle that each human being is neither good nor evil at their birth, and that the *good*—which is to say *the love of liberty, consciousness of justice and mutuality, the worship, or rather the respect and the habit of truth, reason and labor*—could only be developed in each through a rational education and instruction, based on the obvious and manifest respect, at once practical and theoretical, of that reason, that justice and that liberty that authority, I say, must have as its sole aim the preparation of all children for the most complete liberty. It could only arrive at that goal by destroying itself gradually, giving way to the liberty of the children, as they increasingly approach the age of majority.

Instruction should embrace all the branches of science, technology and human industry.—It must be scientific and professional at the same time, necessarily general for all children, and special according to the dispositions and tastes of each; in order that each young man and woman, leaving the schools and recognized as free and adult—should be equally fit to work with the head and with the hands.

Once emancipated, they will be absolutely free to associate for labor or not to associate. All will inevitably wish to associate, because from the moment that the right of inheritance is abolished, and land and capital will become the property of the international, or rather universal, federation of free workers' associations, there will be no more place or possibility for competition, for the existence of isolated labor.

founded solely on the right of hereditary property. And the equalization of the political, economic and social rights of woman with those of man.

5. The upkeep,—the education and instruction, both scientific and industrial, and including all the branches of higher education, equal for all children of both sexes, and obligatory until they have passed the age of majority—at the cost of society.

The School must replace the Church and render the criminal codes, punishment, prison, executioner and gendarme useless.

Children are not the property of anyone, not the property of their parents or even of society—they belong to their own future Liberty. But that liberty in children is still not real;—it is only potential—real liberty, the full consciousness and practice of liberty in each, based primarily on the sentiment of personal dignity and on the serious respect of the liberty and dignity of others, that is to say on justice,—that liberty only being capable of realization in children though the rational development of their intelligence, and by that of their character, of their intelligent will.—From this it results that society, the whole future of which depends on the education and instruction of children, and which consequently has not just the right, but the duty to oversee them—is the natural tutor of all the children of both sexes, and as it will be from now on the sole inheritor, the right of individual inheritance needing to be abolished—it will naturally consider it one of its first duties to provide for all the costs of maintenance, education and instruction without distinction for all the children of both sexes, without consideration of their relations and origins.

The rights of the parents should be limited to loving their children and exerting over them a natural authority, to the extent that that authority will not be contrary to their morality, their intelligence and their future liberty.—Marriage, political and civil, and every intervention of society in matters of love

be based on economic and social equality. The realization of liberty through that equality—that is justice.

11. Labor being the sole producer of all values, social utilities or wealth, man, who is a social being par excellence, could not live without labor.
12. Only associated labor is sufficient for the existence of a populous and somewhat civilized society. All that we call civilization could only have been created by associated labor. The whole secret of the infinite productivity of human labor consists first of the application of more or less developed, scientific intelligence, which is itself always the product of a labor previously and currently associated; and then the division of labor, but at the same time also of a certain combination or association of the labor thus divided.
13. All the historical injustices, all the wars, all the political and social privileges have for their basis and principal object the subjugation and exploitation of some associated labor to the profit of the stronger—conquering nations, classes and individuals. Such has been the true historical cause of slavery, of serfdom, of the salariat—and to sum up everything in a phrase—of the so-called *right of individual and hereditary property*.
14. From the moment that the right of property was accepted and established, society was forced to divide itself into two parts: a privileged propertarian minority, exploiting the associated, forced labor of the masses, on one side,—and on the other, the millions of proletarians, subjugated under the name of slaves, serfs, or wage-earners. Some, through leisure based on the satisfaction of needs and material comfort, would find themselves assured all the benefits of civilization, of education and

of instruction. The others—the masses, the millions would find themselves condemned to a forced labor without rest, to an ignorance and a poverty without end.

15. The civilization of the minority finds itself thus founded on the forced barbarism of the majority. The privileged of all political and social hues, all the representatives of property are thus, by the very force of their position, the natural enemies, the exploiters and oppressors of the great masses of the people.
16. Leisure—this precious privilege of the dominant classes—being necessary for the development of the intelligence, and a certain ease as well as a certain freedom of movement and action being equally indispensable to the development of character—it is entirely natural that these classes should show themselves first more civilized, more intelligent, more humane and up to a certain point even more moral than the masses.—But as on the one hand the inactivity as well as privilege break down bodies, with hearts and deform minds, by making them love and pursue lies and injustice, absolutely compatible with their exclusive interest, but by the disarm token contrary to the interest of everyone, it is obvious that the privileged classes must sooner or later fall into corruption and imbecility, and into servility.—It is an effect that we see today.
17. On the other side, the total absence of leisure and the force labor have necessarily condemned the masses to barbarism. The labor itself cannot develop their intelligence, for [due to] their necessarily hereditary ignorance, all the intelligent part of labor—the applications of science, the combination and direction of the productive forces were and still find themselves almost exclusively reserved for individuals of the bourgeois

class; only the muscular, unintelligent, mechanical part, rendered still more stultifying by the division of labor, was left to the people,—who thus find themselves stunned, in the full sense of that word, by their daily labor.

Well, despite all that, thanks to the moralizing power that is inherent in labor, thanks also to the fact that in demanding justice, liberty and equality for himself, the laborer implicitly demands them for everyone, since there exists no human being who is more shamefully treated than him—if it is not the woman or child perhaps;—thanks finally to the fact that he has not used and abused life and consequently is not jaded, and that while lacking instruction he at least has this immense advantage that his virgin heart and mind have not been corrupted and distorted by selfish interests and self-serving lies;—that he has preserved intact all of the natural energy of his character—while all the privileged classes slump, weaken and rot, the worker alone increases in life—today, he alone represents, loves and desires truth, liberty, equality and justice;—to him alone belongs the future.

18. **Our socialist program**

It demands and must demand:

1. Political, social and economic equalization of all the classes and of all the individual humans on the earth.
2. The abolition of hereditary property.
3. The appropriation of the land—by the agricultural associations; of capital and of all the instruments of labor—by the industrial associations.
4. The abolition of patriarchal right, of the right of the family—of the despotism of the husband and father,