

A black and white photograph of a snowy forest. The trees are covered in snow, and the ground is also covered. A vertical light band runs down the center of the image, creating a sense of depth and focus. The text "ICONOCLASTS, FORWARD!" is overlaid on this light band.

ICONOCLASTS,
FORWARD!

INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHIST STUDY GROUP
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“ANARCHY IS FREEDOM, AND THIS MOST ASSUREDLY INCLUDES THE FREEDOM NOT TO BE A SOCIALIST OR TO LIVE LIKE ONE, AND THE FREEDOM NOT TO LIMIT ONE’S IDENTITY TO ANY SOCIAL ROLE—ESPECIALLY THAT OF WORKER. IT’S THE FREEDOM NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNAL ACTIVITIES OR TO SHARE COMMUNAL GOALS, OR TO PRAY BEFORE THE IDOL OF SOLIDARITY. IT’S THE FREEDOM NOT ONLY FROM THE RULE OF THE STATE BUT ALSO FROM THAT OF THE TRIBE, VILLAGE, COMMUNE, OR PRODUCTION SYNDICATE. IT’S THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ONE’S OWN PATH TO ONE’S OWN GOALS, TO MAP OUT ONE’S OWN CAMPAIGN AGAINST AUTHORITY, AND IF DESIRED, TO GO IT ALONE.”

“PREAMBLE: DRAWING FIRST BLOOD BY MEME, MYSELF AND I.”
ENEMIES OF SOCIETY: AN ANTHOLOGY OF INDIVIDUALIST & EGOIST THOUGHT.

RENZO NOVATORE

WILDFLOWERS

Even throughout the endless, barren lands of the bleak deserts flowers bloom. Flowers that put out a sinful perfume and the make the very hands of those who pick them bleed, but that still have their own splendid history of joy, sorrow and love. I repeat, they are strange, wild flowers that arise from the nothing that creates. They were fertilized by the sun and then cruelly battered by the storm, thus!

These flowers are thoughts that sprouted in the deep and meditative solitude of my mind, while outside in the world that is no longer mine, madness rages furiously, lashed by the electrifying fire of lightning that strikes relentlessly. And I, an unrepentant vagabond who loves to run wild on the joyous and frightening paths of this my solitary and deserted realm, will take my pleasure by periodically gathering a bunch of these wild flowers to crown this rebel banner. It was once already brutally crushed in a cowardly way, but it still sings the joyful chorus of eternal return.

Only those who have found themselves again after a long, hard desperate search and placed themselves on the margins of society, contemptuous and proud, denying anyone the right to judge them, are anarchists. Those who are not able to recognize themselves in the greatness of their actions, they alone being their own judge, may believe that they are anarchists, but they are not. The strength of will and potentiality (not to be confused with power), the spirit of self-elevation and individualization are the first rungs on a long and endless ladder that those who want to surpass themselves along with everything else climb.

Only those who, with impetuous violence, know how to appraise the rusty gates that enclose the house of the great lie where the lewd thieves of the I (god, state, society, humanity) have arranged to meet, in order to take their greatest treasure back from clammy, greedy hands adorned with the false gold of love, pity and civilization, from the baleful predators, can consider themselves lord and master of himself and call themselves anarchists.

MY ICONOCLASTIC INDIVIDUALISM

I have left the life of the plain forever.--Henrik Ibsen

//1 Even the purest springs of Life and Thought that gush fresh and laughing among the rocks of the highest mountains to quench the thirst of Nature's chosen ones, when discovered by the demagogic shepherds of the hybrid bourgeois and proletarian flocks, quickly become fetid, filthy, slimy pools. Now it is individualism's turn! From the vulgar scab to the idiotic and repulsive cop, from the miserable sell-out to the despicable spy, from the cowardly slave afraid to fight to the repugnant and tyrannical authority, all speak of individualism. It is in fashion! Scrawny pseudo-intellectuals of tubercular liberal conservatism, like the chronic democratic syphilitics, and even the eunuchs of socialism and the anemics of communism, all speak and pose as Individualists!

I understand that since Individualism is neither a school nor a party, it cannot be "unique", but it is truer still that Unique ones are individualists. And I leap as a unique one onto the battlefield, draw my sword and defend my personal ideas as an extreme individualist, as an indisputable Unique one, since we can be as skeptical and indifferent, ironic and sardonic as we desire and are able to be. But when we are condemned to hear socialists more or less theorizing in order to impudently and ignorantly state that there is no incompatibility between Individualist and collectivist ideas, when we hear someone stupidly try to make a titanic poet of heroic strength, a dominator of human, moral and divine phantoms, who quivers and throbs, rejoices and expands himself beyond the good and evil of Church and State, Peoples and Humanity, in the strange flickering of a new blaze of unacknowledged love, like Zarathustra's lyrical creator, pass as a poor and vulgar prophet of socialism, when we hear someone try to make an invincible and unsurpassable iconoclast like Max Stirner out to be some tool for the use of frantic proponents of communism, then we may certainly have an ironic smirk on our lips. But then it is necessary to resolutely rise up to defend ourselves and to attack, since anyone who feels that he is truly individualist in principle, means and ends cannot tolerate being at all confused with the unconscious mobs of a morbid, bleating flock.

//2 Individualism, as I feel, understand and mean it, has neither socialism, nor communism, nor humanity for an end. Individualism is its own end. Minds atrophied by Spencer's positivism still go on believing that they are individualists without noticing that their venerated teacher is the ultimate anti-individualist, since he is nothing more than a radical monist, and, as such, the passionate lover of unity and the sworn enemy of particularity. Like all more or less monistic scientists and philosophers, he denies all distinctions, all differences. And he sacrifices reality to affirm

illusion. He strives to show reality as illusion and illusion as reality. Since he isn't able to understand the varied, the particular, he sacrifices the one or the other on the altar of the universal. Sure, he fights the state in the name of the individual, but like every sociologist in this world, he comes back to sacrifice under the tyranny of another free and perfect society, since it is true that he fights against the state, but he fights against it only because the state as it is doesn't function as he would like.

But not because he has understood the anti-collectivist, anti-social singularities capable of higher activities of the spirit, of emotion and of heroic and uninhibited strength. He hates the state, but does not penetrate or understand the mysterious, aristocratic, vagabond, rebel individual!

And from this point of view, I don't know why that flabby charlatan, that failed anthropologist, bloated more and more with the sociology of Darwin, Comte, Spencer and Marx, who has spread filth over the giants of Art and Thought like Nietzsche, Stirner, Ibsen, Wilde, Zola, Huysman, Verlaine, Mallarmé, etc., that charlatan called Max Nordau; I repeat, I cannot explain to myself why he hasn't also been called an Individualist... since, like Spencer, Nordau also fights the state...

//3 Giovanni Papini said this about Spencer: "As a scientist, he bowed before facts, as a metaphysician, before the unknowable, as moralist, before the immutable fact of natural laws. His philosophy is made up of fear, ignorance and obedience: great virtues in the presence of Christ, but tremendous vices for one who wants the supremacy of the individual. He was neither more nor less than a counterfeiter of individualism." And though I am not at all a Papinian, in this case, I am in complete agreement with him.

//4 E. Zoccoli is an intellectual of the greatest range with a deep knowledge of anarchist thought, but he declares himself to be a pathetic, moral bourgeois. In his colossal study, *Anarchy*, after railing – though calmly and with some reason – against the greatest agitators of anarchist thought, from Stirner to Tucker, Proudhon to Bakunin, he feels sorry for Kropotkin because he finds that this anarchist was not able to develop a new rigorously scientific and sociological anarchism as he allowed himself to call all the mad delinquents of extreme anarchism, or Individualism, back to the sane currents of a viscous positivistic, scientifically materialist and humanist, semi-Spencerian system, since this famous science is what finally discovered the nullity of the individual "before the limitless immensity...". And for the positivist, humanist, communist, scientific Kropotkin it also seems that man is "a small being with ridiculous pretenses" and amen! Anyone who concentrates on sociology can't be anything but a scientist of collectivity who forgets the individual in order to seek Humanity and raise the Imperial Throne at whose feet the I must

renounce itself and kneel down with deep emotion. And when all anarchists have this sublime concept of life, E. Zoccoli will also be happy and content, since by taking on the seraphic pose of a prophet who tells men: "I have come to offer you the possibility of a new life!", he turns to us and says: "May anarchists return to (legal) right and may right expect them, quick to extend its safeguards to them as well..."

But what is right? We say with Stirner:

"Right is the spirit of society. If Society has a will, this will is simple

Right: Society exists only through Right. But as it endures only exercising a sovereignty over individuals right is its sovereign will.

Aristotle says justice is the fruit of society."

But "all existing right is – foreign law [Right]; some one makes me out to be right, 'does right by me'. But should I therefore be in the right if all the world made me out so? And yet what else is the right that I obtain in the state, in society, but a right of those foreign to me? When a blockhead makes me out in the right, I grow distrustful of my rightness; I don't like to receive it from him. But, even when a wise man makes me out in the right, I nevertheless am not in the right on that account. Whether I am in the right is completely independent of the fool's making out and the wise man's". Now we add to this definition of the Right that this wild, invincible German gave us, the famous aphorism of Protagoras: "The man is the measure of all things", and then we can go to war against all external right, all external justice, since "justice is the fruit of society".

//5 I know! I know and understand: my ideas – which are not new – might wound the overly sensitive hearts of modern humanists, who proliferate in great abundance among subversives, and of romantic dreamers of a radiant, redeemed and perfect humanity, dancing in an enchanted realm of general, collective happiness to the music of a magic flute of endless peace and universal brotherhood. But anyone who chases phantoms wanders far from the truth, and then it is known that the first to be burnt in the flames of my corroding thought was my inner being, my true self! Now within the burning blaze of my Ideas, I also become a flame, and I burn, I scorch, I corrode...

Only those who enjoy contemplating seething volcanoes that launch sinister, exploding lava from their fiery wombs toward the stars, later letting them fall into the Void or among Dead Cities of cowardly men, my carrion brothers, making them run in frantic flight out from their moldy wall-papered shacks, hellholes of rancid, old ideals, should approach me.

I think, I know, that as long as there are men, there will be societies, since this putrid civilization with its industries and mechanical progress has already brought us to the point where it is not even possible to turn back to the enviable age of the caves and divine mates who raised and defended those born of their free and instinctive love like tawny, cat-

like Lionesses, inhabiting magnificent, fragrant, green and wild forests. But still I know and I think with equal certainty that every form of society – precisely because it is a society – will, for its own good, want to humiliate the individual. Even communism that – as its theorists tell us – is the most humanly perfect form of society would only be able to recognize one of its more or less active, more or less esteemed members in me. I can never be as worthy through communism as I will be as myself, fully my own, as a Unique one and, therefore, incomprehensible to the collectivity. But that within me which is most incomprehensible, most mysterious and enigmatic to the collectivity is precisely my most precious treasure, my dearest good, since it is my deepest intimacy which I alone can explain and love, since I alone understand it.

It would be enough, for example, if I said to communism: “it is to do nothing that the elect exist” as Oscar Wilde said, to see me driven out from the holy supper of the new Gods like a leprous Siberian! And yet one who had the urgent need to live his life in the highly and sublimely intellectual and spiritual atmosphere of Thought and contemplation could not give anything materially or morally useful and good to the community, because what he could give would be incomprehensible, and therefore noxious and unacceptable, since he could only give a strange doctrine supporting the joy of living in contemplative laziness. But in a communist society – as in any other society where it would be even worse – such a doctrine could have the effect of corruption among the phalanx of those that must produce for collective and social maintenance and balance. No! Every form of society is the product of the majority. For great Geniuses and for great lawbreakers, there is no place within the triumphant mediocrity that dominates and commands.

//6 Someone will raise the objection to me that in this vermilion Dawn, this noble eve of armies and war, where the vibrant and fateful notes of the great twilight of the old Gods already echoes resoundingly, while on the horizon, the golden rays of a smiling future are already rising, it is not good to bring certain intimate and delinquent thoughts into the light of the sun. It is an old and stupid story! I am twenty-eight years old, for fifteen years I have been active in the libertarian camp and I live anarchistically, and I am told the same things, the very same things all the time:

“For the love of harmony...”

“For the love of getting the word out...”

“For the next redemptive Social Revolution...”

“For...” but why go on!

Enough! I cannot remain silent!

“If I were to keep a still unpublished manuscript locked up in my drawer, the manuscript of a most beautiful work that would give the reader thrills of unknown pleasure and would uncover un-

known worlds; if I were certain that men would grow pale with fear over these pages, and then slowly wander through deserted pathways with eyes fiercely dilated in the void, and later would cynically seek death when madness didn't run to meet them with its sinister laughter like the roaring of winds and its grim drumming of invisible fingers on their devastated brains; if I were certain that women would smile obscenely and lie down with skirts lifted on the edge of footpaths, awaiting any male, and that males would suddenly throw themselves upon them lacerating vulva and throat with their teeth; if intoxicated, hungry mobs were to chase down the few elusive men with knives and there was death between being and being perpetuating their deep hatred; if the peace of an hour, tranquility of the spirit, love, loyalty, friendship would have to disappear from the face of the earth, and turbulence, restlessness, hatred, deception, hostility, madness, darkness and death would have to reign in their place forever; if a most beautiful book that I wrote, still unpublished and locked in my drawer, would have to do all this, I would publish that book and have no peace until it was published."

So Persio Falchi wrote in *Forca* a couple of years ago to express his concept of the Freedom of Art, and so I repeat now in *Iconoclasta!* to express my conception of Freedom of Thought.

