

# EGO

An Individualist Review

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I NOW

Tom Lisicki

In making distinctions between concepts and percepts it has been asserted many times by many people that words and languages do not perfectly correspond with what is called "reality". This point is hard to clarify because any criticism of words and language depends on words and language themselves and any attempt to criticize them tends to invalidate the critic's own remarks. Therefore ambiguity and intuition must be tolerated to some degree in a discussion of this topic and others related to it.

What is the relation of language to reality and to the individual? Although language attempts to describe all of reality it might be more accurate to say that it describes social or societal reality. Language is a part of society, one of the common links between individuals. It is very precious, real, natural, human, and I do not wish to downgrade it, but there are limitations to the use of language that are of major significance to the individual and to individual self-expression and self-experiencing.

The individual is a process in constant flux, changing from instant to instant. The individual and his uniqueness only exist "now". "Now" is not the same as the "present" that is found in language. The linguistic "present" is static and defined and cannot handle the "now-ness" and uniqueness of the individual, but rather deals with the "not now-ness" of individuals and with experiences rather than experiencing. Society is the product of the "not-ness" or "not-nowness" of individuals. Language can describe it in the static, linear logic of past, present and future tenses that truly describe society, but not the individual, who does not exist in the past, present or future, but always "now". The individual is what he is now experiencing, sensing and feeling, "internally" and "externally", while society stems only from what individuals have experienced, sensed and felt. For an individual to be truly self-experiencing and expressing he must be open to the uniqueness of "now". But very often individuals close themselves off from their "now" experiencing by limiting themselves to the narrow sensibilities of language, in an attempt to clarify and define with terms and expectations their "nows", preferring the security and consistency of language to the insecurity and wonder of "now". Not that one is less real or natural in doing this, but one is less individual and is unable to fully know one's self and one's interests by accepting this conventionality. It is possible for an individual to experience his unique "now", but it is not possible to think about "now" conceptually without reducing it to some common denominator, thus sacrificing individuality and uniqueness.

Since language by nature is common and static rather than individual and changing, its children – logic and laws – are not good supporters of the individual. Because language is consistently defined, logic and laws

have consistency and this consistency is good enough for society because society does not deal with the flux of "now".

Laws are real in society and society deals with them conceptually. To an individual laws are real just insofar as they are connected to percepts that occur in his "now" and to accept them conceptually would deny his individuality. Laws and authority are just elaborate manifestations of social reality engendered by words and concepts and as such are basically anti-individual. Not accepting laws and not believing in any sacred authority does not mean that these societal pressures will not be part of an individual's experiences. They will be real as part of the "now" experiences, but only in the context of the individual's open awareness of the reality of his individuality without any acceptance of the soporific effects of societal standards.

To attempt to define and clarify an individual's goals or "worth" or "standards" would be foolish. Although an individual may often act in common with others, he will never be in common with others. Society may term him "common", but he will not really be so as an individual. The only possible description of an individual's relation to society is a negative one. An individual can be non-negative, but such a state is beyond description as far as the individual's reality is concerned.

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EGOTIST, n. A person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me.

POLITICS, n. A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage.

RADICALISM, n. The conservatism of tomorrow injected into the affairs of today.

SELFISH, n. Devoid of consideration for the selfishness of others.

The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary by Ambrose Bierce

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## INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIAL TIES: An Extract From A Letter

Keith Hudson

A point that appears to bother critics is the apparent conflict between individualism and social ties. I believe that this can be largely resolved by understanding the origins of our mental behaviour in the course of evolution. There seems little doubt now that both our physical and behavioural evolution proceeded in distinct "bursts" at the beginning of new climatic periods in the past. For example, we, along with several more

pre-hominid ape-like species, were forced out of the rain forests and had to survive on the fringes due to a considerable cooling and drying of the earth's climate about 10 million years ago. This had considerable effects on both our physical and mental evolution. For tidiness (the early parts of what follows are somewhat arbitrary) I divide our evolutionary stages into four main periods – rain forest, forest fringe, open savannah and temperate-cold. All these periods implanted powerful behaviour/mental “instincts”, but the last two are particularly interesting in discussing the apparent dichotomy between our socialisation and our individualism.

In the open savannah what was absolutely required (particularly among the males) was strict rank order and implicit obedience in emergency situations. The free-and-easy socialisation of the previous (forest fringe) period was thus modified, or rather added to. The main point from this is that we have a very deep need to associate together in common pursuits. Now where this is, say, the formation of a local bowls club or darts team, this is fine. But this need of ours is suborned by religious cults and ideologies then it is very dangerous.

And the reason is that our individualism, our ability for abstract thought, arose mainly in the following evolutionary period (the onset of the Ice Ages). Conditions became extremely difficult and it became very necessary to develop conceptual systems (planning, theories, etc) to get through the long savage winters and also to hunt the larger, more dexterous creatures that we were forced to do. It was during this period that several parts of our brain (particularly the frontal areas) that are importantly involved in abstract thought expanded significantly. According to some experts this brain expansion stabilised about 60,000 years ago. But this ability for abstract thought also gave another weapon to the ambitious leader. No longer was he confined to short-range interactions and the display of quite ordinary human skills, but he now had the additional faculty to use ideology to inspire guilt and control. Under this additional control feature the tribe became, a city-state and so on and so on – all our troubles began.

