

Max Stirner, Hegel and the Young Hegelians: A reassessment[☆]

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Available online 20 December 2007

Abstract

Max Stirner is generally considered a nihilist, anarchist, precursor to Nietzsche, existentialism and even post-structuralism. Few are the scholars who try to analyse his stands from within its Young Hegelian context without, however, taking all his references to Hegel and the Young Hegelians as expressions of his own alleged Hegelianism. This article argues in favour of a radically different reading of Stirner considering his magnum opus “*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*” as in part a carefully constructed parody of Hegelianism deliberately exposing its outwornness as a system of thought. Stirner’s alleged Hegelianism becomes intelligible when we consider it as a formal element in his criticism of Bauer’s philosophy of self-consciousness. From within this framework it becomes quite clear what Stirner meant with such notions as “ownness” and “egoism”. They were part of his radical criticism of the implicit teleology of Hegelian dialectics as it found according to him its highmark in Bauer. In short, this article puts the literature on Stirner into question and tries for the first time in 30 years to dismantle Stirner’s entire undertaking in “*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*” by considering it first and foremost a radical criticism of Hegelianism and eventually the whole of philosophy while fully engaged in the debates of his time.

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Keywords: Max Stirner; Bruno Bauer; G.W.F. Hegel; Hegelianism; Young Hegelians; Irony; Dialectics; Teleology

Introduction

The Young Hegelians have recently become the subject of renewed scholarly interest, re-evaluating or stressing the socio-political dimensions of German theological and philosophical debates of the 1830s and 1840s.¹ In light of new research, it might be opportune to re-evaluate a number of arguments which were laid down many years ago on the relation between Stirner, Hegel and Hegelianism, and which have hardly been questioned ever since. More than 20 years ago, Lawrence Stepelevich drew some intriguing comparisons between the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* and *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*.² Through a number of articles he

[☆]The author would like to thank Douglas Moggach for corresponding with me on the idea of the comic and for not sparing me his “critical criticism” in general. I’m also indebted to William Desmond and Lawrence Stepelevich for their comments on earlier drafts of this text.

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¹Warren Breckman. *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Douglas Moggach. *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Douglas Moggach. Ed. *The New Hegelians: Philosophy and Politics in the Hegelian School*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²Max Stirner. *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000); Max Stirner. *The Ego and its Own*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Lawrence Stepelevich. “Max Stirner As Hegelian.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46:4 (1985) 597–614; Lawrence Stepelevich. “Max Stirner and Ludwig Feuerbach.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39:3 (1978) 451–463.

managed to draw scholarly attention to Stirner who was until then merely considered a “nihilist”, “anarchist” and precursor to Nietzsche and existentialism.³ Stepelevich argued that the strong Hegelian ties in Stirner’s work made him somehow the ultimate consequence of Hegelianism. He thus elaborated on a thesis that had remained implicit in the works of among others Mautz, Arvon and Mc Lellan.⁴ None have followed in Stepelevich’s footsteps since, while others to this very day combined his findings with conclusions that have been drawn since the initial publication of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, considering Stirner a distinct philosopher of anarchism.⁵ While Stirner’s criticism of Feuerbach has been thoroughly analysed in light of Marx’s move from humanism towards historical determinism, his criticism of Bauer has always remained a blank spot in the research on Stirner’s thought.⁶ Karl Löwith for instance has merely hinted at Bauer’s influence on Stirner, a thesis that can be easily derived from Stirner’s enthusiastic review of Bauer’s “*Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts*”.⁷ All these commentators are of course well aware that Stirner constructed his own philosophy around his criticism of both Feuerbach and Bauer, but none of them has made Stirner’s criticism of Bauer intelligible. What will be presented here is nothing less than an entirely new reading of Stirner based on his criticism of Bauer’s philosophy of self-consciousness. The theses that will ensue from it will rest on our well-argued assumption that Stirner’s reading of Hegel is strictly Bauerian in both style and sense. The criticism of Hegel is thus a criticism of Bauer and vice versa. This will consequently open a debate on Stirner’s opposition to (Young) Hegelianism as a system of thought.

The Young Hegelians: “dethroning the self”

Young Hegelianism presented a new account of modernity and freedom, including a criticism of absolutism, religious dogmatism and rigid particularism. Warren Breckman has argued that this criticism was among others tied to the question of the nature of sovereignty, linked to the Christian notion of a “sovereign individual” which was, in turn, derived from the “absolute sovereignty of god”.⁸ Hegel had replaced the personal god of Christianity by an immanent God (“spirit”), thus triggering pantheistic readings of his work, which were intimately linked to a criticism of the existing socio-political order.

The young Ludwig Feuerbach, for instance, criticized the “personal god” of Christianity and its egoist notion of “personal immortality” by putting the Hegelian notion of “love” in its stead as the main element of the relation between god and man.⁹ Not unlike David Friedrich Strauss, who would later claim that mankind was the incarnation of the relation between human mortality and divine infinity, Feuerbach would eventually consider man to be finite, but the species as infinite, realizing as an endless task the predicates projected onto divinity. As long as this “universality” was projected onto a personal god, mankind would fall victim to a suffocating egoism.¹⁰ Human essence was no longer an idea but an objective reality realized within inter-subjective relations. Feuerbach’s initial criticism was thus tied to a communitarian line of thought and considered the isolated relation between persons and their property to be “egoistic”. Feuerbach did not, however, develop a thorough going criticism of private property.¹¹ Within Hegelian thought, human personality or freedom was objectified through property and its use was regulated through “abstract right”, “morality” and eventually “ethical life”. The state, as the highest culmination point of ethical life, was the last concrete development of the “idea” of “freedom” in concrete reality. Property was therefore a social relation where human personality manifested itself for the first time in an objective, sensual form through the recognition of others. It is rather surprising that Warren Breckman paid hardly any attention to Bruno Bauer

³Henri Arvon. *Aux sources de l'existentialisme: Max Stirner*. (Paris: PUF, 1954); Ronald Patterson. *The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner*. (London: Oxford University, 1971).