It is an absolute and urgent need of mine to launch into the darkness the stormy and sinister light of my thoughts and the incredulous and mocking sneer of my rare ideas that want to freely wander, proud and magnificent, displaying their vigorous and uninhibited nakedness, going through the world in search of virile embraces. No one could be more revolutionary than I am, but this is precisely why I want to throw the corroding mercury of my thoughts into the midst of the senile impotence of the eunuchs of Human Thought. One cannot be half a revolutionary and one cannot half-think. It is necessary to be like Ibsen, revolutionary in the most complete and radical sense of the word. And I feel that I am such!

//7 History, materialism, monism, positivism and all the other isms of this world are old and rusty swords which are of no use to me and don't concern me. My principle is life and my end is death. I want to live my life intensely so that I can embrace my death tragically. You are waiting for the revolution! Very well! My own began along time ago! When you are ready – God, what an endless wait! – it won't nauseate me to go along the road awhile with you! But when you stop, I will continue on my mad and triumphant march toward the great and sublime conquest of Nothing!

Every society you build will have its fringes, and on the fringes of every society, heroic and restless vagabonds will wander, with their wild and virgin thoughts, only able to live by preparing ever new and terrible outbreaks of rebellion! I shall be among them! And after me, as before

me, there will always be those who tell human beings: “So turn to yourselves rather than to your gods or idols: discover what is hidden within you, bring it to the light; reveal yourself!”

Because everyone that searches his inner being and draws out what is mysteriously hidden there, is a shadow eclipsing every form of Society that exists beneath the rays of the Sun! All societies tremble when the scornful aristocracy of Vagabonds, Unique ones, Unapproachable ones, rulers over the ideal, and Conquerors of Nothing advance without inhibitions. So, come on, Iconoclasts, forward! Already the foreboding sky grows dark and silent!

January 1920, *Arcola*

ALFREDO M. BONANNO

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*THE THEORY OF THE INDIVIDUAL: STIRNER'S SAVAGE
THOUGHT*

//Introduction

My reading of Stirner as philosopher of the Unique and the direct itinerary of reconstructing a “theory of the individual”, in a manner that varies through the other writings of mine presented here, at least seems to me to demonstrate a coherence of purpose that legitimates giving them a new life together here.

In the current frozen panorama of anarchist readings, turning to the sources of *The Ego and Its Own* is always a radical shock. If nothing else, this explains the persistent fortune of a strange book that would not have obliged itself to relieve any worries in the watchful forecasts of power or taken any interest, or at least very little, in the few readers it was likely to have. No prediction was ever less attentive.

Often it occurs to me to read a few pages of *The Ego and Its Own*, even when I am intent on thoroughly going to the depths of topics of another sort. And it is always a short path over unknown territory.

Stirner is a sharpened blade that penetrates in depth, that allows no respite, that doesn't stop halfway, but gets to the bottom, suddenly. And he does it only with thought. If events are there at times, they are there in order to avert the attention, bring the feet back down to the ground and thus perhaps provoke a smile of satisfaction. Not thought. It moves in a linear fashion, cuts away the bridges with reality and with the respectability of intellectual appearances that yield to events before having their say about them, washed out and weak, that then make all the obeisances of apology if, by chance, they happen to strike a nerve. The raw and naked thought of Stirner is a barbaric act of rare ferocity, excessive, the classical elephant that with its pachydermic mass makes space for itself in the philosophical china shop.

A tutor exists, and this is obvious, but he is a strange tutor, that Hegel who sharpened blades himself, to then stop halfway, carefully blunting the most dangerous part and, in fact, building the new pillars of power on that point. Stirner goes beyond this point (Marx instead took a further step backward in relation to his tutor — this is what the matter of the head and the feet of the dialectic consists of), a going beyond that the

reader almost doesn't notice. After Stirner there is no other possible use of thought than that which is on this side of the barbaric rarefaction of civilization and its conditions of compromise that he traces, in a diligent manner, almost without making us aware of it.

The next step can only be action, the reign of chatter has become unspeakable. "I only want to be I. I despise nature, people and their laws, human society and its love, and sever every general relationship with it, even that of language. To all the claims of your duty, to all the designations of your categorical justice, I oppose the imperturbability of my I. And already I make a concession, if I make use of language. I am 'unspeakable,' 'I manifest only myself'"

The thought that puts an end to the chattering is passed off as something primitive, not sufficiently cultured, something that does not know courtesy and manners. This is why it is considered barbarous, why it is limited at times, in terms of the linguistic orthodoxy of the academy, to stammering in the impossibility of continuing to talk about the great emotional pressure that remains behind, inside, unable to come out. But why should it come out in a further distinction of the Hegelian mechanism of thought, this too, the final element of common understanding, which ends up being thrown overboard? Even neo-Kantians try to ask, who was he, and what did he want from their coordinated chatter, considering that, after all, he paid little attention to their method.

I'm not trying to say that anarchists, on their side, have all taken into account what it means to read Stirner. Sometimes, for reasons not so different from those of the academy, they read with the same desire for the comforting funeral dirge that gives cadence to the previous moments at rest. And why should these readings proceed differently? Perhaps because anarchists have a hidden philosopher's stone, some secret that throws light into the territory of theory? I don't think so, at least not if this means a kind of privilege produced by the simple fact that one considers oneself an anarchist as a category of existence, which consolidates in the deep and uncontaminated purity of the refusal of power, and says so. Stirner would have sneered at this as well. Perfectly fulfilling anarchist principles.

//Max Stirner, Philosopher of the Unique One

A discussion about Stirner, a philosopher of few words who poses a decidedly unspeakable concept at the center of his thought, a concept that fights against being expounded: the concept of the Unique one.

In fact, this philosopher has been used in all kinds of ways, has been cooked in so many styles. He is used by the academy, but also on the streets; he is used by professional philosophers, but also by revolutionaries. In a lecture of a bout an hour, it is difficult to give an idea of the complexity of Stirner's thought. I will attempt to create a meeting of the minds with you: a mutual effort at approaching a fascinating problem.

As I said, Stirner can be understood in many ways. The Ego and Its Own can be read as a romance; it can be read, with good reason, as a book that technically has aspects of philosophical analysis.

My endeavor today is somewhere in the middle. I will try to give account of the roots on which and from which The Ego and Its Own originates, and I will try to show the possible uses to be found in reading this book.

Stirner fits into the region of Hegelian philosophy. Today, distant in time, beyond what is told in books on the history of philosophy, it is difficult to develop an idea of what the frightful mechanism of Hegelian thought might mean, what that mechanism succeeded in solidifying in German culture at that time, and the extent to which it would later manage to carve into the history of philosophical thought considered in the totality of its development. One man (Hegel) capable of bringing a flux of intuitions that flowed through the entire history of human thought, or rather the entire history of western philosophical thought, like a subterranean river into the light.

Let's take a small step backwards together. As you know, Kant is considered to be a crossroads. He summarizes the conditions of previous philosophical thought, but is limited to pointing out the things that are the constituent conditions of all possible future metaphysics, of every possible development of philosophical thought. After Kant and his reductive intentions, the great German philosophical idealism is born (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel).

The problem that Kant leaves is that of understanding what is behind the phenomenon, what the human being might be able to comprehend beyond the phenomenological appearance of reality. In fact, still today in every day life, we see the consequences and reach of this question that seems in appearance to be a technical intricacy. If we consider reality, as we know it, we have a creation of our own. There is no object, there is no event, that was not invented, we could say, created by man. Nature itself is a human production, in so far as it is a cataloguing, an archiving carried out through the cognitive processes of the human being. What is there behind this cognitive apparatus, what is this thing that stands behind, what is the noumenon that stands behind the phenomenon, what is the so-called thing in itself?

These are the questions that the heirs of Kant pose themselves. And the answers, concisely (apart from a transition period: Maimon, Beck, etc.), are as follows: first, the response of Fichte, the capacity of the I to construct and encompass, to take, in reality; second, that of Schelling (the early Schelling, the period in which Schelling was, in a certain sense, Hegel's tutor), the capacity of nature and art to explain reality (and thence the second moment, the I-nature); third, that of Hegel, the capacity to sum reality up in a new synthesis.

Why am I speaking of these matters that in a way show signs of

textbook scholasticism? Because ultimately Stirner is not comprehensible if one does not place him in the philosophical climate of his time, a climate marked by the Hegelian theoretical dimension.

Therefore, it is necessary to forcefully delve deeply into the structure of Hegelian thought, very complex thought that I will try to summarize in a few words. First of all, there is a great voyage of consciousness, which is described in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*. The sensible certainty of the I is presented as the only possible tool for knowing reality. It is a poor tool insofar as it only renders the existence of a generic I capable of desiring. But the perception of reality, as the capacity to define the object of knowledge in the sphere of its specificity is based on an ability to furnish this multiple totality with a unity, a process the intellect looks after. Thus, the intellect is what establishes a difference, in perception, between the object and the process of its recognition, the supersession of every specification in the perceptive unity. This completely resolves/dissolves perception in consciousness, that thus becomes self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness has a history of its own, inasmuch as it is broken into a series of forms and phases that develop progressively. Keep in mind that we will find these phases, which may be clear from some standpoints and not from others, in Stirner's thought with the same schematization developed in Hegel's thought (ancient, medieval and modern world). In the ancient world, the antithesis between the slave and the master, the conflict, the life and death struggle from which servile consciousness emerges the winner. In the middle ages, this consciousness, servile and victorious, is unsure of itself, and so unfortunately unhappy; it seeks a greater synthesis and finds it in asceticism., in religion. Finally, the modern era, in which self-consciousness finds itself in the dimension of reason, in other words, in other words, that dimension which is realized as such in the institutions of reality: the family, society, the state.

Parallel to this development, which we find in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, one of Hegel's most inspiring books, another development of Hegel's thought takes place, that contained in *Logic*. Let's keep in mind that Hegel's book of logic is different from any other book of logic. It has nothing to do with Aristotle's *Organon*, for example. Hegel states that logic is the ideal, the vicissitudes of logic are the vicissitudes of the ideal, and thus the vicissitudes of the ideal are the vicissitudes of God, because logic is God. Logic assumes that any movement is distributed in three phases, reflecting in this the preceding tripartition. We have looked at the preceding phases (ancient world, medieval world, modern world), and now we see them reflected in the phases of logic: as the first phase, the ideal in and for itself, i.e., a prisoner within its own enclosure; then, the escape, firstly in the phase of nature, the ideal alienated in outward appearance; and then in the philosophy of the spirit, the ideal, that having returned to itself, supercedes the phases of philosophical enclosure and objective alienation. Hegel often recalls the experience of the time when

he first saw the extremely beautiful sight of the Alps and felt no emotion at all: For him that spectacle did not exist, it meant nothing to him, it was the estrangement of the I.

The philosophy of the spirit: the science of the ideal that returns to itself, beyond alienation. In the first phase, there is the ideal in itself and for itself. Existence appears to a certain extent, indefinable, inasmuch as it is not distinguishable from nothingness, is not separable from nothingness, appears as the confusion of being and nothingness. It is from the mixture of these two movements that becoming comes out. From becoming springs the essence of existence, the phenomenon, that which is visible, the perceivable dimension; and from this contrast that is superseded, the concept comes out, reality as essence for itself, the ideal.

The second phase of the Logic, as we know, is nature, the third is spirit. The subjective spirit, the tiniest spirit, the most reduced spirit, anthropology, the science of objective conditions, of daily life, day after day; but this objective spirit is posed as self-consciousness, as we have seen, in the Phenomenology of the Spirit, the voyage begins, it becomes self-consciousness for itself and finally becomes free. And in what does the subjective spirit become free? Do you recall the sign at the entrance of Nazi concentration camps? It becomes free in work, it becomes free through work, it becomes free in practical realizations; it becomes free in the state.

Here the foundation of all future reaction, of all future conservation of thought, of the methods and institutions of the great Germany that was being born from the small extremely militarized Prussia, is truly built. It is through this little provincial professor, who held his classes in the Prussian dialect, that the central seed of what would be the reactionary thought of the future developed. This is why even today both sides, progressives and reactionaries, discuss this question: the vicissitudes of the subjective spirit; in what way the subject is able to liberate itself exclusively through the acceptance of the institutions; in what way it becomes free in practical activity, in what way it becomes free and so acquires the desire to free itself, the desire for freedom. And in what way the desire for freedom becomes objective spirit, no longer subjective objective spirit that travels through history; that is realized in the concrete and spatial institutions of history; that is realized in the legal right where the subject becomes a person, holder of rights, holder of rights, with the mark of property; that is realized as proprietary subject; that is realized in morality, as through the moral conception it acquires freedom in the will or the will in freedom, and from the synthesis of these two elements, in ethics, in the objective dimension in which ethics is realized: the family, society, the state. [...] The state is the ethical essence of reality. The ethical state of the fascists originates here in this Hegelian analysis.

From the union and supercession of the subjective spirit and the objective spirit, the absolute spirit emerges. This final concretization of

the spirit is realized in its three moments: in art, in religion and through the union of art and religion in philosophy. The conclusion of Hegelian thought is self-consciousness, absolute spirit, philosophy. Philosophy realized. This is why Hegel, without any shadow of self-exaltation, could say in complete sincerity: "I do not teach a philosophy; I am philosophy." He thought that with him the process of the development of philosophy came to an end.