It seems to me, therefore, that we have no need to negate our social impulses and needs, nor even the thrill that we get when we associate in small groups for the achievement of a common objective. What we must not do is to confuse those sort of objectives with matters that are entirely to do with untrammelled abstract thought – philosophy, beliefs and so on. These are entirely for individual consideration.

But what should never be forgotten is that the ancient emotional needs and behaviours are very powerful indeed and can easily be used in instilling intellectual ideas. For example, to take the “package” of social behaviour from our forest-fringe period, the Moonies use guitarplaying week-ends, plenty of singing, dancing, touching and so on. This can have tremendous effects on the lonely youngster and, normally, he or she is then only too willing to accept the ideological strings attached. Another example, to use the “package” of behaviours from our open savannah period, Hitler persuaded many many intellectuals in the course of his Nuremberg Rallies. The marching and other super-tribal effects completely subjugated any intellectual doubts that individuals previously had.

As you say in your newsletter, Stirner's philosophy had nothing against the domination of one individual by another. This, from our open savannah period, is very natural behaviour and, where there is an understandable, tangible objective, those who are dominated get as much

kick out of it as the one who dominates. It is, indeed, essential in any fairly difficult endeavour. What is positively dangerous, however, is when a leader seeks to instil panoramic ideas and ideologies in his flock. No ideology, however brilliant, can be useful for very long in these modern changing times and inevitably becomes perverted by our more basic needs for power.

I think we should be increasingly aware that our earlier instincts for socialisation, power, etc., are indeed strong and there must always be outlets for them. But their origins must be clearly seen for what they are and their objectives must be clearly demarcated. Ideologies, abstract thought, intellectualisation, etc., belong to the individual.

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People who bite the hand that feeds them usually lick the boot that kicks them.

*Eric Heffer*

Reviews –

## MIGHT IS RIGHT

(Might Is Right by Ragnar Redbeard. Introduction by S.E. Parker. Loompanics Unlimited, PO Box 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98365, USA 7 dollars, 95 cents)

Originally published in 1896, this is a much improved edition. I recall an old anarchist who in our discussions would never fail to quote Redbeard:

“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, those three great lights of Modern Democracies are three colossal falsehoods – ignoble slave shibboleths impossible of actualization even if proclaimed by some superhuman Satan...”

“Might is Right, absolutely, unreservedly. From the records of history, the facts of life, and the discoveries of science, this startling deduction may be thoroughly proved!”

One could quote endlessly. The language is forceful and made to stick. On reading the book James J. Martin said “it is surely one of the most incendiary works ever to be published anywhere”.

S.E. Parker, in his Introduction, gives an interesting account of the history and mystery round the question “Who was Redbeard?” and a critique writing that

*“although Redbeard claims to scorn moral codes, stating that ‘all arbitrary codes of right and wrong are insolent invasions of personal liberty’ and that greatness lies ‘in being beyond and above all moral measurement’, he is nonetheless a moralist.”*

Parker does not stop there, but deals with the question of racism and other compelling features.

Reading this book is an experience not to be missed!

*Stephen Marletta*

## RAPHAEL LEMKIN AND THE HOLOCAUST

(The Man Who Invented "Genocide": The Public And Consequences of Raphael Lemkin by James J. Martin. Institute for Historical Review PO Box 1306, Torrance, CA 90505, USA. 9 dollars, 95 cents)

James J. Martin is prominent among those "revisionist" historians who consider that the so-called "Holocaust" against the Jews during World War 2 was a hoax. He contends that there is no cogent evidence that the Nazis had a deliberate policy of exterminating Jews in death-camps. He does not deny, any more than other revisionists, that the Nazis were anti-Jewish and did persecute them, nor that many of them died from various causes in the concentration camps. What he does question is that there was any organized "genocide". In his latest book, The Man Who Invented "Genocide", he considers in detail the manner in which a Polish-Jewish lawyer called Raphael Lemkin sought and succeeded in having the concept of "genocide" incorporated in to many legal codes. At the same time he subjects the legend of the gassing of 6,000,000 Jews to an astringently critical examination.

Anyone who is not prepared uncritically to accept official war history will find much of interest in his book - despite the colourless character of the late Mr Lemkin. I particularly liked the chapter Some Missing Historical Back-ground which occupies over one third of its length. In this chapter he gives a mordant description of the treatment of Jews in countries other than Germany (such as Poland), the anguished wriggings of the Communists over the Katyn Massacre, the effects of Allied policy on the German resistance, and the contradictions of the Holocaust believers. Here is Martin at his excoriating best.

Whatever decision the reader may make about Dr Martin's case (and I, for one, have not been able, despite considerable reading on the subject, to make up my mind) his book should at least serve to underline the capacity of the persecuted to become persecutors when they get the chance. Witness the vendetta being currently waged by professional "nazi-hunters" and an acquiescent media against old and sometimes dying men for acts allegedly carried out forty or more years ago.