⁴Kurt Mautz. *Die Philosophie Max Stirners im Gegensatz zum hegelschen Idealismus*. (Berlin, 1936); David Mc Lellan. *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*. (London, 1969).

⁵David Leopold. “The State and I: Max Stirner’s Anarchism.” *The New Hegelians*. Ed. Douglas Moggach. 176–199.

⁶Lawrence Stepelevich. “Max Stirner and Ludwig Feuerbach.” 451–463.

⁷Karl Löwith. *From Hegel to Nietzsche*. (New York, 1964) 343.

⁸Breckman. 5–11.

⁹Ludwig Feuerbach. “Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit.” *Frühe Schriften, Kritiken und Reflexionen: 1828–1834*. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1981) 203–211.

¹⁰Breckman. 99–107.

¹¹Breckman. 117–119.

while convincingly arguing that the Young Hegelians' struggle against the political theology of Restoration Germany was eventually a struggle over the complicity between concepts of the self and of sovereignty.¹² Bauer's Hegelianism set itself apart from the readings by other Young Hegelians in that it explicitly attributed to Hegel its own revolutionary stands. Bauer's politics were thus firmly intertwined with his philosophical views. It is without a doubt the merit of Douglas Moggach to have made this link explicit in his influential study "The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer".

Bruno Bauer and "the conquest of egoism"

Bruno Bauer derived his notion of infinite self-consciousness from Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit, and opposed it to the pantheistic Hegel readings of Strauss and Feuerbach. Hegel had stressed the concept of substance as the pure universal that absorbed the particularity of the self and this "Spinozist moment" misled a number of Young Hegelians into granting substantiality a certain independency over consciousness. Bauer considered "the universal" to be the immanent history of self-consciousness. The universal was the rational concept and the particular its embodiment. The universal thus acquired objectivity by incorporating the particular as an aspect of itself, while the particular elevated itself and became the expression of a higher principle. Infinite self-consciousness was thus tied up in a dialectical development while it demanded that individuals acquired the discipline of freedom as universality and repudiated their attachments to merely alienated or given forms of life.¹³ Accessing universality was therefore the product of intellectual labour turning finite consciousness into the existence form of the rational idea of freedom as universality. The unity of the individual with the universal was therefore merely a historical possibility. The subject first had to appear as potentially universal while the objects had to show themselves as a purposive order, responding to the subject's striving for rational freedom. The next step was to transform substance into the concrete acts of conscious spirit. Substantiality was in a sense a merely abstract universality, which was eventually made concrete. The reconceiving of substance thus assimilated universality as the subject's own universality. Subjectivity contained universality since self-consciousness was an inner and subjective universality. Particular consciousness would eventually become universal self-consciousness, which was the ultimate synthesis of the universal and the particular and was synonymous with "the conquest of egoism".¹⁴

Religious consciousness, however, was marked by both the particular and the universal, which meant that particular interests were legitimized out of an abstract universality.¹⁵ By denying self-consciousness its universal character and by projecting it as an abstract, transcendent universality on countless particular interests, the religious arrogation of universality abandoned the community to "egoism".¹⁶ Religious consciousness indeed denied the claims of the self to rise to universality by its own efforts. False universals such as the absolutist state and the fetishist objects of religion all transcended this power of individuality but all their attempts to assert freedom on the basis of particular interests were irrational and therefore doomed. Infinite self-consciousness, on the other hand, meant both freedom and humanity and eventually dissolved both substance and the "transcendent absolute". The absolute surpassed religious consciousness and was, in turn, dissolved in the criticism of individual consciousness. Universal consciousness was thus literally "victorious over egoism".¹⁷

Substance was part of this relation between critical self-consciousness since universal substance made it possible for self-consciousness to surpass individual particularism. As an immanent subjective universality, infinite self-consciousness was ultimately linked to a criticism of liberalism and socialism. According to Bauer "mass society" had emerged out of the French Revolution and was characterized by forms of particularism that blocked any form of criticism of the existing order. Against the political expressions of mass society Bauer

¹²Breckman. 298.

¹³Moggach. 40–46.

¹⁴Moggach. 124.

¹⁵Moggach. 76–77.

¹⁶Moggach. 13.

¹⁷Bruno Bauer. "Die gute Sache der Freiheit und meine eigene Angelegenheit." *Die Hegelsche Linke: Dokumente zu Philosophie und Politik im deutschen Vormärz*. Ed. Pepperle I. (Frankfurt: Röderberg Verlag, 1986), 497–498.

assessed his own republicanism. Liberalism translated freedom into particularistic interests and acquisition, which was, like socialism, remotely removed from “universal freedom”.

The republic, on the other hand, would be founded on the victory of “self-consciousness” over “egoism”.¹⁸ Bauer explicitly linked religious egoism to economic egoism, as they were both opposed to the true universality of self-consciousness. The egoism that Bauer ascribed to Judaism, Christianity was thus also present in his criticism of both liberalism and socialism which should be considered the main reason why Stirner posits Bauer’s own “humane liberalism” as the pinnacle of the development towards “freedom” throughout history, which as will be argued further on, meant the highest oppression of the individual in Stirner’s account. True singularity or individuality was according to Bauer autonomous since it had cast aside the fixity and rigidity of particularism. Bauer thus always used singularity in reference to the concept of freedom as universality that eradicated the particular. Autonomy is therefore a notion crucial for understanding Bauer’s ethical idealism. Moggach has argued that it was the historicized version of Kantian “perfectionism”, uncompromisingly committed to the transformation of political relations and institutions. Autonomy as a duty with freedom as its ultimate aim. It strove to bring about a new reality more closely but never definitively in accord with the rational concept of freedom. Subjects could thus only attain genuine universality by freeing themselves from particular interests, transcendent universals and reigning institutions that claimed autonomy over self-consciousness.¹⁹ It is from within this framework that one should examine Bauer’s opposition to Jewish emancipation in Prussia. Based on their particular identity the Jewish minority in Prussia could not claim political and social freedom, according to Bauer.