This discourse at least allows us to understand one thing. There is a great moment in Hegelian thought. It is this: bringing back into the official institutions that which had until that time (or at least until Fichte if not Schelling) had been the heritage of an underground thought that many people who were not accepted at the official level had developed during the course of the previous two thousand years. There is no doubt that Hegel is connected with German mysticism (for example through Franz von Baader), with the mystics who had gone into the light of the sun (like Hamann, Kant's black beast, in the restricted sphere of small ascetic and mystical cliques, the currents of the dissident sects of Protestantism, like the Pietists); instances of purity of thought and mainly a kind of importation of the dimensions of the infinite into the finite.

But what was there in these men of faith that made them face persecution, if not a deep desire for freedom? (Consider, for example, the massacres for which Luther himself was responsible, with which peasant revolts were repressed). These people brought to light the desire for communism. Certainly in a limited and circumscribed way, since these were not people who read much or visited universities, but they certainly felt the desire for communism, for life in common, for free life, the desire to negate exploitation, the obligation of work, poverty, suffering and pain. Hegel had the capacity to bring all this into institutionalized thought, to blend it with traditional philosophy and make it become the possible terrain for future development, because upon it he subsequently built the definitive state of tomorrow, the all-inclusive state, the state capable of engulfing, justifying and thus nullifying subversive moments. This concept, this process, this philosophical product, is due to Hegel.

Hegel died in 1831 and left a heritage that was not well-understood from the start, but that fed a debate for at least 20 years (with poor understandings and many approximations, also due to the drafts of his works), debates that are reflected in the condition of the development of Germany, but also in those of Europe in general.

Within what is described as the "Hegelian debate", the most interesting positions for us are those of the so-called "Hegelian left". Extremely broad discussions: the "old" and "young" Hegelians the right, the left, the center, positions that were patterned after the divisions of the French parliament. This problem interests us here only as a passage to bring us to Stirner who, from the philosophical point of view, is located within the Hegelian left. It is of interest to take a look at the critiques the left brings

to the central philosophical concept of Hegel which is summarized in the idea that the absolute spirit is realized in history in its principle expression, i.e., in the state.

The first of these critiques, and certainly the most important, is that of Feuerbach. First, we should point out that all the exponents of the Hegelian left had little success within the institutions. Some for one reason (persecution by the police), some for another (persecution by the academic structures), they had no luck. Their perspectives themselves prevented any outlet in the university structure of the time. Feuerbach had this fate as well. He starts with a bit of access to an academic career, because he is a student of Hegel, because he did his thesis with him, because he is Hegelian at least in his earliest periods. From the moment that he arises to firmly establish his distance from Hegel, his career is over. A few students — maybe two or three — call him to give a series of lessons. Attendance is meager, and it all ends there.

What is Feuerbach's position? He criticizes the conception of the divine, but doesn't go so far as to negate the divine. Though it is one of the components of his thought, he considers true and proper negation to be of secondary importance. Thus, the essence of Feuerbach's thought is not atheism, but the identification of divine attributes, the removal of these attributes from the divine and their transference (as attributes) to the human. Everything (Feuerbach said) that according to theological analysis belonged to the divine dimension up to now, essentially forms the totality of the qualifications of man, and it is necessary to return them to man. Obviously, this implies a series of modifications, a whole series of interesting discussions, which we will see but as they are taken into consideration by Stirner.

Clearly, Feuerbach is not the only one who opposed Hegel; there were other thinkers as well. I would like to say a few words here about another figure, Bauer, who is also an outcast from a German academic career. He stands halfway between Feuerbach and what will be, as we will see, Stirner's theses. He says: yes, it is right to transfer the weapons and baggage of divinity to man, but in effect this transference is dangerous because it could constitute a new point of reference for creating another form of deification in the very form of a new construction of "Humanity". Thus he anticipates the much more pointed and radical critique of Stirner himself. (on this point, there is a technical debate: who first defined this critique of Feuerbach, Bauer or Stirner).

The other interesting position is that of Marx, and it is very well-known, so I won't talk at length about it. As you know, Marx expresses himself in detail on this topic in the book that was written and then abandoned (as Engels said) to the gnawing criticisms of rats: *The German Ideology*. In this text, where for the first time, Marx and Engels clarify the foundations of their historical materialism, and that was published several decades after their deaths, their critique of Stirner is developed, sup-

porting the important concept that the true foundation of the Hegelian essence is production relationships, i.e., economic, social relationships, concrete society.

Now let's get to the heart of Stirner's thought. I think it's useful to briefly quote from *The Ego and Its Own*. This is indispensable if we want to develop a discussion that is the least bit deep about Stirner's thinking. There is a question of shading that could be summarized in a brief concept: Stirner is against all sanctity, against all ideologizing. But, in itself this says little.

For example, let's look at the critique of Feuerbach. The critique of Feuerbach is important for Stirner and so he wrote: "How natural is the supposition that man and ego ['I'] mean the same. And yet one sees, as in Feuerbach, that the expression 'man' is to designate the absolute ego, the species, not the transitory individual ego. Egoism and humanity (humaneness) ought to mean the same, but according to Feuerbach the individual 'can only lift himself above the limits of his individuality, but not above the laws, the positive ordinance of his species.' But the species is nothing, and, if the individual lifts himself above the limits of his individuality, this is rather his very self as an individual; he exists only in raising himself, he exists only in not remaining what he is; otherwise, he would be done, dead. Man with a capital M is only an ideal, the species is only something thought of. To be a man is not to realize the ideal of man, but to present oneself, the individual. It is not how I realize the generally human that needs to be my task, but how I satisfy myself. I am my species, am without norm, without law, without model, and the like. It is possible that I can make little out of myself; but this little is everything, and is better than what I allow to be made of me by the might of others, by the training of custom, religion, the laws, the state." From the point of view of the critique of religion, it doesn't matter whether we transfer all divine attributes, part and parcel, to man and say that this man is the sole perfectible being. When we consider this man as a species, as a sanctification of man. The only man I know, says Stirner, is I myself. And the only man that interests me and in whose name I am disposed to do anything is I myself. Feuerbach seeks to defend himself from this critique, but it is clearly a radical critique, and he ends up not realizing that there is no way out from this critical opposition of Stirner.

What critique did Stirner develop in the face of Marx's position? This critique is not only directed at the materialist concept of Marx, which had affirmed, as we have seen, that the essence of existence is constituted by the totality of social and economic existence. It also, and principally, deals with the consequent development of this critique, that is to say the foundation of a free society, of the, of the ideal and of communist organization. At this point I think that a small quote is most illuminating, something relating to Stirner's critique of communism: "But the social reformers preach to us a 'law of society'. There the

individual becomes society's slave, and is in the right only when society makes him out in the right, when he lives according to society's statutes and so is — loyal. [Only then are these rights conceded to him]. Whether I am loyal under a despotism or in a 'society' [communist, we suppose] á la Weitling, it is the absence of right insofar as in both cases I have not my right, but foreign right. In consideration of right, the question is always asked: 'What or who gives me the right to it?' [The] Answer [is always this]: "God, love, reason, nature, humanity, etc. No, only your might, your power gives you the right." And further on: "All attempts to enact rational laws about property have put out from the bay of Love [with a capital L] into a desolate sea of regulations. Even socialism and communism cannot be excepted from this. Everyone is to be provided with adequate means, for which it is little to the point whether one socialistically finds them in personal property, or communistically draws them from the community of goods. The individual's mind in this remains the same; it remains the mind of dependence. The distributing board of equity let's me have only what the sense of equity, its loving care for all, prescribes. For me, the individual, there lies no less of a check in collective wealth than in that of individual others; neither that is mine nor this [neither communist property or capitalist property]."

This passage is important. Many times Stirner has been wrongly considered a supporter of individual property, playing on a misunderstanding of what his concept of property was, that as we shall see was quite different. And, therefore, in him the refusal of communist property is very clear, but so is the refusal of capitalist property. "Whether the property belongs to the collectivity," Stirner continues, "which confers part of it on me, or to individual possessors, is for me the same constraint, as I cannot decide about either of the two. On the contrary, communism, by the abolition of personal property, only presses me back still more into dependence on another, on the generality or collectivity; and as loudly as it always attacks the "state", what it intends is itself again a state [what it wants to realize has always been a state], a status, a condition hindering my free movement, [therefore] a sovereign power over me. Communism rightly revolts against the pressure that I experience from individual proprietors; but still more horrible is the might that it puts in the hands of the collectivity."

So Stirner's critical analysis takes shape as a radical critique of ideology, of any ideology. From what dimension does the sacred, which is the fertile terrain of all ideologies, emerge? There are various interpretations about the origins of the sacred: fear, the noumenous, etc., but in Stirner this entire set of problems is seen through the Hegelian filter. Let's not forget that Stirner is a Hegelian. The history of the development of thought, and therefore of human consciousness, is the Hegelian one. History in its three phases: the ancient world, the childhood of man; the medieval world, the passage and the philosophical break of Proclo;

the modern world, as the modern world develops itself, the function of empiricism and so on. Now, within this movement, Stirner produces a history of the origins of the sacred. That his concept is then transferred to men, and here, in concrete terms (without disturbing Destut DeTracy, but speaking in Feuerbachian terms) becomes ideology, that is to say abstract construction (metaphysical and political) of the sacred. This occurs in the same manner, because man still has need of giving a transcendent justification to their actions, a projectuality, he needs to give himself justifications. This takes place both in the individual dimension of immediate awareness and in the dimension of collective projectuality.

In my opinion, this is a major problem, inside of which lies the rejection of the hypothesis of a chosen physical place for the elaboration of ideology. Ideology is not invented as a fantasy. And on this point, Schelling was illuminating, because in the return to teaching after the death of Hegel, that is when the poor man finally was able to open his mouth (since Hegel did not permit anyone to speak during the course of his philosophical dictatorship), Schelling makes us understand how myth is born. Myth is not born because some theoretician develops an analysis. Rather it is born from the suffering of people, from the need people have of giving themselves a justification for why pain exists, why death exists, why suffering exists. This model of the development of myth is visible and is the initial element of the argument that Hegel makes and that he takes from the vast reservoir of Schelling's writings, not from the second period, that he couldn't have read, but from the period of the philosophical journal they published together. From Schelling's first writings, the concepts of pain and death are put forward as irrational elements capable of overturning the organization of reason within history. It is from this that myth originates and not from the elaboration of some philosophy. Therefore, even now, we can affirm that ideology is not built in a workshop.

Today [1994], we are facing the birth of a new ideology, an anti-communist ideology, a free market ideology, and all that this requires. But this ideology is not found in books. You think, neoliberalism. But there is no economic theory more discredited than neo-liberalism. You think rightly that today it may still be supported by some well-paid economists, doubtlessly, English, American and Japanese, still supporting *laissez faire*, *laissez passer*. But are we joking? Yet the fear of communism creates an illusion in people that this free market dimension might actually solve the problems, the problems of those who suffer, of backwards countries, might resolve all these problems. Thus, ideology is born; thus, sanctification is produced. Now, it is logical from time to time that we should make a specific analysis of each individual element in the construction of the current morality, study its origins, the historical moments that have crystallized the taboo on which one is not to touch another's woman or the taboo against incest or the taboo about respecting one's father. These are

all things that can be historically distinguished, but we cannot, from this, understand how they originate.

The new ideology that is being born before our eyes, and absolutely obsolete, contradictory, insignificant ideology, functions perfectly. Therefore, the ideologue, or the intellectual by trade or state-subsidized to do this job, and thus, first of all, professional philosophers, are as they say so many examples of the marionette in the hands of history of which Hegel speaks. These people, often without wanting to or only wanting to in the slightest degree (because these scum work with an utterly ridiculous projectuality), contribute to building that ideology. The destructive task alone is up to us, seeking to unravel it, to eliminate negative results. Stirner does this work from a philosophical point of view, and thus opens the way for us, supplies us with a radical direction. Stirner's readers have often tried to continue his thought from a practical point of view. And, in my opinion, the practical reading of Stirner is still all to be done.

Now let's go to the true heart of Stirner's discourse. At the start, Stirner poses the problem of the basis, i.e., of the reason of reality. It is a technical problem that pertains to Hegelian philosophy, but also to the earlier philosophies. All systematic philosophers have posed the problem of the concreteness from which to start, the Grund [ground] on which to base their reasoning. Stirner also does this in a way that is justifiable, or at least explicable within the Hegelian philosophical method and its subsequent developments, but this basis is something disturbing, something downright savage: "I have set my affair on nothing".[1] Let's keep in mind that there has been much debate about this "nothing". "Nothing" is not "the nothing" [nothingness?]. The original text says "on nothing". "Nothing" means the exclusive and absolute elimination of any over-determination of the I, what Stirner describes as "sanctity", i.e., as the concept of security. God, authority, state, family, ideal, sacrifice, world, morality, ethics, all the elements that form the estrangement of the I, its negation, its alienation. For Stirner, starting from nothing is the only possible basis for the Unique one.

"The divine is God's concern," he wrote, "the human, 'man's'. My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is mine, and it is not the general one, but is unique, as I am Unique. Nothing is more to me than myself!" But the Unique one, as seen up to this moment in its develop through the things that I have spoken about more or less clearly, could be thought of as the extreme, rarefied end of Hegelianism, as the absolute spirit with every other attribute removed, as the end of History. What is it that effectively removes the Unique one from this sorry end, what is it that really brings it out from the territory of the development of Hegelian thought?

Let's not forget that there was something that pulsed in a vital way in the Hegelian philosophical system. It was its historicity, the concept of history as progress, as development, that Hegel, of course,

takes from the French materialist philosophers of the 18th century, from Voltaire to Holbach.

