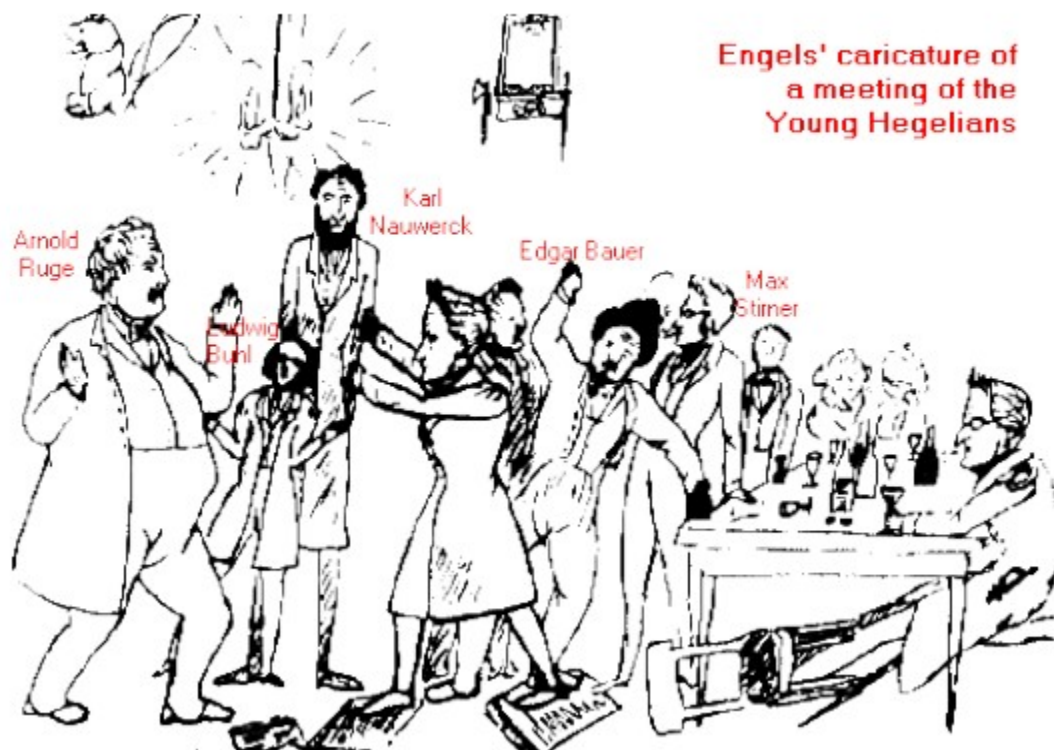


The Ego and His Own: 1844-1994: A Celebration



Engels' caricature of "The Free", the Berlin group of Young Hegelians

(Words in the drawing: Ruge, Buhl, Nauwerck, Bauer, Wigand, Edgar [Bauer], Stirner, Meyen, stranger, Koppen the Lieutenant. The squirrel in the upper left corner is a caricature of the Prussian Minister Eichhorn)

Wm. Flygare, Frank Jordan, Svein Olav Nyberg, S. E. Parker, Paul Rowlandson
and John C. Smith.

PREFACE

S.E. Parker

Although the first edition of *The Ego and His Own* (*Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum*) bore the date of 1845, it in fact appeared towards the end of October 1844. This year is therefore the 150th anniversary of its publication.

Otto Wigand, its Leipzig publisher, was well aware that such a work might feel the weight of the disapproval of the Saxon Censorship Board and resorted to a ruse which he hoped would enable the book to be distributed even if the censors condemned it. As soon as the copy that he was legally obliged to deposit at the Government Office was receipted Wigand set about delivering the remaining copies to booksellers so that any official confiscators would find his warehouse empty. To a large degree he succeeded. Nonetheless, the censors still managed to seize 250 copies of the 1000 printed. After a few days, however, the confiscation order was withdrawn on the grounds that Stirner's book was "too absurd" to warrant censorship. In other words, the censors could not understand it! *The Ego and His Own* was also banned in Prussia, Kurkessen and Mecklenburg Schwerin, but although these bans were never lifted, this did not stop copies being obtained and read by anyone interested.

Since then *The Ego and His Own* has been reprinted many times and has been translated into many languages. Throughout its existence it has provoked outrage and won admiration. All too often, however, both the outraged and the admiring have tried to fit Stirner's views into the conceptual imperatives of this or that ideology. He has been labelled many things, ranging from anarchist to fascist. No doubt passages can be found in his book that appear to lend support to each of these extremes, but the more one understands just what it is that Stirner is actually saying, the less these labels can be fixed. The contributors to this commemoration fortunately do not indulge in such a futile game. They are content to record their own reactions to *The Ego and His Own* and its value for them.

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Contributors...