Karl Marx entered the discussion by criticizing both political liberalism and Bauer, while linking Christianity and the sovereign individual to egoism.²⁰ He had already used a “transformative method” (man as subject and thought as predicate) in his dissertation on Epicurus and Democritus and linked it to a criticism of so-called “abstract individual consciousness”.²¹

The notion of “egoism” as it was developed throughout the works of Feuerbach, Bauer and Marx allows us to elaborate this issue further. Hegel had linked civil society to atomism (individualism), and this thesis was almost literally translated into a criticism of religion by Feuerbach, Bauer and Marx.²² Feuerbach drastically radicalized Hegel’s remark that Judaism did not consider nature as the embodiment of the divine.²³ According to Feuerbach, Judaism had reduced nature to an object of self-interest, taking “egoism” as its basic principle.²⁴ Feuerbach criticized both Judaism and Christianity because they spoke of “a creation out of nothing” and linked this to the “absolute personality to whom nature was nothing”.²⁵

Stirner’s employment of “nothing” is related to this context since he used these very words to launch an attack on Feuerbach and the whole of philosophy.²⁶ Bauer concluded in a similar way that Judaism was even further removed from “freedom” than Christianity since it “felt at home in egoism”.²⁷ Marx, however, argued that it was the alleged “political emancipation” of Bauer that reduced men to members of civil society and therefore to “egoistic men”.²⁸ Marx’s criticism of the theological treatment of the “Jewish question” meant that “egoism” as an “element of society” had to be overcome before Judaism itself would disappear.²⁹ This is the ultimate consequence of a thesis that was elaborated before him by Feuerbach, since egoism was not the

¹⁸Moggach. 158.

¹⁹Moggach. 33.

²⁰Karl Marx. “Zur Judenfrage.” *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe: Werke, Schriften, Briefe*. Ed. Band I. (Gläshutten im Taunus: Detlev Auvermann, 1970) 605.

²¹Karl Marx. “Über die Differenz der Demokritischen und Epikureischen Naturphilosophie.” *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*. 51.

²²Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der geschichte*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986) 534.

²³Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. “Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal (1798–1800).” *Frühe Schriften*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986) 276–311. This text remained unpublished but the most famous statements in this regard can be found in: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986) 61–63.

²⁴Ludwig Feuerbach. *Das Wesen des Christentums*. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973) 208–211.

²⁵Ludwig Feuerbach. *Das Wesen des Christentums*. 210–214.

²⁶Max Stirner. *Der Einzige*, 77; Max Stirner. *The Ego and its Own*. 66.

²⁷Bruno Bauer. “Die Fähigkeit des heutigen Juden und Christen, frei zu werden.” *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*. Ed. SASS HM. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968) 178–180.

²⁸Karl Marx. *Zur Judenfrage*. 599.

²⁹Karl Marx. *Zur Judenfrage*. 600–603.

product of religion, but religion gave legitimacy to “Jewish egoism” according to Feuerbach.³⁰ Christianity had spiritualized egoism and thus replaced “earthly bliss” with “heavenly bliss”.³¹

The criticism of “egoism” was thus a moral criticism and akin to Christian anti-Semitism. What was clearly at stake in Hegel, Feuerbach, Bauer and the young Marx was the overcoming of “egoism”. These debates will prove to be crucial in understanding Stirner’s undertaking in “*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*”. It will be argued further on that Stirner represented a criticism of Bauer’s philosophy of self-consciousness, which permitted him to develop a more general criticism of Hegelianism and philosophy in general.

Max Stirners’ early writings: “self-determination” vs. “egoism”

Max Stirner (1806–1856) whose real name was Johann Caspar Schmidt, was born in Bayreuth and studied at the universities of Berlin, Erlangen and Königsberg. Between 1839 and 1844, he held a teaching position in a school for girls, where he taught German and literature, while frequenting the so-called “Freien” also known as “the Berlin Young Hegelians”. After the publication of “*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*” he repeated most of his criticism and arguments in *Rezensenten Stirners* (1845) and *Die philosophische Reaktionäre* (1847).

Stirner started publishing his first philosophical articles in 1842 and his initial stand was heavily influenced by Bauer, as can be derived from his review of Bauer’s *Posaune*, where he clearly supported Bauer’s reading of Hegel as an “atheist” and “antichrist”.³² His support for Bauer was, however, preceded by criticism ventilated towards Edgar Bauer who summarized it in his letter to his brother on 11 February 1841. Stirner considered Bauer’s criticism as purely “negative”, resulting in “unhappiness” turning Bauer, who according to Stirner “had thrown away all his older authorities”, into an “unhappy man”.³³ None of this criticism can be found in his review of Bauer’s *Posaune* published a year later.

In *Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung, oder: Humanismus und Realismus* (1842), he first developed a dialectic which led to his own “personalist” view out of the dichotomy between the “*Humanistic*” and “*Realistic*” forms of education, thus radicalizing a stand he took in his thesis *Über Schulgesetze* (1834) where he considered education to be part of some kind of humanizing process. The student recognized himself in the “purely human” and eventually appropriated it.³⁴ In *Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung*, he deprived the Hegelian notion of “appropriation” of any positive appreciation for religion, law or the state. As long as “thinking” remained purely “formal” (humanistic) or “material” (realistic) it would be detached from the subject, while it had to dissolve in individual “will”.³⁵ Education should focus on producing “free people”, “self-creating people” instead.³⁶ In his political criticism he put love in opposition to egoism (Selbstsucht), a notion that was clearly distinct from his own notion of “self-determination”. Egoism led to a form of dependence on “others” and “passions”. Self-determination, on the other hand, was distinct from egoism on the level of reason. Reason thus equalled freedom and vice versa. The political criticism of “love” was linked to the notion of “will” because “love” only “wished” but made no demands.³⁷

In his review of Eugene Sue’s *Les Mystères de Paris* he did not so much criticize Sue’s so-called “philanthropic proposals” but attacked his moral presuppositions instead. The numerous characters that incarnated civil morality were juxtaposed with so-called “self-created men” (“*selbstgeschaffenen Menschen*”). Self-created man or own-man (“*eigener Mensch*”) did not believe in all kinds of virtues but rather created

³⁰Ludwig Feuerbach. *Das Wesen des Christentums*. 215–216.