There is some importance, in my opinion, in opening a little parenthesis on this point. One does not find the idea of progress throughout the history of humanity. It is a modern idea that the ancients did not have. For them, the concept of history had a circular course. For example, Paul Orano, St. Augustine's disciple, while writing his thoughts immediately after the occupation of Augustine's city by the Vandals, did not have the idea of the death of History, because for him History could not die, since, being cyclic, it would have to start again.[2] Yes, the Vandals had destroyed the civilization that had seen the work of the great philosophical and religious figure, Augustine, but they could not destroy the circle, they could not depart from the circular form of History. This concept is shattered by the radical critique of the Enlightenment philosophers. A concept of progress, a mechanism that develops and that History acquires by growing and directing itself toward an improvement, is thus furnished to humanity. Hegel makes this concept his own, but he makes it his own within that triadic system that saw the triumph of philosophy as the absolute spirit and as the synthesis of art and religion. Between parentheses, let's recognize that even in that so much praised turning upside down of the dialectic that walked on its head and now walks on its feet (according to Marx's affirmation), this triadic movement is not damaged. It is no longer the absolute philosophy, it is no longer Hegelian philosophy, it is no longer the absolute spirit that resolves and realizes History; it is the proletariat. This is the historical task of this class that, negating the conflict with the bourgeoisie, realizes the free communist society.

After the lessons of the past few years, that we alone have seen, having had the fortune of being able to live them, nobody would now light-heartedly adhere to an analysis like this. Stirner did not have the experience of these times, and so could only use tools of thought with certain considerable limitations that often led to unjust condemnations such as "petty bourgeois Stirner", Stirner as philosopher of a bourgeoisie that wanted to rebuild the colonialist and imperialist capacities of a disunited Germany, that wanted to protect the interests of the "German Customs Union", and so on. However, Stirner manages to prevent the Unique from falling into the equivocation of a hypothetical conclusive moment of the triadic development of history, the Unique one in bad company with proletariat and absolute spirit.

The Unique one is not in this company, but has a particular characteristic of its own: the Unique one is not, by itself, self-sufficient. After having constructed the thesis of the uniqueness (singularity) of the Unique one for almost 250 pages of his book (written in a brilliant style, in the journalistic German of the time), Stirner tells us that the Unique one is not self-sufficient. It needs something; it needs its property. Without its property, the Unique one is nothing, it is an abstraction. But what

is the property of the Unique one: a house? A genuine possession? A purchase agreement? Or rather what are these things? Sanctifications of reality, concessions.

I cannot see a distinction, a truly clear separation, between the Unique one and its property, a point when the latter becomes precisely the property of the former. Otherwise, the Unique one is fixed as absolute spirit, it becomes a sacred thing. In other words, if the existence of the Unique one by itself and, separately, that of its property or rebellion or the union of egoists as things alien to it, were possible, it would be like announcing the separate existence of the Unique one and then of its property. It does not seem to me that one can make this distinction. Perhaps I read Stirner badly. In any case, for me, there is a group of elements that form the Unique one, a totality in movement.

But no one grants me my property. If anyone grants me my property, if anyone grants me my freedom, this freedom makes me an emancipated slave, a liberated slave, i.e., a slave who continues to be a slave under changed conditions of the management of my slavery. So freedom is conquered, property is conquered. In order to conquer it, might[3] is necessary. The force of the will is needed, the force of decision is needed, the might that can smash the moral obstacles, the spooks, the sanctifications, the sacredness that keep us bound.

It is necessary to understand that Stirner's philosophy is not a philosophy of dialogue. Stirner is not Martin Buber [...] with all respect for Buber, who has given me a great deal of pleasure. Stirner is a considerable thinker. The Unique one is not the I of dialogue. It doesn't open itself to the other in order to dialogue, but in order to take possession of it. To take possession even of oneself? I don't know. I don't know if it is legitimate to even think of taking possession of oneself as other. I don't know if the other is an integral part of oneself, because this would annul all the reasoning in the triad. Above all, in the Unique one there is, from the start, a radicalization, a taking to extremes, of the triad, which would remain ineffective, and would substantially represent the limits of the discussion of the absolute spirit, if there were not all the aspects of opening to the usability of others: property, the union of egoists. Now these aspects have a meaning because the Unique one moves; if it were to keep still, they would have no meaning.

Therefore the Unique one is a movement, and moves toward a thing different from itself. From what I have been able to understand of Stirner, a centrality of the Unique one is not acceptable. Otherwise, this would have within itself the dimension of sacredness. Since what do you have in yourself that is not something that must be conquered? Inside of you there is nothing, what a tragedy if the dimension of the Unique one were the sanctification of the other within you.

Now I don't have the exact quote available, but in relation to the overcoming of moral limits, Stirner uses a fantastic phrase and says: to

stretch out the hand. If we stretch out our hand in order to gain possession of something, that gesture places outside the law. Because according to the law, we can only make that which the law grants us our own, not that which we autonomously decide to make our own. And yet, in order to take possession of what we want, we must do nothing other than to stretch out the hand to take it. But to reach the point of doing so we must overcome an obstacle. Only that which we take possession of is our property, not that which is granted. That which is granted to us is the mark of our slavery, of our acceptance of the compensation. We have done something and are given a wage in compensation, a payment. "But property," says Stirner, "is conditioned by might. What I have in my power [and only this], that is my own. So long as I assert myself as holder [as long as I am capable of sustaining my possession of the thing with force], I am the proprietor of the thing; if it gets away from me again, no matter by what power, as through my recognition of a title of others to the thing — then [my] property is extinct. Thus, property and possession coincide."

But there is another discourse. Stirner speaks with clarity. Stretching out the hand, i.e., the exercise of force, finds an obstacle, a limit, in the force of others, this is the Stirnerian principle as well as that of anarchism.

Even Bakunin, in the writings of the period of the Franco-German war of 1870, says: why should we fear civil war? Civil war rouses the instincts too, but sooner or later it reaches an end and people come to an agreement among themselves. Clearly behind the chaos, behind the war, behind the human vileness, there is the possibility of building a different society, a different future. Thus, there is no need to fear very many things.

For example, there is no need to fear force. We have been educated in a sanctification of tolerance, a sanctification of respect for others, etc. I respect the other because it gives me pleasure to do so insofar as I love the other. But from the moment that the other no longer has loving intentions with regards to me, but rather those of hatred, my pleasure becomes something else. It becomes something else because I feel pleasure not only in defending myself from the other's intentions, but also in attacking. It is not at all the case that I find pleasure only in pacifism, in tolerance, in not attacking the other. In fact, quite the opposite. Conflict pleases me, struggle pleases me, because struggle is part of life. Now, if Stirner, and not just him, but also other anarchists, were to limit themselves only to saying: the sole solution is force, let's go, let's attack, let's destroy, etc., his discussion would have been partial. However, Stirner says in a passage we have read today: I love people, I love all people, and this is really the basis of my might, because I want to take possession of the other through the realization that I want to love it, because this remains good to me, it puts me in a position of enjoyment. Thus, this also forms a limit to the use of my force, because if I were to use my force beyond this limit, I would cause the other suffering and this suffering of his would

be my suffering and so my enjoyment would disappear. This is the true obstacle to the use of my force. Force cannot be developed infinitely, one cannot enter cheerfully into the territory of the gratuitous gesture, represented by Gide.

The problem of property is extremely important. There has always been a lively debate on this point. In the book *Community and Society* by F. Tönnies, there is an important distinction made between possession and property. But Stirner said that there is no distinction. The distinction is clear for Tönnies: possession is the defining quality of something we have from which we might separate ourselves only through sacrifice, that we might get rid of, but only with pain, with suffering. Property, on the other hand, is that which we have in order to get rid of it, because we receive enjoyment, a positive compensation by getting rid of it. Let's suggest: I am a bookseller and sell books, the books I possess mean nothing to me. They mean something when I separate from them, because in exchange I receive a payment in cash with which I can do other things that concern me. If, on the other hand, I consider the books of my personal library, I would not want to get rid of them, because they mean something to me only when they are not alienated from me. Because in the moment in which they are separated from me, let's say because I sell them or because someone destroys them, they mean something else to me: they cause me sorrow, they cause me suffering.

Thus the difference between possession and property, as it has been developed at length in juridical and sociological thought is absolutely eliminated in Stirner. For him, property has no meaning if it has alienation, merchandise, exchange value as its purpose. It has meaning only in use value. The use of property. This is why he says that property and possession are the same thing. In this way, property and possession end up becoming the same thing.

Property gives me might and might allows me to maintain my property. Only in this way do I come out of the herd and become something different from what I was. The difference wasn't in me before. It grew in me through rebellion, through acquisition, through force.

Consent, Stirner continues, "is not given to me by a force outside of me, but solely by my own might; if I lose it, the thing I possessed will escape [...] Only might decides about property, and, since the state (no matter whether it is the state of well-to-do citizens, ragamuffins or simply of human beings) is the only mighty one, it alone is proprietor as well. I, the Unique one, possess nothing and am only endowed with a possession; I am a vassal and, as such, a servant. Under the dominion of the state no property of mine exists." In the Stirnerian sense, of course, since, as we know, the state guarantees the existence of property. The extreme radical difference that exists between the state concept of property and Stirner's concept of property is understood. Any attempt (and there are still those who continue to attempt this ...) to bring Stirner into a reactionary philo-

sophical dimension is undeserved.

//Contribution to a Critical Reading of Stirner

One could easily write a small treatise on the history of anarchist individualism using only quotes taken from *The Ego and Its Own*. It would certainly be empty work, but in a few instances, this is all that some students of Stirner have done. A questionable affair for people called to deeply examine themes and problems, but also a sad affair when superficial and enthusiastic revolutionaries do substantially the same thing, because it has negative practical consequences.

Stirner's entire work lends itself to distortions of this type, and thus can be used to satisfy easy palates and minds in need of tutelage. Now, this shouldn't seem strange, since these readers and the image of themselves that they love to project, seem distant from the human prototype in need. The Stirnerian individualist loves to cry to the four winds about placing his right to life and joy in himself and in his strength. He is satisfied affirming that every "cause" outside of his "I" is extraneous to her and therefore she denies it, identifying his cause only in what is his, i.e., it is a unique cause, as his "I" is unique.

The appeal to revolt has fascinated many anarchists, and couldn't be otherwise. It fascinated this writer and continues to fascinate him, as an anarchist and as a man who has dedicated his life to revolution, but fascination with something does not have to dull the critical capacity. Otherwise, every declaration of principle falls under the razor that Stirner himself prepared along with other philosophers. It's a razor sharper than any other. All sanctification is a phantom that leads me far from myself, and thus, definitively becomes something contrary to myself. And what if this were the sanctification of one's "I" itself? What if it were the sanctification of nothing?

Here I would like to propose a critique of this basic thesis contained in *The Ego and Its Own*, but I mainly want to confront the problem of revolt as an end in itself. This misunderstanding becomes more serious, to the extent to which its possible unmasking becomes more difficult. Stirner provides a very important occasion. In fact one finds in his basic works all the elements that incubate, often quite thoughtlessly, in models that project in advance instincts of revolt, desires to conquer the world, spurs to pleasure, use of the other, ownership of the means with which the world is overburdened, and so on, in a colorful montage, agreeable to aggressive spirits. After all, life is not rationed. It is always better to rip it out in large chunks and enjoy it even at the cost of getting one's hands dirty.

The need for a foundation. Behind all Stirner's work, and not just the fundamental book, there stand the need for a foundation, a basis from which to start. The enumeration of all the "false" foundations, such as "God", "man", "freedom", "truth", etc., corresponds to another list of

“true” foundations, i.e., the “nothing”, the “I”, “self-liberation”, “property”. Of course, these two lists, which correspond exactly, could be lengthened considerably, and in the triadic scheme of the Hegelian dialectic, they can find their “supersession” in the third phase, that of synthesis, in which the “egoist”, the “individualist”, emerges and consolidates itself.

All of Stirner’s labor is directed toward building this foundation and enlarging it, passing from the egoist to the society of egoists, developing analyses of great interest that have formed and in the future will again form the eternal fortune of this philosopher.

I want to say one thing here, which I will develop from this point. Like every foundation, the egoist also succumbs to Stirner’s critical considerations. If the possibility is not admitted that once this foundation is formed, once the path of revolt against every earthly and divine institution is undertaken, once the individualist is found in his most intimate and vital aspect, one could not head toward a further critical vision, proceeding beyond, toward other perspectives, always more distant and risky, precisely because they lack any foundation, if this is not admitted, the egoist will herself be a “possessed” person, yet another “spook”. Stirner is the one who supplies us with the means for reaching this conclusion. But he carefully avoids proposing it since this would have broken the sealing mechanism of the triadic dialectic.

This is why the strong man, the courageous victor of a thousand battles, even with himself, the prophet of prospects for liberation, often ends his life in the misery of a fictitious rebellion, destined to set up house in the sphere of his image, sadly reflected in the deforming mirror of daily life, even though safeguarded by thousands of mechanisms that are completely other than individualist.

What “supersession” are we talking about? Interesting question. Unfortunately, I think Stirner’s supersession, aimed at constructing the egoist, is destined to fall into the trap of the foundation. The egoist is either constructed as such and once the result is obtained is enclosed in its egoism; or one moves toward egoism, thus one rebels and gains, one appropriates, uses and all the rest, but not just in order to form one’s egoism, but to make something of this egoism as such, i.e., to enjoy oneself, to really live one’s life.

