

Without government

Max Baginski

The gist of the anarchistic idea is this, that there are qualities present in man, which permit the possibilities of social life, organization, and co-operative work without the application of force. Such qualities are solidarity, common action, and love of justice. To-day they are either crippled or made ineffective through the influence of compulsion; they can hardly be fully unfolded in a society in which groups, classes, and individuals are placed in hostile, irreconcilable opposition to one another. In human nature to-day such traits are fostered and developed which separate instead of combining, call forth hatred instead of a common feeling, destroy the humane instead of building it up. The cultivation of these traits could not be so successful if it did not find the best nourishment in the foundations and institutions of the present social order.

On close inspection of these institutions, which are based upon the power of the State that maintains them, mankind shows itself as a huge menagerie, in which the captive beasts seek to tear the morsels from each other's greedy jaws. The sharpest teeth, the strongest claws and paws vanquish the weaker competitors. Malice and underhand dealing are victorious over frankness and confidence. The struggle for the means of existence and for the maintenance of achieved power fill the entire space of the menagerie with an infernal noise. Among the methods which are used to secure this organized bestiality the most prominent ones are the hangman, the judge with his mechanical: "In the name of the king," or his more hypocritical: "In the name of the people I pass sentence"; the soldier with his training for murder, and the priest with his: "Authority comes from God."

The exteriors of prisons, armories, and churches show that they are institutions in which the body and soul are subdued. He whose thoughts reach beyond this philosophy of the menagerie sees in them the strongest expression of the view, that it is not possible to make life worth living the more with the help of reason, love, justice, solidarity. The family and school take care to prepare man for these institutions. They deliver him up to the state, so to speak, blindfolded and with fettered limbs. Force, force. It echoes through all history. The first law which subjected man to man was based upon force. The private right of the individual to land was built up by force; force took way the claims upon homesteads from the majority and made them unsettled and transitory. It was force that spoke to mankind thus: "Come to me, humble yourself before me, serve me, bring the treasures and riches of the earth under MY roof. You are destined by Providence to always be in want. You shall be allowed just enough to maintain strength with which to enrich me infinitely by your exertions and to load me down with superfluity and luxury."

What maintains the material and intellectual slavery of the masses and the insanity of the autocracy of the few? Force. Workingmen produce in the factories and workshops the most varied things for the use of man. What is it that drives them to yield up these products for speculation's sake to those who produce nothing, and to content themselves with only a fractional part of the values which they produce? It is force.

What is it that makes the brain-worker just as dependent in the intellectual realm as the artisan in the material world? Force. The artist and the writer being compelled to gain a livelihood dare not dream of giving the best of their individuality. No, they must scan the market in order to find out what is demanded just then. Not any different than the dealer in clothes -who must study the style of the season before he places 'his merchandise before the public. Thus art and literature sink to the level of bad taste and speculation. The artistic individuality shrinks before the calculating reckoner. Not that which moves the artist or the writer most receives expression; the vacillating demands of mediocrity of every-day people must be satisfied. The artist becomes the helper of the dealer and the average men, who trot along in the tracks of dull habit.

The State Socialists love to assert that at present we live in the age of individualism; the truth, however, is that individuality was never valued at so low a rate as to-day. Individual thinking and feeling are incumbrances and not recommendations on the paths of life. Wherever they are found on the market they meet with the word "adaptation." Adapt yourself to the demands of the reigning social powers, act the obedient servant before them, and if you produce something be sure that it does not run against the grain of your "superiors," or say adieu to success, reputation and recompense. Amuse the people, be their clown, give them platitudes about which they can laugh, prejudices which they hold as righteousness and falsehoods which they hold as truths. Paint the whole, crown it with regard for good manners, for society does not like to hear the truth about itself. Praise the men in power as fathers of the people, have the devourers of the commonwealth parade along as benefactors of mankind.

Of course, the force which humbles humanity in this manner is far from openly declaring itself as force. It is masked, and in the course of time it has learned to step forward with the least possible noise. That diminishes the danger of being recognized.

The modern republic is a good example. In it tyranny is veiled so correctly, that there are really great numbers of people who are deceived by this masquerade and who maintain that what they perceive is a true face with honest eyes.

No czar, no king. But right in line with these are the landowners, the merchants, manufacturers, landlords, monopolists. They all are in possession, which is as strong a guarantee for the continuance of their power, as a castle surrounded by thick walls. Whoever possesses can rob him who possesses nothing of his independence. If I am dependent for a living on work, for which I need contrivances and machines, which I myself cannot procure, because I am without means, I must sacrifice my independence to him who possesses these contrivances and machines. You may work here, he will tell me, but only under the condition that you will deliver up the products of your labor to me, that I may trade with and make profit on them.

The one without possessions has no choice. He may appeal to the declaration of human rights; he may point to his political rights, the equality before the law, before God and the archangels — if he wants to eat, drink, dress and have a home he must choose such work as the conditions of the industrial mercantile or agricultural plants impose upon him.