³¹Ludwig Feuerbach. *Das Wesen des Christentums*. 219.

³²Stirner. “Über B. Bauer’s *Posaune* des jüngsten Gerichts.” *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. Ed. Laska BA. (Nürnberg: LSR-Verlag, 1986) 59–74.

³³Bruno Bauer, Edgar Bauer. *Briefwechsel zwischen Bruno Bauer und Edgar Bauer während der Jahre 1839–1842*. (Charlottenburg: Verlag von Egbert Bauer, 1844) 121–122.

³⁴Stirner. “Über Schulgesetze.” *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. 12.

³⁵Stirner. “Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung, oder: Humanismus und Realismus.” *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. 93–97.

³⁶Stirner. *Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung*. 97.

³⁷Stirner. “Einiges Vorläufige vom Liebesstaat.” *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. 123–126.

himself out of his own creative power. The philanthropic proposals were thus no less than attempts to teach people virtues through a game of reward and punishment and were ultimately attempts to correct the uncorrectable: the state.³⁸

Der Einzige und sein Eigentum: a parody of Bauers Hegelianism

Stirner's numerous criticisms were aimed at ideas, presuppositions and thoughts that were put into contrast with his own notion of "self-created man" who was only "owned by him". This "self-created man" seems to be an ahistorical subject whose existence gains no legitimacy from a kind of communitarian advent or a Hegelian or Bauerian philosophy of self-consciousness. We will elaborate on this by carefully examining its development throughout the two main parts of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. Self-created man was elaborated in the second and last division "I" and thus contrasted with the Hegelian or historic "man" of the first part appropriately entitled "man". It is quite crucial to stress that Stirner's "I" is not the outcome of a serious historical account as David Leopold has recently claimed.³⁹ The alleged history of "man" is not the history of the "I", on the contrary, in his first part Stirner made a sharp parody of Hegel's link between historic-cultural developments and self-knowledge of self-consciousness. Lawrence Stepelevich, who examined the very first chapter of this part entitled "a human life" has recently addressed this Hegelian context. Stepelevich, however, considers the first part to be a serious development of Stirner's own ideas based on both his own life-course and the Hegelian influence he underwent as a student. While not trying to contradict Stepelevich's findings, I suggest that in doing so, Stirner deliberately made a sharp parody of Hegelianism, which merits further exploration.⁴⁰

Unlike Stepelevich, I will not start from Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, but from his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, where he clearly links historic-cultural developments and self-knowledge of self-consciousness: *Orient (childhood)–Greek world (youth)–Roman world (Manhood)–German Empire (old age)*.⁴¹

In his account of "a human life" Stirner, in turn, made a division between: realism (childhood)–idealism (youth)–egoism (man)–? (Old age).⁴² He thus left the fourth part open and stated: "Finally, the old man? When I become one, there will still be time enough to speak of that".⁴³ In the second part entitled "men of the old time and the new" Stirner consequently made a parody of this historic-cultural overview and made a division between: "the old ("realism")–the new ("idealism")–the free". Since "the free" were according to Stirner nothing more than the "newer" and "newest" among the "new", they were still part of the second category (the new).⁴⁴ In reference to Hegel, one should also point to what Stirner called the "negroidity" and "mongoloidity" of the Caucasian age, thus ironically implying that history was the product of the Caucasian race that would reach its highest point of development in "egoism".⁴⁵

The formal game of dialectical triads eventually found its high mark in the category of "the free", divided into "political liberalism" (liberalism), "social liberalism" (socialism and communism) and "humane liberalism" (Bruno Bauer and "critical criticism"). According to Stirner, the development of freedom throughout history meant that "spirit" or thought became free and thus held the greatest possible power of subjugation over the concrete individual.⁴⁶ Political liberalism liberated the egoist from "the master" but replaced him by a "ghost": the state. Social liberalism got rid of the difference between rich and poor, but put all property in the hand of a "ghost": society. Humane liberalism likewise got rid of the personal god, but replaced it by a new faith: mankind or freedom.⁴⁷

³⁸Stirner. "Die Mysterien von Paris von Eugene Sue." *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. 139–145.

³⁹David Leopold. "Introduction." *The Ego and Its Own*. Ed. Stirner. xi–xxxii.

⁴⁰Lawrence Stepelevich. "Ein Menschenleben: Hegel and Stirner." *The New Hegelians*. 166.

⁴¹Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986) 135–141.

⁴²Stirner. *Realismus (Kindheitsalter)–Idealismus(Jüngling)–Egoismus (Mann)–?(Greis)*. *Der Einzige*. 9–15.

⁴³Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 15 (18).

⁴⁴Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 106–107 (89).

⁴⁵Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 71–72 (62–63).

⁴⁶Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 52–53 (48–49).

⁴⁷Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 158–159 (128–129).