Stirner posed this problem and resolved it by affirming that the aim must remain within the egoist I. Thus, if the individualist is to avoid becoming the cause of other, ie, not her own, she must herself be his own aim. In other words, she must simply live the best that she can. But this is not a radical resolution, insofar as the supersession to the definite individualist phase, in a clear way, doesn’t take into consideration that one can only enjoy something that one knows, and one can only possess something that one knows. Stirner himself affirms that involuntary possession, like involuntary enjoyment, are only lesser moments of life. But it is easily understood that knowing, the indispensable antechamber

of all enjoyment and all living, cannot be locked into a definitive foundation, but must be continually put into play. There is no moment in which knowledge can be considered closed. Therefore there is no moment in which one can be called individualistically complete.

Another way to consider “supersession”. The philosophy of the twentieth century responded to the Nietzschean heritage and proposed a concept of supersession that was different from the Hegelian one that presupposes the dialectical mechanism, the *Aufhebung*, which one inevitably finds again even in the formation of the egoist as Stirner proposes it.

This new concept consists in not leaving anything behind, in exceeding starting from one’s own condition of need. Otherwise supersession would be deprived of meaning. This *Überwindung*, revived by Heidegger in some passages of his work, certainly leads back to Nietzsche. If the egoist is the new human being, he needs a supersession that sums up the old strengths in itself, destroying them in the synthesis that produces precisely the new. But considering it well, can we become new? Is the egoist a new human being? According to Stirner’s own analysis, she is not, she cannot be so. But if he cannot be so, if he can only be what she is, and only on the condition of not making aims outside himself sacred, then he cannot ever become “new”. But the Hegelian *Aufhebung* actually produced a new thing, made the old disappear. The egoist destroys the old human being, destroys every residue of past truth; she alone is truth. But if this destruction is carried to its ultimate conclusion, it even destroys itself, needing its own foundation to be real. This is supplied by individualism that very quickly finds quiet, one way or another, in the society of egoists or in the singular ferocity of the solitary.

JOHN BEVERLEY ROBINSON



EGOISM

There is no word more generally misinterpreted than the word egoism, in its modern sense. In the first place, it is supposed to mean devotion to self interest, without regard to the interest of others. It is thus opposed to altruism — devotion to others and sacrifice of self. This interpretation is due to the use of the word thus antithetically by Herbert Spencer.

Again, it is identified with hedonism or eudaimonism, or epicureanism, philosophies that teach that the attainment of pleasure or happiness or advantage, whichever you may choose to phrase it, is the rule of life. Modern egoism, as propounded by Stirner and Nietzsche, and expounded by Ibsen, Shaw and others, is all these; but it is more. It is the realization by the individual that they are an individual; that, as far as they are concerned, they are the only individual.

For each one of us stands alone in the midst of a universe. We are surrounded by sights and sounds which we interpret as exterior to ourselves, although all we know of them are the impressions on our retina and ear drums and other organs of sense. The universe for the individual is measured by these sensations; they are, for him/her, the universe. Some of them they interpret as denoting other individuals, whom they conceive as more or less like themselves. But none of these is his/ herself. He/she stands apart. His/her consciousness, and the desires and gratifications that enter into it, is a thing unique; no other can enter into it.

However near and dear to you may be your spouse, children, friends, they are not you; they are outside of you. You are forever alone. Your thoughts and emotions are yours alone. There is no other who experiences your thoughts or your feelings.

No doubt it gives you pleasure when others think as you do, and inform you of it through language; or when others enjoy the same things that you do. Moreover, quite apart from their enjoying the same things that you enjoy, it gives you pleasure to see them enjoy themselves in any way. Such gratification to the individual is the pleasure of sympathy, one of the most acute pleasures possible for most people.

According to your sympathy, you will take pleasure in your own happiness or in the happiness of other people; but it is always your own happiness you seek. The most profound egoist may be the most complete

altruist; but he knows that her altruism is, at the bottom, nothing but self-indulgence. But egoism is more than this.

It is the realization by the individual that she/he is above all institutions and all formulas; that they exist only so far as he chooses to make them her own by accepting them. When you see clearly that you are the measure of the universe, that everything that exists exists for you only so far as it is reflected in your own consciousness, you become a new person; you see everything by a new light: you stand on a height and feel the fresh air blowing on your face; and find new strength and glory in it.

Whatever gods you worship, you realize that they are your gods, the product of your own mind, terrible or amiable, as you may choose to depict them. You hold them in your hand, and play with them, as a child with its paper dolls; for you have learned not to fear them, that they are but the "imagination of your heart."

All the ideals which people generally think are realities, you have learned to see through; you have learned that they are your ideals. Whether you have originated them, which is unlikely, or have accepted somebody else's ideals, makes no difference. They are your ideals just so far as you accept them. The priest is reverend only so far as you reverence him. If you cease to reverence him, he is no longer reverend for you. You have power to make and unmake priests as easily as you can make and unmake gods. You are the one of whom the poet tells, who stands unmoved, though the universe falls in fragments about you.

And all the other ideals by which people are moved, to which people are enslaved, for which humyns afflict themselves, have no power over you; you are no longer afraid of them, for you know them to be your own ideals, made in your own mind, for your own pleasure, to be changed or ignored, just as you choose to change or ignore them. They are your own little pets, to be played with, not to be feared.

"The State" or "The Government" is idealized by the many as a thing above them, to be revered and feared. They call it "My Country," and if you utter the magic words, they will rush to kill their friends, whom they would not injure by so much as a pin scratch, if they were not intoxicated and blinded by their ideal. Most people are deprived of their reason under the influence of their ideals. Moved by the ideal of "religion" or "patriotism" or "morality," they fly at each others' throats — they, who are otherwise often the gentlest of neighbors! But their ideals are for them like the "fixed ideas" of lunatics. They become irrational and irresponsible under the influence of their ideals. They will not only destroy others, but they will quite often sink their own interests, and rush madly to destroy themselves as a sacrifice to the all-devouring ideal. Curious, is it not, to one who looks on with a philosophical mind?

But the egoist has no ideals, for the knowledge that his ideals are only his ideals, frees her from their domination. She acts for his own interest, not for the interest of ideals. She will neither hang a person nor

whip a child in the interest of “morality,” if it is disagreeable to her to do so. He/she has no reverence for “The State.” She knows that “The Government” is but a set of men, mostly as big fools as he is himself, many of them bigger. If the State does things that benefit her, he will support it; if it attacks her and encroaches on his liberty, she will evade it by any means in his power, if she is not strong enough to withstand it. He/she is a person without a country.

“The Flag,” that most people adore, as people always adore symbols, worshipping the symbol more than the principle it is supposed to set forth, is for the egoist but a rather inharmonious piece of patch-work; and anybody may walk on it or spit on it if they will, without exciting their emotion any more than if it were a tarpaulin that they walked upon — or spat upon. The principles that it symbolizes, they will maintain as far as it seems to their advantage to maintain them; but if the principles require them to kill people or be killed themselves, you will have to demonstrate to them just what benefit they will gain by killing or being killed, before you can persuade them to uphold them.

When the judge enters court in his togger, (judges and ministers and professors know the value of togger in impressing the populace) the egoist is unterrified. She/he has not even any respect for “The Law.” If the law happens to be to his advantage, she will avail himself of it; if it invades her liberty she will transgress it as far as he thinks it wise to do so. But she has no regard for it as a thing supernal. It is to her the clumsy creation of them who still “sit in darkness.”

Nor does he bow the knee to Morality — Sacred Morality! Some of its precepts she may accept, if he chooses to do so; but you cannot scare her off by telling him it is not “right.” He usually prefers not to kill or steal; but if she must kill or steal to save herself, he will do it with a good heart, and without any qualms of “conscience.”

And “morality” will never persuade her to injure others when it is of no advantage to himself. She will not be found among a band of “white caps,” flogging and burning poor devils, because their actions do not conform to the dictates of “morality,” though they have injured none by such actions; nor will he have any hand in persecuting helpless girls, and throwing them out into the street, when she has received no ill at their hands. To her friends — to those who deserve the truth from him, — she will tell the truth; but you cannot force the truth from him because she is “afraid to tell a lie.” He has no fear, not even of perjury, for she knows that oaths are but devices to enslave the mind by an appeal to supernatural fears.

And for all the other small, tenuous ideals, with which we have fettered our minds and to which we have shrunk our petty lives; they are for the egoist as though they were not. “Filial love and respect” he will give to his parents if they have earned it by deserving it. If they have beaten her in infancy, and scorned her in childhood, and domineered

over him in maturity, he may possibly love them in spite of maltreatment; but if they have alienated her affection, they will not reawaken it by an appeal to “duty”.

In brief, egoism in its modern interpretation, is the antithesis, not of altruism, but of idealism. The ordinary person — the idealist — subordinates their interests to the interests of their ideals, and usually suffers for it. The egoist is fooled by no ideals: she/he discards them or uses them, as may suit his own interest. If he/she likes to be altruistic, they will sacrifice themselves for others; but only because they like to do so; they demand no gratitude nor glory in return

Green Anarchy Issue #20

ANDRE LORULOT

WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE WANT?

We don't have the pretension of responding in one article to questions as vast and interesting as these. This is the goal that our "Idée Libre" proposes to fulfill, and we only want to indicate here an overview of the work to be carried out, a work whose urgency and necessity escape no one.

For too long we have contented ourselves with responding to these questions with a few pompous clichés or sonorous phrases. For too long we have limited ourselves to purely sentimental declarations or virulent affirmations. We can't be satisfied with words or dreams, and we think it is time to substitute precise concepts based on discussion, experience, and knowledge for abstract formulas and puerile declamations.

Determining the rational and tangible goals of our activity and envisaging the most serious and rapid means for realizing them: this is the fruitful task we must seek to carry out. It is this task that we want to collaborate here as best we can. In a few lines we are going to today attempt to pose the question on its true terrain while of course reserving the right to later return to the different parts of the problem in order to debate them more completely.

In the midst of the unspeakable chaos of philosophies of all kinds and of various moralities we can cull out the constant and persistent tendency which pushes the individual towards life. Towards an ever better life, freer and more noble: that is, towards happiness.

We are thus headed towards happiness, like all humans and all organized beings of whatever kind. The essential aspiration of every living being consists, in the first instance, in safeguarding his life, and then in improving it. Egoism? Instinct of preservation? Law of universal equilibrium? This is of no importance, and without quibbling over the interpretation of this fact we will limit ourselves to noting it.

And so we want to live. As long and as well as possible, and it will be easy for us to determine what this means. To be sure, men have never managed to come to an agreement on the meaning of the word happiness. It is understood that this word expresses something variable, individual, impossible to fix in a collective and immutable ideal. But we have noted that everywhere and always the individual has sought happiness. And so we don't have to concern ourselves with general or planetary happiness, but with our personal happiness. In any event, could we impose happiness

on those who don't desire it or who see it in a different way than us? Do we have the capacity to make our neighbor happy without his assistance? Not at all, and this is why the realization of happiness must above all be the work of the individual, and the fruit of his own efforts.

Far from us the pretension to want to dictate acts or to present a new gospel. On the contrary, it is by the destruction of all credos, of all beliefs, that the individual can find the path to his happiness, his life. But we say that the happiness of the individual can only consist in the rational flowering of his faculties, the free and conscious satisfaction of his needs, the preservation of his vitality, and the equilibrium of his functions. This is not a metaphysical definition engendering interminable and sterile discussions. It rests upon an experimental basis, easily controlled and of incontestable importance. Everything that is susceptible of atrophying one of my organs, one of my senses, everything that diminishes or can diminish my intelligence, my energy, everything that can trouble the functioning of my organism, dull my will, pervert my instincts, lead me to harmful acts, all of this is contrary to my life, contrary to my happiness, and consequently, contrary to myself. "With all my might I will seek to cast aside these obstacles, to overcome these obstacles, to defend myself against aberrations, against absurd acts, for I want to realize my personality as fully as possible." This is what the reasoning individual will say in the face of life, after having swept the tables clean of all constraints.

Enemies of collective morality, of rules of conduct imposed on the individual, we want the latter to determine his morality for himself, freely, with no other guide than his reason constantly enlightened by study and experience, as well as by his knowledge and his observations of his like, controlled and verified by himself when this is needed.

Let us then repeat it: our work will consist in furnishing to each the elements that will permit him to establish his individual morality and to act as much as possible with conquering his happiness and improving his life in view. In our opinion this will be the best means for everyone to be able to usefully respond to the primordial questions that we often pose ourselves: "Who are we?" Men in love with the ardent, free and conscious life. "What do we want?" To know the laws that preside over our existence in order to conduct ourselves both intensely and reasonably. An unlimited field of action is open before such efforts, capable of allowing us fertile results and radiant realizations.

Inevitably, the putting in practice of such concepts will lead us to engage in a struggle with social forces. It isn't enough to know where the good lies, it is necessary to want to and to be able to conquer it. It isn't enough to know the value of one act or the absurdity of another, one must have the strength to effectuate the former and avoid the latter. The individual will thus be led to rebel against the institutions that pretend to maintain him in evil, against the men who do harm to his will, impose upon him a form of life whose failings he recognizes. He becomes the

adversary of all tyrannies, he rebels against all economic, material and moral constraints. By reason of the numerous ties that attach individual life to collective life, the individual cannot proclaim a lack of interest in the social question, since his personality will develop all the better if his ambient milieu is more propitious, more favorable, less authoritarian, constituted by men less close-minded and more tolerant.

Nevertheless, before beginning the struggle it is good to know where you are going and what you want. Before acting, you must know. Let us thus learn. Man will only be able to act usefully when he will have managed to destroy all lies, freed himself from all the superstitions given birth to by error, sought the truth in the jumble of knowledge and observations. I will respond in the following way to those skeptics who will object that the truth doesn't exist: we call truth a controlled relationship among phenomena. These latter can vary, in the same way as the properties of bodies and the manifestations of beings, and in this case it is obvious that the truth transforms itself. We should thus not look upon it as a dogma, but must seek it in all domains, without any preconceived spirit, relying on the exact data we possess. This will be its only true and solid foundation.