WM. FLYGARE: "This 1/5.6 billionth: Swedish-American. Boston '17-'46. Chicago '46-'51. Kyoto '51-the end. BA & MA (philosophy and buddhism) plus attempts at music and theatre to learn my inabilities. Drafted into English teaching '51-'90. Some minor publications along the way. Highly independent... and dependent, enjoy being alone without loneliness, my being remarried ('65), with two daughters (25 and 28), two cats, a love-bird, and a plum-tree. Eclectic: atheist in fact, animist in fancy, affinity for persons, allergic to people. Own house ('69 at last) with a window overlooking 'rooves' onto green hills and a variety of skies. Retired to studying, versing, digesting my haps, and being glad for my failures-n-good fortune."

FRANK JORDAN: "A life-loving, aesthetically minded outsider, passing from a 'Nietzschean' into a fully conscious 'Stirnerite'."

SVEIN OLAV NYBERG: "27 years old; mathematician (PHD); editor of *Non Serviam*; almost as selfish as the two cats that own him; has been interested in Stirner for the ten years he has known about him."

S.E.PARKER: "Born 1929, Birmingham, England. Now retired after thirty three years with British Rail. Has worked his way through the Young Communist League (1944-1946), the British Federation of Young Co-operators (1946- 1947 , and virtually all the different varieties of anarchism (1947-1982), to emerge as his own man, the penny of conscious egoism having finally dropped. Editor and publisher of *Minus One/Ego/The Egoist/Ego* 1963-1994."

PAUL ROWLANDSON: "Currently earns a living as a lecturer in a pseudo- academic subject at a University College on the North West Frontier of the United Kingdom."

JOHN C. SMITH: "Needs no introduction."

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IN PRAISE OF MAX

Frank Jordan

What is arguably the most iconoclastic work of philosophy ever written was first published in the year 1844. This work was entitled *The Ego and His Own* (In the original German: *Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum*). The author of this seminal work called himself Max Stirner, which was the pseudonym of Johann Caspar Schmidt. Stirner was a member of the radical wing of the Young Hegelians, but the ideas he put forward in *Der Einzige*, his one major work, easily outstripped and went far beyond anything that his friends and contemporaries had to say in their criticisms of the various idealistic trends in society, as they understood it.

Whether the subject be God, Spirit, Family, Morality, The People, The State, and so on, all of these Stirner ruthlessly and logically breaks down and shows that they are nothing more than idealistic 'spooks,' falsely created in substitution for the true needs of the ego, and usually interpreted in an altruistic fashion. Only Nietzsche, in his many writings, approaches anywhere near to the same 'dizzying' extremes and idol-smashing that is a constant theme in Stirner's book. The main difference between the two thinkers, I believe, is that Stirner's book is a complete statement, consistent within itself, whereas Nietzsche's insights have to be dug out from beneath his overall works, and they are usually aphoristic in style and content.

The impact of Stirner's book provoked a most virulent attack against it by no less a thinker than Karl Marx, along with Engels. In their massive work, *The German Ideology*, they devoted almost two thirds of it to attacking line by line, and blow by blow, Stirner's book. They constantly refer to him as 'Saint Max', 'Don Quixote', and other rather absurd appellations, all to try and exorcise him and his book. But, in the end, they fail miserably, after having tried every intellectual trick they had in their mental store, hoping to promote Marxist socialism and discredit Stirner's pure egoism.

Various theorists have proven, quite consistently, that Marxism as it eventually developed would not have been possible without Marx and Engels psychologically reacting against the egoistic philosophy of Stirner in the manner that they did. As recent history conclusively shows Marxism can now be seen as a failed attempt at trying to mould the individual psyche into a social-procrustean bed of ideology.

Besides the effect Stirner had on Marxism, various other thinkers and theorists have tried to adapt the views expressed in *Der Einzige* to bolster their own causes. For examples: anarchists, fascists (especially in the case of Mussolini), the situationists of the swinging Sixties, surrealist and dadaistic artists like Max Ernst, psychologists like Erich Fromm. Even the very popular science-fiction trilogy of Wilson and Shea called *Illuminatus* acknowledges a great debt to Stirner throughout the plot. And we must not forget the existentialist tag Stirner has been given!

Ultimately, of course, despite the diverse thinkers who are attracted to, and 'turned on' by, by Stirner, the uniqueness of *The Ego and His Own* stands like a lone mountain which cannot be levelled down to fulfil some else's rather shallow and hollow-sounding ideals.

As long as men can, and will, think and act for themselves there will always be a place for Max Stirner's uplifting and stirring book. His work speaks from the position of a unique one to all other receptive unique ones.

I thank you, Max Stirner.