Bruno Bauer thus came at the end of Stirner's ironic historical account. The development of so-called "freedom", as the cornerstone of Hegel's entire system, found its highest culmination point in Bauer and would be juxtaposed with Stirner's notion of "ownness" in the second part "I". While the history of man is firmly tied up with the coming into being of so-called freedom, the "I" is connected with ownness which clearly has nothing to do with any development throughout the course of history and will eventually set the stage for Stirner's criticism of the implicit teleology of dialectical reasoning which according to him found its highmark in Bauer's Hegelianism. An interesting historical account of "egoism" can also be found in Marx's "Zur Judenfrage", in which he stated that "egoism" had reached its highest point of development and would necessarily "dissolve".⁴⁸ Stirner wrote as it were an inverted history and used all kinds of formal Hegelian and Young Hegelian elements making the first part of "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum" a clear parody of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Before elaborating on Stirner's radical criticism of Hegelianism and philosophy throughout his notion of "dissolving" I would like to refer to a remark made by Stirner in his criticism of Szeliga in "Stirner's critics", of which I provide a translation because it has been omitted in the partial translation of Frederick M. Gordon⁴⁹:

"After Szeliga has let the ego in all seriousness develop and identified him with "man" (p. 4: "the ego has not always been ego, not always been man, but instead once child and afterwards youth") he turns him into a "worldhistoricindividual" and finally, after some definition of spooks (out of which results that "a thoughtless mind is a body and that the naked, bare body is thoughtlessness") it is the ego who by consequence is the spook of all spooks".⁵⁰

This remark seems to confirm my earlier statement that the first part should be read as a sharp parody of Hegelian thought. But how are we then to evaluate Stirner's "ownness"? What was considered to be "freedom" had reached its highest point of development according to Stirner and would thus necessarily dissolve into ownness. Spirit or thinking could only be dissolved by anyone who could think of nature and spirit as "finite" and "passing": the "egoist".⁵¹ This is a very clear definition of the "egoist" which has been completely neglected by scholars until now.

By using the term "egoism" throughout the remainder of his book, he managed to state his case even more clearly. The whole of Stirner's project, however, will become clear when we analyse the meaning of both ownness and egoism. At a first glance Stirner seems to use "ownness" and "egoism" interchangeably and even nearly considers them to be synonymous.⁵² It should be clear from our previous argument, however, that Stirner opposed ownness and not egoism to freedom, a difference that should not be treated lightly as will be argued further on. According to Stirner "ownness" was not an idea but merely a description of the owner:⁵³ Contrary to freedom, right, morality and the state that had "man" as their primary subject, "ownness" was connected to the owner or the "I". "Ownness" was what the individual held in his power.⁵⁴ The relation between "ownness" and "egoism" can thus best be analysed from Stirner's criticism of "freedom"⁵⁵

"Freedom lives only in the realm of dreams!" Ownness, on the contrary is my whole being and existence, it is I myself. I am free from what I am *rid* of, owner of what I have in my *power* or what I *control*.⁵⁶

To be the owner meant being owner of the world:

"I secure my freedom with regard to the world in the degree that I make the world my own, *i.e.* "gain it and take possession of it" for myself."⁵⁷

⁴⁸Karl Marx. "Zur Judenfrage." 601.

⁴⁹Stirner. "Stirner's Critics." *The Philosophical Forum*. 8:2–4 (1977) 66–80.

⁵⁰Stirner. "Recensenten Stirners." *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. 147–148.

⁵¹Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 77 (66).

⁵²Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 141 (116).

⁵³Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 188 (154).

⁵⁴Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 203 (166).

⁵⁵Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 180 (148).

⁵⁶Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 173 (143).

⁵⁷Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 182 (149–150).

Since Stirner opposed ownness to the Hegelian account of freedom, of which Bauer presented its most mature form (and thus oppressing), egoism should be considered Stirner's counterpart for Bauer's notion of autonomy. We will therefore analyse the relation between egoism and ownness from the way in which autonomy and freedom were interrelated in Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness. Autonomy repudiated all the ideas of freedom that were based on either religious, political or economic particular interests and was thus the prerequisite for attaining the rational idea of freedom. If we detach Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness from its ethical idealism we can easily read his definition of autonomy as Stirner's own notion of egoism.⁵⁸

We could thus easily translate Bauer's point of view on autonomy into "egoism" by stating that it attacked all invariable particular interests, transcendent categories that posited themselves outside of self-consciousness and was thus the ultimate prerequisite for attaining "ownness".

We will now elaborate on this through Stirner's notion of "property". Just like Hegel who considered property to be the first expression of freedom (*Rechtsphilosophie*, §41) ownness and property were intrinsically tied to another. Both concepts constituted (abstract) right and were the very foundation of "objective spirit" (the gradual development of absolute freedom in concrete reality). Stirner, however, made them the cornerstone of his generalized attack on right and state. Stirner thus stated mockingly that "right was the spirit of society" and set it up against his own notion of "power".⁵⁹ Power was thus considered to be characteristic of the existing property relations, and this led Stirner to comment on "property rights" and direct his attacks mainly towards the "communists" (August Becker, Wilhelm Weitling, P.J. Proudhon). Property belonged to those who were able to make it their own or could make sure that it remained theirs. Private property rights, however, meant that the state remained owner of property and handed down "rights" to its subjects.⁶⁰

Private property was thus an alien power outside the individual. Inheritance rights made this very clear since property did not belong to the finite person but was an inheritable right.⁶¹ If the individual egoistically drew everything to himself, on the other hand, everything would be his property and he would be owner of himself.⁶² Everything was thus drawn upon the "finite", "mortal creator" who "consumed himself".⁶³ The property question could thus only be solved through the notion of the owner. As long as those without property did not become conscious of their own power, they would fall victim to the "power" of others. As long as power remained monopolized by the state, pauperism and state would be one and the same according to Stirner.⁶⁴

It was within this rather specific context that Stirner opposed "egoism" to "love" as the so-called essence of society (Feuerbach), thus elaborating his criticism of Feuerbach's transformative method.⁶⁵ By making the predicate the subject and thus making the subject object and principle, Feuerbach had turned Hegel's speculative philosophy upside down: "Thus we no longer say "God is love," but "Love is divine."⁶⁶ In doing so he changed what was "merely" transcendent into an immanent, fixed essence. As a fundamental predicate of "man" "love" became a "profession", a "task".⁶⁷ The egoist, on the other hand, did not put his "essence" above him and could thus not "realize" himself.⁶⁸ Throughout his criticism of the transformative method, Stirner denounced all dialectical reasoning as a form of teleological or religious thought.