So it is necessary that man know what his place is in nature, and that he study the laws of universal evolution. He must give himself over to positive study, i.e., study entirely based on facts, the phenomena he participates in, and the beings that surround him. This study can be both gradual and universal, should scrutinize every living being, every organ, every part of every animal and raise itself to the level of the understanding of the relations that tie the part to the whole, the cell to the body and the universe. Through the study of phenomena and the laws of instinct, the morality of animals, of their collective groupings, he will prepare himself to no be longer ignorant of the laws that guide the functioning of human reason, of psychological and social manifestations, of the evolution of the ideas and customs of our societies. By examining historical documents relating the efforts of those who preceded him, as well as through the knowledge of their labors, of their ideas, he will find matter for fruitful reflections and profitable learning. When he will have acquired the knowledge that will permit him to consciously guide him the individual will fortify himself through reflection and discussion, which will aid him in assimilating his intellectual nourishment in a more perfect way, and will develop his faculties of discernment and comprehension.

It goes without saying that we must not neglect our physical culture and that all those sciences that are concerned with the maintenance of our health must be investigated. We want to live, that is, be able to ward off all that can degrade us, all forms of partial or total suicide, conscious or unconscious. The sciences dealing with general hygiene will teach us to search for the correct means of existence, to love pure air, the sun, cleanliness, healthy foods, rational exercise, healthy and agreeable lodgings.

They will inspire hatred in us for slums, overwork, filth, ugliness, the hatred of artificial joys, of puerile vanity, of perversions that stupefy or taint. We will advance towards beauty, the reasonable and strong life, towards harmony and joy.

We then must develop our will so that it becomes apt at seconding our intelligence, which will have been enlightened. "To think and not act is the same as not thinking," one of our friends correctly said. We insist that education must be total, that it must develop all our faculties, all our senses. It doesn't consist in book learning alone, and he who will be satisfied with retaining a few phrases and a certain number of poorly digested notions will not have brought together the conditions we have laid out, he will not know to — will not be able to — properly comport himself. The will requires educating, just like the intelligence, of which it is the auxiliary. We will exercise our will by casting aside those errors that can be dangerous, and we will maintain it through action, resistance to atavisms, the passions, to evil, by training it in the suppression of harmful acts, by the cultivation of daring, of initiative, of courage.

How unlimited is the horizon that opens up before the individual! He will be able to quench his thirst for knowledge, his desire for healthy joys without ever fearing of tiring of them. Each of his efforts will bear within itself its "recompense" by increasing his happiness and that of his kind.

For moral education is as necessary as purely intellectual education. As I said above, we cannot be uninterested in the life of others, since our personal acts depend on those of other humans. It is here that the error appears of those who use an extreme individualism to legitimize anti-social acts. After having established the rules for his conduct as concerns himself, the true individualist will concern himself with that part of morality that keeps in sight the relations of men among themselves. Not being able to ignore the benefits of solidarity and association he will want to analyze the attitudes of his like in order to draw the greatest profit, personal and durable, from mutual assistance. Through a prior selection and agreements based on affinities he will obtain the maximum amount of profit with the least concessions, and the happiness of the individual will thus be in harmony and equilibrium with that of his comrades.

Acting consciously towards himself and others: this is the goal the man desirous of blossoming through reason and free agreement will propose to himself. It is obvious that he must turn to those of his kind who are still in error, who accept their servitude. It will be in his interest to work for the emancipation of those capable of evolving and who can — after having escaped from ignorance — become fraternal and dedicated comrades, increasing the wealth and power of his life.

To be sure, the question will not be resolved by this summary exposé, nor do we have the naïve pretension to believe this. We have simply attempted to indicate the overall picture of a flexible and individual

morality based on liberty and reason. At the same time we have sketched the plan for a colossal but marvelous labor. Is this not our entire task? Improve ourselves, reform ourselves, become more conscious, less flawed, less proud and impulsive and through our friendly criticism, our propaganda and comradely efforts strive to show the ignorant and the submissive the renovating path of revolt and education.

We will search in this very place — and this will be the reason for this publication — to study and determine the multiple rules of individual conduct. Stripped of all dogmatic spirit, but also of all mysticism and skepticism, we will advance towards life with something other than literary witticisms and sentimental impressions. Everything capable of elevating man's mentality, everything that can assist him in piercing nature's mysteries, in tasting science's teachings universally applied, all of this will interest us. We want men who know how to conduct themselves, who know what they are doing and what they want, and not chatterboxes, the regimented the infatuated, or vain, and authoritarian fools. The task is difficult, but it is fascinating and fruitful! Accomplished methodically and seriously it will be the true anarchist task, since it alone can form better individuals, capable of living without authority, of blossoming individually and forever advancing towards the better through honest solidarity. In the face of dogmas, of despots, of the sentimental, of charlatans and regimenters, humanity's future belongs to reason.

G. PALANTE

ANARCHISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

The words anarchism and individualism are frequently used as synonyms. Many thinkers vastly different from each other are carelessly qualified sometimes as anarchists, sometimes as individualists. It is thus that we speak indifferently of Stirnerite anarchism or individualism, of Nietzschean anarchism or individualism, of Barrésian anarchism or individualism, etc. In other cases, though, this identification of the two terms is not looked upon as possible. We commonly say Proudhonian anarchism, Marxist anarchism, anarchist syndicalism. But we could not say Proudhonian, Marxist, or syndicalist individualism. We can speak of a Christian or Tolstoyan anarchism, but not of a Christian or Tolstoyan individualism.

At other times the two terms have been melted together in one name: anarchist individualism. Under this rubric M. Hasch designates a social philosophy that it differentiates from anarchism properly so-called, and whose great representative, according to him, are Goethe, Byron, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Carlyle, Emerson, Kierkegaard, Renan, Ibsen, Stirner and Nietzsche. This philosophy can be summed up as the cult of great men and the apotheosis of genius. It would seem to us to be arguable whether the expression individualist anarchism can be used to designate such a doctrine. The qualification of anarchist, in the etymological sense, can be applied with difficulty to thinkers of the race of Goethe, Carlyle, and Nietzsche, whose philosophy seems on the contrary to be dominated by ideas of hierarchical organization and the harmonious placing of values in a series. What is more, the epithet of individualist can't be applied with equal justice to all the thinkers we have just named. If it is appropriate for designating the egotist, nihilist and anti-idealist revolt of Stirner, it can with difficulty be applied to the Hegelian, optimist and idealist philosophy of a Carlyle, who clearly subordinates the individual to the idea.

There thus reigns a certain confusion concerning the use of the two terms anarchism and individualism, as well as the systems of ideas and sentiments that these terms designate. We would here like to attempt to clarify the notion of individualism and determine its psychological and sociological content by distinguishing it from anarchism...

Individualism is the sentiment of a profound, irreducible antinomy between the individual and society. The individualist is he who, by virtue of his temperament, is predisposed to feel in a particularly acute fashion the ineluctable

disharmonies between his intimate being and his social milieu. At the same time, he is a man for whom life has reserved some decisive occasion to remark this disharmony. Whether through brutality, or the continuity of his experiences, for him it has become clear that for the individual society is a perpetual creator of constraints, humiliations and miseries, a kind of continuous generation of human pain. In the name of his own experience and his personal sensation of life the individualist feels he has the right to relegate to the rank of utopia any ideal of a future society where the hoped-for harmony between the individual and society will be established. Far from the development of society diminishing evil, it does nothing but intensify it by rendering the life of the individual more complicated, more laborious and more difficult in the middle of the thousand gears of an increasingly tyrannical social mechanism. Science itself, by intensifying within the individual the consciousness of the vital conditions made for him by society, arrives only at darkening his intellectual and moral horizons. *Qui auget scientiam auget et dolorem.*

We see that individualism is essentially a social pessimism. Under its most moderate form it admits that if life in society is not an absolute evil and completely destructive of individuality, for the individualist is at the very least a restrictive and oppressive condition, a necessary evil and a last resort.

The individualists who respond to this description form a small morose group whose rebellious, resigned or hopeless words contrast with the fanfares for the future of optimistic sociologists. It is Vigny saying: "The social order is always bad. From time to time it is bearable. Between bad and bearable the dispute isn't worth a drop of blood." It's Schopenhauer seeing social life as the supreme flowering of human pain and evil. It's Stirner with his intellectual and moral solipsism perpetually on his guard against the duperies of social idealism and the intellectual and moral crystallization with which every organized society threatens the individual. It is, at certain moments, an Amiel with his painful stoicism that perceives society as a limitation and a restriction of his free spiritual nature. It's a David Thoreau, the extremist disciple of Emerson, that "student of nature," deciding to stray from the ordinary paths of human activity and to become a "wanderer," worshipping independence and dreams. A "wanderer whose every minute will be filled with more work than the entire lives of many men with occupations." It's a Challemeil-Lacour with his pessimistic conception of society and progress. It is perhaps, at certain moments, a Tarde, with an individualism colored with misanthropy that he somewhere expresses: "It is possible that the flux of imitation has its banks and that, by the very effect of its excessive deployment, the need for sociability diminishes or rather alters and transforms itself into a kind of general misanthropy, very compatible, incidentally, with a moderate commercial circulation and a certain activity of industrial exchanges reduced to the strict necessary, but above all appropriate to reinforcing in each of us the distinctive traits of our inner individuality."

Even among those who, like M. Maurice Barrès, by dilettantism and artistic posture, are averse to the accents of sharp revolt or discouraged pessimism, individualism remains a sentiment of "the impossibility that exists of harmoniz-

ing the private and the general I.” It’s a determination to set free the first I, to cultivate it in what it has of the most special, the most advanced, the most rummaged through, both in detail and in depth. “The individualist,” says M. Barrès, “is he who, through pride in his true I, which he isn’t able to set free, ceaselessly wounds, soils, and denies what he has in common with the mass of men...The dignity of the men of our race is exclusively attached to certain shivers that the world doesn’t know and cannot see and which we must multiply in ourselves.”

In all of them individualism is an attitude of sensibility that goes from hostility and distrust to indifference and disdain vis-à-vis the organized society in which we are forced to live, vis-à-vis its uniformising rules, its monotonous repetitions, and its enslaving constraints. It’s a desire to escape from it and to withdraw into oneself. Above all, it is the profound sentiment of the “uniqueness of the I,” of that which despite it all the I maintains of unrepressible and impenetrable to social influences. As M. Tarde says, it is the sentiment of the “profound and fleeting singularity of persons, of their manner of being, or thinking, of feeling, which is only once and of an instant.”

Is there any need to demonstrate how much this attitude differs from anarchism? There is no doubt that in one sense anarchism proceeds from individualism. It is, in fact, the anti-social revolt of a minority that feels itself oppressed or disadvantaged by the current order of things. But anarchism represents only the first moment of individualism, the moment of faith and hope, of actions courageous and confident of success. At its second moment individualism converts, as we have seen, into social pessimism.

The passage from confidence to despair, from optimism to pessimism is here, in great part, an affair of psychological temperament. There are delicate souls that are easily wounded on contact with social realities and consequently quick to be disillusioned, a Vigny or a Heine, for example. We can say that these souls belong to the psychological type that has been called “sensitive.” They feel that social determinism, insofar as it is repressive of the individual, is particularly tormenting and oppressive. But there are other souls who resist multiple failures, who disregard even experience’s toughest examples and remain unshakeable in their faith. These souls belong to the “active” type. Such are the souls of the anarchist apostles: Bakunin, Kropotkin, Reclus. Perhaps their imperturbable confidence in their ideal depends on a lesser intellectual and emotional acuity. Reasons for doubt and discouragement don’t strike them harshly enough to tarnish the abstract ideal they’ve forged and to lead them to the final and logical step of individualism: social pessimism.

Whatever the case, there can be no doubt concerning the optimism of anarchist philosophy. That optimism is spread, often simplistically and with naivety, in those volumes with blood red covers that form the reading matter of propagandists by the deed. The shadow of the optimistic Rousseau floats over all this literature.

Anarchist optimism consists in believing that social disharmonies, that the antinomies that the current state of affairs present between the individual and society, are not essential, but rather accidental and provisional; that they will one

day be resolved and will give place to an era of harmony.

Anarchism rests on two principles that seem to complement each other, but actually contradict each other. One is the principle that is properly individualist or libertarian, formulated by Wilhelm von Humboldt and chosen by Stuart Mill as the epigraph of his "Essay on Liberty": "The great principle is the essential and absolute importance of human development in its richest diversity." The other is the humanist or altruist principle which is translated on the economic plane by communist anarchism. That the individualist and humanist principles negate each other is proven by logic and fact. Either the individualist principle means nothing, or it is a demand in favor of that which differs and is unequal in individuals, in favor of those traits that make them different, separates them and, if need be, opposes them. On the contrary, humanism aims at the assimilation of humanity. Following the expression of M. Gide, its ideal is to make a reality of the expression "our like." In fact, at the current time we see the antagonism of the two principles assert itself among the most insightful theoreticians of anarchism, and that logical and necessary antagonism cannot fail to bring about the breakup of anarchism as a political and social doctrine.

Whatever the case and whatever difficulties might be met by he who wants to reconcile the individualist and humanist principles, these two rival and enemy principles meet at least at this one point: they are both clearly optimistic. Humboldt's principle is optimistic insofar as it implicitly affirms the original goodness of human nature and the legitimacy of its free blossoming. It sets itself up in opposition to the Christian condemnation of our natural instincts, and we can understand the reservations of M. Dupont-White, the translator of the "Essay on Liberty," had from the spiritualist and Christian point of view (condemnation of the flesh) as concerns this principle.