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STIRNER, YOUTH AND TRADITION

Paul Rowlandson

Young people are subject to the psychological malady of 'militant enthusiasm'. It strikes between the ages of 16 and 25, the time of life when we are most keen to sacrifice our all for a Cause, the particular cause being determined by the fashionable enthusiasms of the day. That is why young men are useful in armies - they are easily fired up to go over the top. They are useful too, in religious organisations, because they will go out and proselytise in the rain, or sign away their lives to religious orders.

Stirner described this period, when the boy has become a youth: "One must obey God rather than man... from this high standpoint everything 'earthly' recedes into contemptible remoteness; for the standpoint is the heavenly".

As a youth in the late 60s and early 70s I was influenced by the passions of the time.

As a child I was packed off to the fire and brimstone "washed in the blood of the Lamb" Congregational church in Oak Vale, Liverpool, by my parents, who themselves never went near a church except for weddings and funerals.

I remember a visiting preacher throttling a live chicken in the pulpit to make a point I have long forgotten. It was a church parade day and I was a member of the church scout troop, which I hated. Some of the Church elders must have thought that the preacher had overdone it because I remember we were asked by some of them what we thought of the chicken-throttling. I can't remember being upset by it, which is surprising. It was shortly after this incident that I was sent to the local Anglican church for some civilized religion.

I wasted a lot of my time during my school years by my involvement with CND, the Young Communist League, the Syndicalist Workers Federation, and other radical organisations. I took part in various silly demonstrations, including the then obligatory Aldermaston marches and some sort of anti-Vietnam war demo from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square.

Most of my reading was of the radical sort - Marx, Alexander Berkman, Proudhon, Anarchy magazine, Direct Action, Solidarity, and such. I left school with 2 '0' levels as a result.

The young mind is bombarded by other people's thoughts. From childhood to adolescence we absorb ideas and viewpoints from other people, whether in person, through print, or through radio and television. The selection of what goes in is more or less random, within certain limits, varying according to time, culture and geography.

Christianity was perhaps the major ingredient in my case, as it probably was (and still is, though less so) with most English youths.

It is an easy thing for an unformed mind to contrast the "idealism" of Christianity with the "injustices" of the world. I remember thinking how like Christianity Marxism was, and how hypocritical of a Christian society to deny us the benefits of communism.

However, there was a growing realisation of a divergence of interests, an awareness that I had reservations and doubts about the activities and enthusiasms with which I was then engaged. For example, as a teenager I was a pirate radio enthusiast, which I found hard to reconcile with my anarchocommunist beliefs. There several other discrepancies. I was a strange sort of anarchist for I always had a high regard for the Police, and

frequently found myself uncomfortable with my comrades' description of them as 'pigs'.

I have always been an enthusiast for quirky or idiosyncratic publications. As a youth I favoured the iconoclastic. As an older man I now seek out the reactionary, the traditional, the ultra conservative publications.

Revolutions pleased me then, Tradition pleases me now.

The most unusual journal I ever came across was Minus One. I subscribed immediately. Here was something very different.

I very soon thereafter acquired from Minus One a copy of the Libertarian Book Club 1963 edition of The Ego and His Own. Even the physical attributes of the book are extraordinary. It is a substantial book, printed on high quality paper, bound in signatures, with a plain thick green cover, and a plain typeface. It looks and feels a serious book.

My reading of The Ego and His Own had a powerful and continuing influence. Here was a mind I connected with straight away. Its effect was of a mental spring cleaning. The "wheels in the head", the ideas and opinions which I had accumulated, lost their power, although, as Stirner says, "Daily experience confirms the truth that the understanding may have renounced a thing many years before the heart has ceased to beat for it." Nevertheless, the effect was that I now possessed the wheels in the head rather than them possessing me.

Stirner takes no hostages. The demolition is thorough: "the Good cause, God's cause, the cause of mankind, of truth, of freedom, of humanity, of justice, my people, my prince, my fatherland, even the cause of Mind, and a thousand other causes."

For a time I was cause-less, but eventually started restocking. I acquired some causes of my own, but this time they belonged to me. I could run with them or discard them as I wished.

It is probably as difficult to go without causes as it is to do without interests. A cause is, after all, simply a compelling interest grown large. But one of the benefits derived from reading Stirner is the ability to prevent their possession of their owner. My final authority is myself.

There are occasions in life which we think of as watersheds. Nothing is ever quite the same again. My discovery of The Ego and His Own was such an event. It became impossible to think again in the way I thought before I read the book. There is no other book like it.

Pope John Paul II once commented that the faithful have a right not to be disturbed by the speculations of the so-called radical theologians. Should the man or woman in the street be exposed to Max Stirner? I think not. People will go to almost any lengths to avoid thinking for themselves. The Ego and His Own would no doubt unhinge many of them, which might make life more difficult for the rest of us.

Fortunately there appears to be a small elite which can absorb and benefit from Stirner without going off the rails - those who can see through not just the Emperor's new clothes but the old ones as well.