This could be linked to what we, in reference to Ingrid Pepperle, would like to call the Hegelian "Vergegenständlichungsdialektik" which held that "absolute spirit" knew itself only by objectifying itself in

⁵⁸Bruno Bauer. "Religion des Alten Testaments I, 183 as quoted in Douglas Moggach." *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*. 51–52.

⁵⁹Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 204 (166).

⁶⁰Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 284 (227).

⁶¹Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 307 (245).

⁶²Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 203 (166).

⁶³Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 412 (324).

⁶⁴Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 274–284 (220–230).

⁶⁵Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 285, 347 (228, 274).

⁶⁶Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 51 (47).

⁶⁷Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 322 (257), 201 (164).

⁶⁸Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 311 (248), 157 (127–128).

reality and reclaiming its alienated essence.⁶⁹ Similar to Hegel, but true to his transformative method, Feuerbach stated that man knew himself only by objectifying himself in an idea of god and then by reappropriating this idea. The “*Vergegenständlichungsdiagnostik*” thus functioned as a kind of theory of “human emancipation” which presented man as a self-creative being. Within this eternal process of “*Enttäusserung-Wiederaneignung*”, “*Vergegenständlichung-Aufhebung*” self-consciousness according to Bauer realized its human self-consciousness.

By externalizing itself, self-consciousness was alienated from the static objects that were the products of its own dynamic productivity. This resulted in an inversion of the subject–object relation, which eventually meant that free, creative self-consciousness re-appropriated its own objects.

The relation between “the ego” and “his own”, just like the structure of the book (“man”-“I”), bears resemblance to this relation. Bauer had reduced Hegel’s fourfold historic account to the age of “alienation” and the “age of the dissolving of alienation. Alienation meant that “man” made himself inferior to his own products and considered them as a strange power outside of him. Throughout the dissolution of alienation, man would come to realize “the state, law, morality and religion” as the products of his own self-consciousness and would realize his essence in free self-determination. Stirner of course considered “man” to be this strange product outside him and argued in favour of the “dissolution” of all the aforementioned categories in the mortal “I”. The “*Vergegenständlichungsdiagnostik*” that corresponded with this relation claimed the whole of reality as “my object” (“*Gegenstand*”) and therefore as my property.⁷⁰

Egoism was thus the relation between the individual and the whole of reality as his property, which meant that nothing could claim autonomy over the individual. My alienation (“*Entfremdung*”) of the object meant that I was “possessed” by it, that I did not own the object and thus myself, but that the object “possessed” me.⁷¹ My own “creations” thus had independence and forced stability and continuity upon me.⁷² Stirner’s notion of “egoism” in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* thus bears resemblance to his notion of “self-determination” (Selbstbestimmung) in *Einiges Vorläufige vom Liebesstaat* (1843) where “self-determination” meant being both the “creator” and the “creation” and was explicitly opposed to “egoism” which meant being still determined by someone or something.⁷³ This kind of determination is called “possessedness” in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*.⁷⁴ “Egoism” was thus the prerequisite to “ownness” since the amount in which the individual considered the world as his own, determined the amount in which he was owner of himself.⁷⁵ This clarifies why Stirner used egoism and ownness interchangeably without considering them to be synonymous.

Possessedness meant that it was impossible to “enjoy” life/property, since it always set out a calling.⁷⁶ By ascribing a *Vergegenständlichungsdiagnostik* to Stirner we are not implying that he actually took dialectics seriously as will become clear from our analysis of his notion of “dissolving” (*Auflösung*).

Stirners criticism of philosophy as teleology and theology

Throughout the very notion of “*Auflösung*” the concrete subject is not considered a developing subject, but an action field marked by constant changes and “*Auflösung*”. “*Auflösung*” is also akin to the so-called creative nothing (“*schöpferische Nichts*”). “*Der Einzige*” is a creative nothing, has no essence to realize but quite to the contrary creates himself.⁷⁷

This idea of “nothing” has been addressed by Stepelevich who related it to Hegel’s idea of “nothing” in the “science of logic”. Hegel’s notion of pure Being “made a beginning” as the first moment in the dialectic Being-Nothing-Becoming and set the stage for the whole of his metaphysical system. Stepelevich has argued that this

⁶⁹Hans, Ingrid Pepperle. *Die Hegelsche Linke: Dokumente zu Philosophie und Politik im deutschen Vormärz*. 35–39; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986) 575–586.

⁷⁰Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 153 (125).

⁷¹Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 326–328 (259–261).

⁷²Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 215 (175).

⁷³Stirner. “Einiges Vorläufige vom Liebesstaat.” *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. 126.

⁷⁴Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 82 (58–59).

⁷⁵Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 316 (252).

⁷⁶Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 358–359 (282–283).

⁷⁷Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 5 (7).

“beginning” found its antithesis in Stirner’s use of “nothing” as the first moment of his thought. Hegel considered “nothing” as merely the second moment after the empty concept of “Being”, whereas Stirner reversed this procedure and started from a “nothing” from which “Being” would issue.⁷⁸

Being indeed issued from nothing according to Stirner and it is a creative nothing, a nothing from which the creator creates everything, but the concept of being was only the necessary step to complete his parody of Hegel’s dialectic of being. The principle of creation ex nihilo applied by Stirner seems to be part of the much broader criticism of Hegelianism as it was developed throughout the whole of “Der Einzige und sein Eigentum”. Before returning to Hegel’s “science of logic” we would like to bring Feuerbach’s criticism of Judaism and Christianity to mind, they spoke of “a creation out of nothing” which was according to him linked to the “absolute personality to whom nature was nothing”.⁷⁹

Stirner’s own position seems to claim this terrain as his own and sets the stage for the rigorous consequences that issue from it. If we analyse this in light of the “science of logic”, we are confronted with Hegel’s notion of determinate being (Dasein) as expressing his ontological vision of finite being as the necessary and yet inadequate vehicle of infinite being. The first notion of pure being, which is being without any determinate quality, was actually pure emptiness and this nothing was consequently the equivalent of pure being. In order to move towards a determinate notion of being, being and non-being were joined together in the third notion “Becoming”. In Hegel’s metaphysics Spirit is thus embodied in a series of inadequate embodiments moving between Being and Non-Being and vice versa.⁸⁰