The humanist principle is no less optimistic. Humanism, in fact, is nothing but rendering divine of man in what he has of the general, of humanity, and consequently of human society. As we see, anarchism, optimistic as concerns the individual, is even more so as concerns society. Anarchism supposes that individual freedoms, left to themselves, will naturally harmonize and spontaneously realize the anarchist ideal of free society.

In regard to these two opposing points of view, the Christian and anarchist, what is the attitude of individualism? Individualism, a realist philosophy, all lived life and immediate sensation, equally repudiates these two metaphysics: one, Christian metaphysics, which a priori affirms original evil, the other the rationalist and Rosseauist metaphysics, that no less a priori affirms the original and essential goodness of our nature. Individualism places itself before the facts. And these latter make visible in the human being a bundle of instincts in struggle with each other and, in human society, a grouping of individuals also necessarily in struggle with each other. By the very fact of his conditions of existence the human being is subject to the law of struggle: internal struggle among his own instincts, external struggle with his like. If recognizing the permanent and universal character of egoism and struggle in human existence means being pessimistic, then we must say that individualism is pessimistic. But we must immediately add

that the pessimism of individualism, a pessimism of fact, an experimental pessimism, if you will, pessimism a posteriori, is totally different from the theological pessimism that a priori pronounces, in the name of dogma, the condemnation of human nature. What is more, individualism separates itself every bit as much from anarchism. If, with anarchism, it admits Humboldt's principle as the expression of a normal tendency necessary to our nature for its full blossoming, at the same time it recognizes that this tendency is condemned to never being satisfied because of the internal and external disharmonies of our nature. In other words, it considers the harmonious development of the individual and society as a utopia. Pessimistic as concerns the individual, individualism is even more so as concerns society: man is by his very nature disharmonious because of the internal struggle of his instincts. But this disharmony is exacerbated by the state of society which, through a painful paradox, represses our instincts at the same time as it exasperates them. In fact, from the rapprochement of individual will-to-life is formed a collective will-to-life which becomes immediately oppressive for the individual will-to-life and opposes its flourishing with all its force. The state of society thus pushes to its ultimate degree the disharmonies of our nature. It exaggerates them and puts them in the poorest possible light. Following the idea of Schopenhauer, society thus truly represents the human will-to-life at its highest degree: struggle, lack of fulfillment, and suffering.

From this opposition between anarchism and individualism flow others. Anarchism believes in progress. Individualism is an attitude of thought that we can call non-historical. It denies becoming, progress. It sees the human will-to-life in an eternal present. Like Schopenhauer, with whom he has more than one similarity, Stirner is a non-historical spirit. He too believes that it is chimerical to expect something new and great from tomorrow. Every social form, by the very fact that it crystallizes, crushes the individual. For Stirner, there are no utopian tomorrows, no "paradise at the end of our days." There is nothing but the egoist today. Stirner's attitude before society is the same as that of Schopenhauer before nature and life. With Schopenhauer the negation of life remains metaphysical and, we might say, spiritual (we should remember that Schopenhauer condemns suicide which, would be the material and tangible negation). in the same way Stirner's rebellion against society is an entirely spiritual internal rebellion, all intention and inner will. It is not, as is the case with Bakunin, an appeal to pan-destruction. Regarding society, it is a simple act of distrust and passive hostility, a mix of indifference and disdainful resignation. It is not a question of the individual fighting against society, for society will always be the stronger. It must thus be obeyed, obeyed like a dog. But Stirner, while obeying, as a form of consolation, maintains an immense intellectual contempt. This is more or less the attitude of Vigny vis-a-vis nature and society. "A tranquil despair, without convulsions of anger and without reproaches for heaven, this is wisdom itself." And again: "Silence would be the best criticism of life."

Anarchism is an exaggerated and mad idealism. Individualism is summed up in a trait common to Schopenhauer and Stirner: a pitiless realism. It arrives at what a German writer calls a complete "dis-idealization" (Entidealisierung

ung) of life and society.

“An ideal is nothing but a pawn,” Stirner said. From this point of view Stirner is the most authentic representative of individualism. His icy word seizes souls with a shiver entirely different from that, fiery and radiant, of a Nietzsche. Nietzsche remains an impenitent, imperious, violent idealist. He idealizes superior humanity. Stirner represents the most complete dis-idealization of nature and life, the most radical philosophy of disenchantment that has appeared since Ecclesiastes. Pessimist without measure or reservations, individualism is absolutely anti-social, unlike anarchism, with which this is only relatively the case (in relation to current society). Anarchism admits an antinomy between the individual and the state, an antinomy it resolves by the suppression of the state, but it does not see any inherent, irreducible antinomy between the individual and society. This is because in its eyes society represents a spontaneous growth (Spencer), while the state is an artificial and authoritarian organization. In the eyes of an individualist society is as tyrannical, if not more so, than the state. Society, in fact, is nothing else but the mass of social ties of all kinds (opinions, mores, usages, conventions, mutual surveillance, more or less discreet espionage of the conduct of others, moral approval and disapproval, etc.) Society thus understood constitutes a closely-knit fabric of petty and great tyrannies, exigent, inevitable, incessant, harassing, and pitiless, which penetrates into the details of individual life more profoundly and continuously than statist constraints can. What is more, if we look closely at this, statist tyranny and the tyranny of mores proceed from the same root: the collective interest of a caste or class that wishes to establish or to maintain its domination and prestige. Opinion and mores are in part the residue of ancient caste disciplines that are in the process of disappearing, in part the seed of new social disciplines brought with them by the new leading caste in the process of formation. This is why between state constraint and that of opinion and mores there is only a difference in degree. Deep down they have the same goal: the maintenance of a certain moral conformism useful to the group, and the same procedures: the vexation and elimination of the independent and the recalcitrant. The only difference is that diffuse sanctions (opinions and mores) are more hypocritical than the others. Proudhon was right to say that the state is nothing but a mirror of society. It is only tyrannical because society is tyrannical. The government, following a remark of Tolstoy's, is a gathering of men who exploit others and that favors the wicked and the cheaters. If this is the practice of government, this is also that of society. There is a conformity between the two terms: state and society. The one is the same as the other. The gregarious spirit, or the spirit of society, is no less oppressive for the individual than the statist or priestly spirit, which only maintain themselves thanks to and through it.

How strange! Stirner himself, on the question of the relations between society and the state, seems to share the error of Spencer and Bakunin. He protests against the intervention of the state in the acts of the individual, but not against that of society. “Before the individual the state girds itself with an aureole of sanctity. For example, it makes laws concerning duels. Two men who agree to risk their lives in order to settle an affair (whatever it might be) cannot execute

their agreement because the state doesn't want it. They would expose themselves to judicial pursuit and punishment. What becomes of the freedom of self-determination? Things are completely different in those places, like North America, where society decides to make the duelists suffer certain disagreeable consequences of their act and takes form them, for example, the credit they had previously enjoyed. The refusing of credit is everyone's affair, and if it pleases a society to deprive someone of it for one reason or another, he who is struck by it cannot complain of an attack on his liberty: society has done nothing but exercise its own. The society of which we spoke leaves the individual perfectly free to expose himself to the harmful or disagreeable consequences that result from his way of acting, and leaves full and entire his freedom of will. The state does exactly the contrary: it denies all legitimacy to the will of the individual and only recognizes as legitimate its own will, the will of the state." Strange reasoning. The law doesn't attack me. In what way am I freer if society boycotts me? Such reasoning would legitimize all the attacks of a public opinion infected by moral bigotry against the individual. The legend of individual liberty in Anglo-Saxon countries is built on this reasoning. Stirner himself feels the vice of his reasoning, and a little further along he arrives at his celebrated distinction between society and association. In the one (society) the individual is taken as a means; in the other (association), he takes himself as an end and treats the association as a means of personal power and enjoyment: "You bring to the association all your might, all your riches and make your presence felt. In society you and your activity are utilized. In the first you live as an egoist; in the second you live as a man, i.e., religiously; you work in the Lord's vineyard. You owe society everything you have; you are its debtor and you are tormented with social obligations. You owe nothing to the association. She serves you and you leave it without scruples as soon as you no longer have any advantages to draw from it..." "If society is more than you then you will have it pass ahead of you and you will make yourself its servant. The association is your tool, your weapon; it sharpens and multiplies your natural strength. The association only exists for you and by you. Society, on the contrary, claims you as its good and can exist without you. In short, society is sacred and the association is your property; society uses you and you use the association.

A vain distinction if ever there was one! Where should we fix the boundary between society and association? As Stirner himself admitted, doesn't an association tend to crystallize into a society?

However we approach it, anarchism cannot reconcile the two anti-economic terms, society and individual liberty. The free society that it dreams of is a contradiction in terms. It's a piece of steel made of wood, a stick without an end. Speaking of anarchists Nietzsche wrote: "We can already read on all the walls and all the tables their word for the future: Free society. Free society? To be sure. But I think you know, my dear sirs, what we will build it with: Wood made of iron..." Individualism is clearer and more honest than anarchism. It places the state, society, and association on the same plane. It rejects them both and as far as this is possible tosses them overboard. "All associations have the defects of convents," Vigny said.

Antisocial, individualism is openly immoralist. This is not true in an absolute fashion. In a Vigny pessimistic individualism is reconciled with a morally haughty stoicism, severe and pure. Even so, even in Vigny an immoralist element remains: a tendency to dis-idealize society, to separate and oppose the two terms society and morality, and to regard society as a fatal generator of cowardice, unintelligence, and hypocrisy. "Cinq mars, Stello, and Servitude et Grandeur militaires are the songs of a kind of epic poem on disillusionment. But it is only social and false things that I will destroy and illusions I will trample on. I will raise on these ruins, on this dust, the sacred beauty of enthusiasm, of love, and of honor." It goes without saying that in a Stirner or a Stendhal individualism is immoralist without scruples or reservations. Anarchism is imbued with a crude moralism. Anarchist morality, even without obligations or sanctions, is no less a morality. At heart it is Christian morality, except for the pessimist element contained in the latter. The anarchist supposes that those virtues necessary to harmony will flourish on their own. Enemy of coercion, the doctrine accords the faculty to take from the general stores even to the lazy. But the anarchist is persuaded that in the future city the lazy will be rare, or will not exist at all.

Optimistic and idealistic, imbued with humanism and moralism, anarchism is a social dogmatism. It is a "cause" in the sense that Stirner gave this word. A "cause" is one thing, "the simple attitude of an individual soul" is another. A cause implies a common adherence to an idea, a shared belief and a devotion to that belief. Such is not individualism. Individualism is anti-dogmatic and little inclined to proselytism. It would gladly take as its motto Stirner's phrase: "I have set my affair on nothing." The true individualist doesn't seek to communicate to others his own sensation of life and society. What would be the good of this? *Omne individuum inefabile*. Convinced of the diversity of temperaments and the uselessness of a single rule, he would gladly say with David Thoreau: "I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue his own way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead." The individualist knows that there are temperaments that are refractory to individualism and that it would be ridiculous to want to convince them. In the eyes of a thinker in love with solitude and independence, a contemplative, a pure adept of the inner life, like Vigny, social life and its agitations seem to be something artificial, rigged, excluding any true and strongly felt sentiments. And conversely, those who by their temperament feel an imperious need for life and social action, those who throw themselves into the melee, those who have political and social enthusiasm, those who believe in the virtues of leagues and groups, those who have forever on their lips the words "The Idea," "The Cause," those who believe that tomorrow will bring something new and great, these people necessarily misunderstand and disdain the contemplative, who lowers before the crowd the harrow of which Vigny spoke. Inner life and social action are two things that are mutually exclusive. The two kinds of souls are not made to understand each other. As antitheses, we

should read alongside each other Schopenhauer's "Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life," that bible of a reserved, mistrustful, and sad individualism, or the Journal Intime of Amiel. Or the Journal d'un Poète by Vigny. On the other side, we should read a Benoit Malon, an Elisée Reclus or a Kropotkin, and we will see the abyss that separates the two kinds of souls...

Paris, Alcan, 1909. *La Sensibilité individualiste*

EMILE ARMAND

MINI-MANUAL OF THE INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHIST

I To be an anarchist is to deny authority and reject its economic corollary: exploitation--and that in all the domains where human activity is exerted. The anarchist wishes to live without gods or masters; without patrons or directors; a-legal, without laws as without prejudices; amoral, without obligations as without collective morals. He wants to live freely, to live his own idea of life. In his interior conscience, he is always asocial, a refractory, an outsider, marginal, an exception, a misfit. And obliged as he is to live in a society the constitution of which is repugnant to his temperament, it is in a foreign land that he is camped. If he grants to his environment unavoidable concessions--always with the intention of taking them back--in order to avoid risking or sacrificing his life foolishly or uselessly, it is because he considers them as weapons of personal defense in the struggle for existence. The anarchist wishes to live his life, as much as possible, morally, intellectually, economically, without occupying himself with the rest of the world, exploiters or exploited; without wanting to dominate or to exploit others, but ready to respond by all means against whoever would intervene in his life or would prevent him from expressing his thought by the pen or by speech.