*S. E. Parker*

## THE LEAP

(The Leap by Bill Hopkins. Foreword by Colin Wilson. Deverell and Birdsey. 21 Kensington Park Road, London W11. 7.50)

The Leap is a novel that is powerful in style and unconventional in theme, but its declared purpose of being a "vehicle for ideas" is flawed by the contradictions of the ideas put forward.

Plowart, the central character, is the leader of a new political movement who has arranged for its co-founder to be murdered because he has become an "obstacle". To provide himself with an alibi he goes to stay on a remote Channel Island. While there he is befriended by the current ruler, the young Dame, and she provides him with an audience before which he can articulate his ideas.

Plowart exalts the creative few, praises those who are in full possession of themselves, is contemptuous of those who "associate and identify themselves with those around them until they have no individual distinction at all", and scorns the herd conditioning that leaves "no

majesty of self". But despite these telling insights he is the victim of muddled thinking. Desiring the fullest individuality of which he is capable, he at the same time is possessed by a messianic urge to redeem "humanity" from its weaknesses and force it towards the goal he has set for it. Despising the mediocre and the weak he nonetheless seeks to weld them into one body to serve his purpose despite the fact that the material at his disposal is such that it will forever frustrate him. Aware of the majesty of self, he is incapable of grasping that his power lies only in his own competence not in playing the role of a mob-messiah.

In his foreword Colin Wilson compares The Leap to the works of Stirner and Nietzsche. Insofar as they are both self-divided the comparison between Plowart is valid. Plowart, however, cannot be compared to Stirner, for Stirner's egoism is at one with him and has not turned in on itself as it has with Plowart, who is a possessed individual.

These criticisms notwithstanding, The Leap should be read. Written as a provocation it is just that – as my own reactions show.

*S. E. Parker*

## Two Short Notices

Sanctions Buster by Harvey Ward (William Maclellan Embryo, 268 Bath St., Glasgow G2) is a vivid political/adventure novel about the clandestine heroes who helped to break the sanctions imposed on white ruled Rhodesia during the days of its independence. For those that like this type of novel – and I do – this is well worth reading even if the author (former head of the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation and "sanctions buster") does not see that when the main terrorist reconverts to Roman Catholicism before she dies she has simply exchanged one religion for another. Stepping Stones To Women's Liberty by Les Garner (Heinemann Educational Books) is a socialist history of the suffragettes which contains an interesting chapter on Dora Marsden and her individualism – soon to become a full-blown advocacy of egoism.

*S.E.P.*

## THE SOGETSU IKEBANA EXHIBITION At the Festival Hall, London

I was very surprised to come upon this oasis of beauty, harmony and colour in a building that more often than not gives its exhibition space over to the promotion of strident socialist realism – occasions which are usually imbued with the theme of the rightness, purity and innocence of the "working" class.

But at the Japanese Ikebana exhibition all was classless, peaceful and pleasing to the eye. Sweet smelling incense burned as subtle and delicate music played in the background. The exhibits mainly consisted of arrangements of everyday objects such as vases and bowls of flowers and earthenware jugs, combined with branches of trees, wooden wheels, bunches of dried cereals and paper flowers. By adhering to laws of harmony and symmetry similar to those of nature the artists had arrived at beauty, without which we should languish and fade. It seems to me that it is "art" not "ideology" that provides the most satisfactory clues as to our origins and purpose. I came away from this exhibition feeling enriched and more at

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peace with myself. If there is a Japanese Ikebana exhibition in your area I recommend the experience.

*"Unconscious Egoist"*

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Correction: On page 6, line 12, between "between" and "Plowart" the words "Nietzsche and" have been omitted.

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Special Offer for readers in the United Kingdom only: A few copies of MIGHT IS RIGHT are available at a bargain price of 3.00 (post. inc.) Editor.

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## LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY

Dora Marsden

Liberty is as necessary to Democracy as is the second blade to a pair of shears. Democracy boldly affirms government; Liberty whispers "Don't govern". Liberty plays 'Conscience with a task to it'. It is the ghostly spirit the moralists would have the meek carry inside their waistcoats: it plays the policemen inside the man. Unfortunately for the meek, it is only on them that Liberty is able to impose. Those who can govern, i.e. forward their own interest to the detriment of those who let them, will govern. Those who feel no stomach for "governing" will espouse the gospel of liberty. That is why to those who already have, shall be given, and from those which have not shall be taken away that which they have. The cry for "liberty" is the plea for the substitution of melodrama for drama in life; the life according to concept in place of life according to power. It is the hoisting of the white flag followed by an attempt to claim victory in virtue of it. It is the request that the powerful should refrain from taking liberties with the weak because they are afraid to take liberties with the powerful. That is what Libertarians have in mind when they speak of conduct which "should" be "non-invasive", not minding that it is scarcely possible to live a day in a community of two without being "invasive". We are one another's daily food. We take what we can get of what we want. We can be kept out of "territory" but not because we have any compunction about invading. Where the limiting line falls is decided in the event, turning on the will, whim, and power of those who are devoured and devourers at one and the same time.

*From "THE EGOIST" 1/1/1914*