Determined being (Dasein) issued from becoming, the unity of being and nothing. Determined being was not only determined according to Hegel but also limited and eventually finite. What concerns us here is that Hegel considered being and non-being as contradictory hence as containing its own destruction. Finitude was exactly this self-destructive nature of determined being but its drive to dissolution was interpreted by Hegel as a drive to infinity as the life contained by the coming and passing of the finite.⁸¹ If we bear Stirner’s *Vergegenständlichungsdiagnostik* in mind, we can easily observe how it stops with the finitude of determined being, the dissolution of the whole of reality in the mortal “I”. “Only the self-dissolving, mortal, finite I was really I.”⁸² Finite determined being (Dasein) thus equals the “mortal I” of Stirner who consumes the whole of reality as his own. Being would consequently be considered “it” (“Es”) by Stirner, an “it” appropriated and consumed by the creative nothing and eventually dissolved in the “mortal I”.

This notion of “dissolving” (*Auflösung*) seems to be derived from Bauer’s radicalization of Hegel’s dialectic of selfhood in the Philosophy of Right of which Stirner’s *Vergegenständlichungsdiagnostik* presented a biting parody. While Hegel considered the universal as dialectically absorbing and thus subsuming the particular, Bauer’s concept of universality often suppressed and eventually dissolved or eradicated the particular. We will briefly elaborate on this, since it clarifies the opposition between Bauer’s notion of autonomy and Stirner’s notion of egoism. According to Hegel freedom constituted the substance and character of the will, a notion translated into autonomy by Bauer as the striving force with freedom as its ultimate aim. We have already argued how Stirner translated “autonomy” into “egoism” as the striving force with “ownness” as its ultimate goal. Bauer’s notion of autonomy however remained faithful to Hegel’s stand that the will was a special way of thinking, it was thought translating itself into reality. Egoism, however, was not a way of thinking but a practice as can be easily derived from Stirner’s criticism of thought in general and his very own *Vergegenständlichungsdiagnostik* in particular.⁸³

The dissolution of the whole of reality in the mortal “I” eventually eradicates the universal, which would according to Bauer leave Stirner with pure particularism. It would therefore be quite misleading to assume that Stirner merely radicalized Bauer’s philosophy of self-consciousness. One can indeed easily observe how Bauer reduced the Hegelian absolute to infinite consciousness while Stirner reduced infinite self-consciousness to the “mortal I” but this is not a relation of continuity but rather of mockery or irony. Before elaborating more fully on this category of the comic let us take a brief look at the notion of “dissolving”. Within his

⁷⁸Lawrence Stepelevich. “Hegel and Stirner: thesis and antithesis.” *Idealistic Studies* 6:3 (1976) 270–274.

⁷⁹Ludwig Feuerbach. *Das Wesen des Christentums*. 210–214.

⁸⁰Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Wissenschaft der Logik*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986) 73–88.

⁸¹Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Wissenschaft der Logik*. 116–140.

⁸²Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 199–200 (163).

⁸³Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 396 (310).

teleology Hegel spoke about dissolving the particular in the general.⁸⁴ Feuerbach spoke about the dissolution of religion in the essence of religion.⁸⁵ Stirner, however, did not consider the relation between “the unique one” and “his own” to be dialectical. Property was dissolved in the mortal “I” and nothing was brought to a higher plan and secured. In opposition to Bauer’s critical criticism we are left with no form of development whatsoever.⁸⁶

Development implies a telos, “*Auflösung*” meant that nothing stood “above” the individual and that all fixed ideas were to be dissolved, since life itself was a process of “self-dissolution”. Dissolution was no destiny, since it was part of the here and the now.⁸⁷ Stirner explicitly referred to Bauer’s earlier statement that “property” was not to become “stable” and should be the object of constant “dissolution”.

Bauer’s critical criticism, however, was part of a process throughout which “man” became “man”.⁸⁸ Bauer only dissolved thoughts in order to replace them by “higher thoughts” according to Stirner. Thought, however, could never dissolve thoughts themselves. Only thoughtlessness could dissolve thought. This meant that the “I” could not be “thought” and could not be put into words.⁸⁹ In his reaction on the reviews by Feuerbach, Szeliga and Hess Stirner said: “What Stirner says is a word, a thought, a concept what he means is no word, no thought, no concept. What he says is not what is meant and what he means is unsayable.”⁹⁰

This also implied that one could easily do away with his own thoughts and thus prevent being “possessed” by them. Stirner did not permit someone to take his ideas away from him, but when they were gone he stayed behind, smiling. Being the owner of all reality meant that one allowed anyone to play with “high thoughts” and “superior” emotions.⁹¹ Humour marked the relation of “*der Einzige*” to his “*Eigentum*”. This was the ultimate breakdown of any form of static autonomy that could be given to “the truth” and the ultimate criticism of all thinking that appealed to things that lay allegedly beyond the individual.