The anarchist has for enemy the State and all its institutions which tend to maintain or to perpetuate its stranglehold on the individual. There is no possibility of conciliation between the anarchist and any form whatever of society resting on authority, whether it emanates from an autocrat, from an aristocracy, or from a democracy. No common ground between the anarchist and any environment regulated by the decisions of a majority or the wishes of an elite. The anarchist combats for the same reason the teaching furnished by the State and that dispensed by the Church. He is the adversary of monopolies and of privileges, whether they are of the intellectual, moral or economic order. In a word, he is the irreconcilable antagonist of every regime, of every social system, of every state of things that implies the domination of man or the environment over the individual and the exploitation of the individual by another or by the group.

The work of the anarchist is above all a work of critique. The anarchist goes, sowing revolt against that which oppresses, obstructs, opposes itself to the free expansion of the individual being. He agrees first to rid brains of preconceived ideas, to put at liberty temperaments enchained by fear, to give rise to mindsets free from popular opinion and social conventions; it is thus that the

anarchist will push all comers to make route with him to rebel practically against the determinism of the social environment, to affirm themselves individually, to sculpt his internal statue, to render themselves, as much as possible, independent of the moral, intellectual and economic environment. He will urge the ignorant to instruct himself, the nonchalant to react, the feeble to become strong, the bent to straighten. He will push the poorly endowed and less apt to pull from themselves all the resources possible and not to rely on others.

An abyss separates anarchism from socialism in these different regards, including there syndicalism. The anarchist places at the base of all his conceptions of life: the individual act. And that is why he willingly calls himself anarchist-individualist.

He does not believe that all the evils that men suffer come exclusively from capitalism or from private property. He believes that they are due especially to the defective mentality of men, taken as a bloc. There are not masters because there are slaves and the gods do not subsist because some faithful kneel. The individualist anarchist loses interest in a violent revolution having for aim a transformation of the mode of distribution of products in the collectivist or communist sense, which would hardly bring about a change in the general mentality and which would not provoke at all the emancipation of the individual being. In a communist regime that one would be as subordinated as presently to the good will of the environment: he would find himself as poor, as miserable as now; instead of being under the thumb of the small capitalist minority of the present, he would be dominated by the economic ensemble. Nothing would properly belong to him. He would be a producer, a consumer, put a little or take some from the heap, but he would never be autonomous.

II The individualist-anarchist differentiates himself from the anarchist-communist in the sense that he considers (apart from property in some objects of enjoyment extending from the personality) property in the means of production and the free disposition of the product as the essential guarantee of the autonomy of the person. Being understood that that property is limited to the possibility of putting to work (individually, by couples, by familial groups, etc.) the expanse of soil or the engine of production indispensable to the necessities of social unity; under condition, for the possessor, of not renting it to anyone or of not resorting pour its enhancement to someone in his service.

The individualist-anarchist no more intends to live at any price, as individualist, were that as exploiter, than he intends to live under regulation, provided that the bowl of soup is assured, clothing certain and a dwelling guaranteed. The individualist-anarchist, moreover, does not claim any system which would bind the future. He claims to place himself in a state of legitimate defense with regard to every social atmosphere (State, society, milieu, grouping, etc.) which would allow, accept, perpetuate, sanction or render possible:

- a) the subordination to the environment of the individual being, placing that one in a state of obvious inferiority since he cannot treat with the collective ensemble as equal to equal, power to power;

- b) the obligation (in whatever domain) of mutual aid, of solidarity, of association;
- c) the deprivation of the individual and inalienable possession of the means of production and of the complete and unrestricted disposition of the product;
- d) the exploitation of anyone by one of his fellows, who would make him labor on his account and for his profit;
- e) monopolization, i.e. the possibility for an individual, a couple, a familial group to possess more than is necessary for its normal upkeep;
- f) the monopoly of the State or of every executive form replacing it, that is to say its intervention--in its role as centralizer, administrator, director, organizer--in the relations between individuals, in whatever domain;
- g) the loan at interest, usury, agio, money-changing, inheritance, etc., etc.

III The individualist-anarchist makes “propaganda” in order to select individualist-anarchist dispositions which he should have, to determine at the very least an intellectual atmosphere favorable to their appearance. Between individualist-anarchists relations are established on the basis of “reciprocity”. “Comradery” is essentially of the individual order, it is never imposed. A “comrade” which pleases him individually to associate with, is one who makes an appreciable effort in order to feel himself to live, who takes part in his propaganda of educational critique and of selection of persons; who respects the mode of existence of each, does not encroach on the development of those who advance with him and of those who touch him the most closely.

The individualist-anarchist is never the slave of a formula-type or of a received text. He admits only opinions. He proposes only theses. He does not impose an end on himself. If he adopts one method of life on one point of detail, it is in order to assure more liberty, more happiness, more well-being, but not at all in order to sacrifice himself. And he modifies it, and transforms it when it appears to him that to continue to remain faithful to it would diminish his autonomy. He does not want to let himself be dominated by principles established a priori; it is a posteriori, on his experiences, that he bases his rule of conduct, nevertheless definitive, always subject to the modifications and to the transformations that the recording of new experiences can register, and the necessity of acquisition of new weapons in his struggle against the environment--without making an absolute of the a priori.

The individualist-anarchist is never accountable to anyone but himself for his acts and gestures. The individualist-anarchist considers association only as an expedient, a makeshift. Thus, he wants to associate only in cases of urgency but always voluntarily. And he only desires to contract, in general, for the short term, it being always understood that every contract can be voided as soon as it harms one of the contracting parties.

The individualist-anarchist proscribes no determined sexual morality.

It is up to each to determine his sexual, affective or sentimental life, as much for one sex as for the other. What is essential is that in intimate relations between anarchists of differing sexes neither violence nor constraint take place. He thinks that economic independence and the possibility of being a mother as she pleases are the initial conditions for the emancipation of woman.

The individualist-anarchist wants to live, wants to be able to appreciate life individually, life considered in all its manifestations. By remaining master meanwhile of his will, by considering as so many servitors put at the disposition of his "self" his knowledge, his faculties, his senses, the multiple organs of perception of his body. He is not a coward, but he does not want to diminish himself. And he knows well he who allows himself to be led by his passions or dominated by his penchants is a slave. He wants to maintain "the mastery of the self" in order to drive towards the adventures to which independent research and free study lead him. He will recommend willingly a simple life, the renunciation of false, enslaving, useless needs; avoidance of the large cities; a rational diet and bodily hygiene.

The individualist-anarchist will interest himself in the associations formed by certain comrades with an eye to tearing themselves from obsession with a milieu which disgusts them. The refusal of military service, or of paying taxes will have all his sympathy; free unions, single or plural, as a protestation against ordinary morals; illegalism as the violent rupture (and with certain reservations) of an economic contract imposed by force; abstention from every action, from every labor, from every function involving the maintenance or consolidation of the imposed intellectual, ethical or economic regime; the exchange of vital products between individualist-anarchist possessors of the necessary engines of production, apart from every capitalist intermediary; etc., are acts of revolt agreeing essentially with the character of individualist-anarchism.

1911, published in *l'Encyclopédie anarchiste (1925-1934)*

OUR DEMANDS AS INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHISTS

The individualist anarchists in the meaning of the UNIQUE (of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*) do advocate a "society without coercion". This implies the following demands, which are unqualified and without reservations. It is self-evident that these demands are to be realized, completely or partly, as far as is possible.

Individualists of our kind recognize every society as a "Society without Coercion" in which the State and any other aggressive power is eliminated, in which there is no longer any domination of man over man or over a sphere of society (and vice versa) and in which an exploitation of man by man or of man through social institutions (and vice versa) is impossible.

Thereupon the following demands arise:

1) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to decide for oneself in all respects.

This means that every unit in society moves according to its own discretion, develops itself, gathers experiences in accordance with its own preferences, corresponding to its talents, reasoning and personal resolutions.

In short, the individual is responsible only to himself (or to those to whom he has obliged himself) for all his actions.

This freedom finds its limits where the equal freedom of others begins and the danger arises that others are harmed.

2) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to chose and practise one's profession and to utter one's opinion orally and in writing, publicly and privately.

3) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to join any association that has definite and predetermined purposes or any other association of any kind.

4) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to decide for oneself either for or against any expression of solidarity, for and against any contractual obligation of whatever kind and in whatever sphere of human activity and without regard to its aims and its duration. Likewise, the right to freely decide upon withdrawal from a contractual situation, within the framework of clearly predetermined contractual conditions. One precondition is that, in case a contract offer is declined or a contract is dissolved, the dissenters are not penalized or maligned. But when a contract is dissolved then neither disadvantages nor any harm must arise for the partner that would be contrary to the form and contents of the contract.

5) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for producers and consumers and other partners to negotiate, whether alone or in groups. Full and unrestricted right, regardless of the sphere of activities and their purpose, to select the persons and societies of one's confidence and to authorize them, especially teachers, instructors, physicians, lawyers and arbitrators.

6) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to determine and change the value or price of any goods, the own products or consumer goods, of whatever kind, according to one's own discretion. Likewise untouchable is the right to negotiate in this respect, to use an arbitrator or to do without any determination of values.

7) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for every individual and every association or group to use any money that applies as a means of exchange to themselves, for their goods and service exchanges, to issue it themselves or to accept that issued by others, provided that this is always done by agreement and not under any monopolistic coercion. The same applies to the so-called labour bonds and goods warrants and similar certificates, to bills, letters of credit etc., whether they are negotiable or not. Consequently, there is a definite right to utilize any voluntarily recognized means of payment for all economic transactions, as long as it is not subjected to any legal tender. With this is meant the unrestricted right to utilize any other kind of means of exchange, provided that an acceptor is found who decides for it without any coercion.

8) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for individuals and groups, competing for any job or contract, provided that the applicants are not prevented from fully informing and improving themselves. Likewise untouchable are the rights to act creatively in accordance with one's desires, to move and settle freely and to advertise one's own cause or services.

9) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to exhibit and realize in any sphere of culture and economics one's opinions or services. There is no other limitation upon this than the condition that nothing may be forced upon others. They may freely decline whatever does not appeal to them. Under this condition the unrestricted right to freedom of expression applies and the right to propagate and teach a theory and to undertake experiments and gather experiences, even when this applies to economic, philosophic, scientific, religious, educational, artistic or any other spheres of activity.

10) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to live from the returns of one's own services or production, even alone, outside of any group or

community or society itself, at one's own risk.

Likewise unrestricted is the right to seek to live together with a partner, in a family, in a patriarchal or matriarchal society, in free associations and communes, in close ideological association of whatever kind.

11) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to decide for oneself to join any association or league whose libertarian aims embrace any kind of human activity or search for knowledge. This applies to associations for any economic, intellectual, ethical, emotional recreational or other purpose and, especially for all spheres of production, consumption, trade, communication, insurance against all possible risks, educational methods and systems, to the utilization of scientific discoveries and of naturally or artificially produced energies.

12) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to secede from any kind of association, but in accordance with the principles and clauses agreed upon when it was established.

13) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for any association, league, cooperative etc. to organize itself in a way that suits its members best. This includes the right to order internal affairs at one's own discretion, in accordance with an internal constitution that applies only to the voluntary members.

14) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to settle upon and utilize for oneself any non-inhabited and not claimed locality or real estate, provided that thereby the equal right of others is not infringed and no one else is exploited thereby.

Under this condition the individual has an incontestable right to possess his means of production (tradesman's tools, instruments, machines, land, minerals etc.).

This requires also the freedom to dispose oneself over the returns from or product of one's own labour - to the extent that no domination over or exploitation of others is involved.

Moreover, the individual shall be guaranteed the unrestricted right to exchange or dispose of his products upon the market or in any other way, regardless whether he does so for payment or under any other condition.

Any association or community has the equal right to apply within the own organization the principles here explained or similar ones.

15) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for each individual and, likewise, for any member of an organized society, to dispose freely over his personal property, i.e. over the utilization rights and the returns that he receives in exchange for his personal labour services and which

assure him his support, his accommodation (and, especially for the individual, the means of production).

16) FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT to express affection for others and preference for anything, according to one's own discretion, provided that neither any deception or any fraud is associated with this and, most importantly, no one is harmed, restricted or in any way reduced thereby.

17) DEMANDS THAT APPLY ESPECIALLY TO WOMEN AND MOTHERS:

FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for every woman, whether alone or in partnership, to determine for herself her readiness to become a mother.

A child shall remain only as long under supervision or custody until it has reached an age in which it can self-responsibly engage in contracts and associations. This applies also to the guardianship for a child. The mother possesses priority in this - which she may completely or partly transfer to another person or institution.

18) DEMANDS APPLYING ESPECIALLY TO CHILDREN:

FULL AND UNRESTRICTED RIGHT for the child, boy or girl, to demand an alteration or complete change in its wardship condition. The child may ask for an early declaration that it is of full legal age or for the clarification of any other problem. In this case the child has the right to arbitration and the right to chose the arbitrator or at least one of the arbitrators.

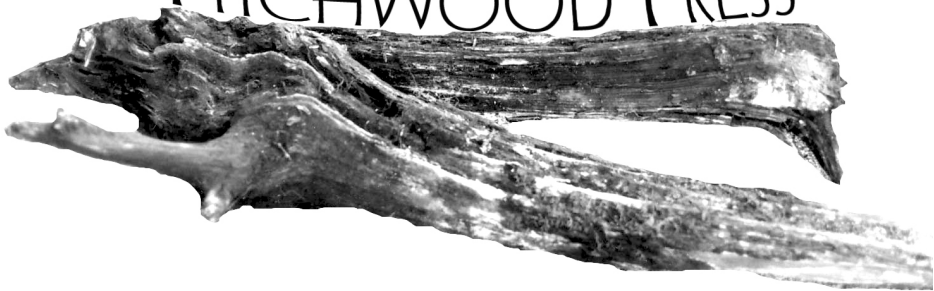
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