Through organized opposition the workingmen can somewhat improve this condition; by the help of trade unions they can regulate the hours of work and hinder the reduction of wages to

a level too low for mere living. The trade unions are a necessity for the workingmen, a bulwark against which the most unbearable demands of the class of possessors rebound; but a complete freeing of labor — be it of an intellectual or of a physical nature — can be brought about only through the abolition of wage work and the right of private ownership of land and the sources of maintenance and nourishment of mankind. There are heart-rending cries over the blasphemous opinion that property is not as holy a thing as its possessors would like to make it. They declare that possessions must not be less protected than human life, for they are necessary foundations of society. The case is represented as though everybody were highly interested in the maintenance of the right of private property, whereas conditions are such that non-possession is the normal condition of most people.

Because few possess everything, therefore the many possess nothing. So far as possession can be considered as an oppressive measure in the hands of a few, it is a monopoly. Set in a paradox it would read: The abolition of property will free the people from homelessness and non-possession. In fact, this will happen when the earth with its treasures shall cease to be an object of trade for usurers; when it shall vouchsafe to all a home and a livelihood. Then not only the bent bodies will straighten; the intellect free itself as might the bound Prometheus rid himself of his fetters and leave the rock to which he is chained, but we shall look back on the institutions of force, the state, the hangman, et al, as ghosts of an anxious fantasy.

In free unions the trades will organize themselves and will produce the means of livelihood. Things will not be produced for profit's sake, but for the sake of need. The profit-grabber has grown superfluous just as his patron, the state, which at present serves by means of its taxes and revenues, his anti-humanitarian purposes and hinders the reasonable consumption of goods. From the governing mania the foundation will be withdrawn; for those strata in society will be lacking which therefore had grown rich and fat by monopolizing the earth and its production. They alone needed legislatures to make laws against the disinherited. They needed courts of justice to condemn; they needed the police to carry out practically the terrible social injustice, the cause of which lay in their existence and manner of living. And now the political corruptionists are lacking who served the above-mentioned classes as helpers, and therefore had to be supported as smaller drones.

What a pleasant surprise! We see now that the production and distribution of means of livelihood are a much simpler matter without government than with government. And people now realize that the governments never promoted their welfare, but rather made it impossible, since with the help of force they only allowed the right of possession to the minority.

Life is really worth living now. It ceases to be an endless, mad drudgery, a repugnant struggle for a mere existence.

Truth and beauty are enthroned upon the necessity of procuring the means of existence in a co-operative organized manner. The social motives which to-day make man ambitious, hypocritical, stealthy, are ineffective. One need not sell his individuality for a mess of pottage, as Esau sold his primogeniture.

At last the individuality of man has struck a solid social foundation on which it can prosper. The individual originality in man is valued; it fructifies art, literature, science, which now, in so far as they are dependent upon the state and ownership—which is far-reaching—must take the direction of prescribed models that are acknowledged, and must not be directed against the continuance of the leisure classes.

Love will be free. Love's favor is a free granting, a giving and taking without speculation. No prostitution; for the economic and social power of one person over another exists no longer, and with the falling off of external oppression many an internal serfdom of feeling will be done away with, which often is only the reflex of hard external compulsion. Then the longing of large hearts may take tangible shape. Utopias are arrows aimed into the future, harbingers of a new reality.

Rabelais, in his description of life in the "Thelemite Abbey," wrote:

"All their life was spent not in laws, statutes, or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure. They rose out of their beds when they thought good; they did eat, drink, labor, sleep, when they had a mind to it, and were disposed for it. None did awake them, none did offer to constrain them to eat, drink, nor do any other thing. In all their rule and strictest tie of their order, there was but this one clause to be observed: 'Do What Thou Wilt.'

"Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honor. Those same men, when by base subjection and constraint they are brought under and kept down, turn aside from that noble disposition, by which they formerly were inclined to virtue, to shake off that bond of servitude, wherein they are so tyrannously enslaved; for it is agreeable to the nature of man to long after things forbidden, and to desire what is denied us. By this liberty they entered into a very laudable emulation, to do all of them what they saw did please one. If any of the gallants or ladies should say, 'Let us drink,' they would all drink. If any one of them said, 'Let us play,' they all played. If one said, 'Let us go a walking into the fields,' they went all. If it were to go a hawking, or a hunting, the ladies mounted upon dainty well-paced nags, seated in a stately palfrey saddle, carried on their lovely fists either a sparrowhawk, or a laneret, or a marlin, and the young gallants carried the other kinds of hawks. So nobly were they taught, that there was neither he nor she amongst them, but could read, write, sing, play upon several musical instruments, speak five or six several languages, and compose in them all very quaintly, both in verse and prose. Never were seen so valiant knights, so noble and worthy, so dexterous and skilful both on foot and horseback, more brisk and lively, more nimble and quick, or better handling all manner of weapons, than were there. Never were seen ladies so proper and handsome, so miniard and dainty, less forward, or more ready with their hand, and with their needle, in every honest and free action belonging to that sex, than were there."

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