It seems that the seriousness, with which one generally deals with the so-called dialectics in Stirner, entirely misses Stirner’s point of positing a radical nominalism beyond philosophy. The category of the comic, evident in Bauer’s *Posaune*, but also in Stirner’s *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* needs to be addressed fully in order to grasp whether it could be considered a means to an end or rather an end in itself. Many of Stirner’s contemporaries addressed the category of the comic, such as Heinrich Heine and Arnold Ruge. Hegel himself addressed this issue in his *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel considered irony as a form of subjectivism, a consciousness that the principle of conviction is only governed by caprice. An attitude that Hegel ascribed to Fichte’s philosophy who according to him considered the I to be absolute, which meant absolute certainty, “universal-selfhood”. Irony thus proclaimed that the self is always distinct and superior to its creations and therefore denies all claims of objectivity. It is most interesting to notice how Hegel considered Socrates’ irony as only a manner of talking to people and not as the essential movement of thought which was of course according to him dialectic.⁹² One could easily consider Stirner’s irony as the essential movement of his thought, firmly opposed to dialectical reasoning but this statement still does not fully grasp the meaning of irony as it can be derived from the writings of Arnold Ruge who considered the category of the comic as in part the appropriate vehicle of emancipation from outworn ideas and institutions. Stirner addressed the category of the comic in a similar vein in his article “*Kunst und Religion*” clearly written in reference of Bauer’s “*Hegel’s Lehre von der Religion und Kunst*”. Stirner treated art in close relation with religion whereas Bauer treated art in close relation with philosophy based on their shared determinacy, clarity and common ethical root.⁹³ Stirner treated art as the beginning of religion, since it created the “ideal” which religion turned into an object of worship. Art, however, eventually reclaimed and destroyed its object and as such also stood at the close of religion. In reclaiming its creature, art rediscovered itself while renewing its creative powers.

⁸⁴Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. 54, 310–311, 318–319, 324–327.

⁸⁵Ludwig Feuerbach. *Das Wesen des Christentums*. 17–18.

⁸⁶Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 167 (134–135).

⁸⁷Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 373 (294).

⁸⁸Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 157 (127).

⁸⁹Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 163–164 (131–132).

⁹⁰Stirner. “Recensenten Stirners.” 149; Stirner. “Stirner’s Critics.” 67.

⁹¹Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 403 (316–317).

⁹²Hegel. *Philosophie des Rechts*. 277–285.

⁹³Douglas Moggach. *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*. 36–38.

In doing so it presented religion as a ridiculous comedy thus freeing men from their old belief in its exhausted being. Comedy according to Stirner thus probed into every holy area exposing the emptiness to which man should no longer hold.

In doing so, it eventually created a new ground for art and stood thus again at the beginning of religion.⁹⁴ Comedy therefore as emancipation from outworn ideas but also of social relations of which Stirner gave the telling example of holy matrimony. Stirner's employment of the category of the comedy should be interpreted as exposing the outwornness of the whole of Hegelian thought as it found its pinnacle in Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness. Stirner's ironic use of formal Hegelian elements is also in accordance with his stance not to posit an alternative for the existent, but rather of making it his own and "consuming" it. Language for instance was considered "Christian" since it was the carrier of "truths" and "thoughts" and thus "alien from me". Language should not be changed according to Stirner but was to become my own and part of a process of constantly dissolving life.⁹⁵ Stirner took his argument quite literally since he used all kinds of wordplays to state his case, such as playing on the etymological meaning of a word and so on. He also made a clear reference to Feuerbach in this regard, who had criticized Hegel "for abusing language by giving different meanings to one single word".⁹⁶ Readers familiar with Hegel's spiral form of arguing in the "Phenomenology" might also point to the way in which Stirner gradually built up his thesis by repeating it while adding new elements to it.

This brings us back to where it all begun: the criticism of personal immortality. Stirner criticized what he called the conservative tendency of Christianity. Opposite death, "stability and imperishability" were posited, which meant that conservatism was aimed at "victory over death".⁹⁷ The Young Hegelians made a similar mistake by stating that mankind was the eternal undying from which the individual had to derive its fame.⁹⁸ Contrary to Fichte, Stirner claimed that the I was not everything but destroyed everything. Only the self-dissolving, mortal, finite I was really I."⁹⁹

Conclusion

This article offers a new analysis of Stirner's philosophy of "egoism" by considering it a criticism of Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness. Max Stirner entered the debates of his time by claiming the much disputed terrain of egoism as his own while ironically appropriating strictly formal Hegelian elements and arguments bearing resemblance to Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness. His notion of the "egoist" was therefore clearly opposed to what he considered to be the product of Hegelianism: "man". The first part of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* makes this entirely clear through a parody of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* where Stirner posits his notion of "egoism" outside of an ironic historical account while using strictly formal dialectical elements. In the second part, Stirner elaborates this issue further throughout the notion of "ownness" which he explicitly opposed to the Hegelian notion of freedom, making "egoism" Stirner's counterpart for Bauer's notion of "autonomy" as the striving force with freedom as its ultimate aim. The dialectics in Stirner should be considered a parody of Bauer's use of the notion of "dissolving" ("Auflösung"). Unlike its meaning in the dialectical reasoning of Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx and Bauer, this notion is stripped of its implicit teleological implications and marked by an absolute absence of any form of development. Dissolving thus literally meant dissolving; nothing was dialectically brought to a higher plan and preserved. His *Vergegenständlichungsdialektik* considered the whole of reality as his own, the world as property dissolved in the mortal "I". Nothing could thus claim autonomy over the individual who himself was considered an actionfield marked by a process of constantly dissolving reality in itself. The criticisms of religion and the absolutist state of his contemporaries were consequently exposed as religious forms of thought since they stuck with an inherent humanism and teleology. The reading we have presented here thus amounts to a major revision of our perception of Stirner. Not only were we able to trace the origins of his philosophy in

⁹⁴Stirner. "Kunst und Religion." *Parerga, Kritiken, Repliken*. 106–110.

⁹⁵Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 328 (261), 389 (306–307).

⁹⁶Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 382 (301).

⁹⁷Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 361–362 (285–286).

⁹⁸Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 371 (292).

⁹⁹Stirner. *Der Einzige*. 199–200 (163).

his early writings where he developed a philosophy of self-determination, which he called “egoism” in his magnum opus we were also able to address Stirners’ use of the category of the comic. The Hegelianism in Stirner should be considered a charade, exposing the outwornness of its foundations and drawing anti-hegelian conclusions while ironically using all kinds of formal Hegelian elements at the same time. Scholars to this very day like Stepelevich and Leopold have never taken the category of the comic seriously and have consequently ignored its crucial philosophical meaning for understanding Stirners’ entire undertaking in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. Our conclusions are by their very nature a drastic departure from the existing literature on the subject and will hopefully open a debate on Stirner for the first time in nearly 30 years.