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"TO MY SWEETHEART" - With An Addition To Bartlett

Wm. Flygare

On this 150th birthday of The Ego and His Own (1844, dated 1845), what intrigues is the dedication. What was Mary's contribution to John-n-Mary's only issue - a book?

Stirner (42.2; p358) speaks of using life up like burning a candle. In the John-n-Mary romance - a Roman candle - their wedded life (1843-1846) ended in her long-life life-long rancour against a "sly" man whom she "neither loved nor respected." In affairs of the heart, as well as in practical affairs, both were losers, the woman more than the philosopher who had two worlds to live in.

It would seem, then, that the inspiring young Mary deserves a gratitude that the older embittered one would be loath to accept, her wound a secret she would not tell.

The Ego and His Own appears a vast commentary to the Goethe poem alluded to at the beginning and end. Its absence in publications of The Ego is unfortunate. In Stirner's time this poem was "a favourite with everyone" (Schopenhauer's Counsels and Maxims #5) but it is little known now. Like Smith, Stirner is "in love," certainly with the "tyranny of words" (43.36; p.389). Unlike elsewhere in his work, there are poetic parallels and flights, external pattern, redundance, etymological word-play, elations, and hyperbole, his pen often shouting as if against the loud-voiced among "The Free Ones". These features have made the work most variously read and can detract. Parler sans accent. But as to the diagnostic content: Stance is circumscribed by circumstance. In their desperate drive for impossible certainty and acceptance, and hope to qualify, the driven drive the driven, mental straight-jackets nicely laced. In adolescence, the rarely curable brain-smudge received in childhood festers into visions and conversions that lead to "normal" madness and its "stealthy malice" (7.2; p46). Now instead of talk about the prophylaxis and solace offered by The Ego and His Own, Stirner himself: I have tried to ferret out his key observations in sober and concise form as "an addition to Bartlett" since Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations" is one of a number of well-known reference works which neglect this exorcist of "spooks", some of whose phrases deserve to be "familiar." Reference is to a yet unpublished paragraph-numbering system and to pages in Reclam 3957(6), the only currently stable publications:

...What have we gained, then, when for a variation we have transferred into ourselves the divine outside us? As little as we are that which is outside us. I am as little my heart as I am my sweetheart, this "other self" of mine. 4.20; p34

...out of confidence in our grandmothers' honesty we believe in the existence of spirits

...But had we no grandfathers then, and did they not shrug their shoulders every time our grandmothers told about their ghosts? 5.1&2;p36

...over each minute of your existence a fresh moment of the future beckons to you, and, developing yourself, you get away from the self that was at that moment. 5.13; p.39

...Man, your head is haunted...You imagine...a spirit-realm to which you suppose yourself to be called, an ideal that beckons to you. You have a fixed idea. 7.1; p.46

...it is only through the "flesh" that I can break the tyranny of mind; for it is only when a man hears his flesh along with the rest of him that he hears

himself wholly, and it is only when he wholly hears himself that he is a hearing (vernehmend) or rational (vernunftig) being. 10.12; p.68

...Because the revolutionary priests or schoolmasters served Man, they cut off the heads of men. 14.24; p.68

...Many a man renounces morals, but with great difficulty the conception, "morality." 15.12; p.96

...As if a concept of the case existed on its own account, and was not rather the concept that one forms of the case! 16.15; p.104

...every effort arrives at reaction...a new master set in the old one's place, and the overturning is a - building up. 17.32 6 35; pp.120 &121

...if a "tie" clasps you, you are something only with another, and twelve of you make a dozen, thousands of you a people, millions of you humanity... I answer, only when you are single can you have intercourse with each other as what you are. 21.34 & 36; p. 148

...I do not want to have or be anything especial above others... but, - I do not measure myself by others either... The equal, the same, they can neither be nor have. 21.52; p.152

...It is not thinking, but my thoughtlessness (lit., thought-rid-ness), or I the unthinkable, incomprehensible, that frees me from possession. 23.15; p.169

...What the craving for freedom has always come to has been the desire for a particular freedom... the craving for a particular freedom always includes the purpose of a new dominion. 24.13 & 14; p.176

...But the habit of the religious way of thinking has biased our mind so grievously that we are - terrified at ourselves in our nakedness and naturalness; it has degraded us so that we deem ourselves depraved by nature, born devils. 24.21;p.178

...I am present. 24.22; p.180

...Thousands of years of civilization have obscured to you what you are... Shake that off!... and let go your hypocritical endeavours, your foolish mania to be something else than you are. 24.30; p.181

...You want to be "in the right" as against the rest. That you cannot; as against them you remain forever "in the wrong"... 26.12; p.207

...What is the ordinary criminal but one who...has sought despicable alien goods?... You do not know that an ego who is his own cannot desist from being a criminal, that crime is his life. 28.6; p.221

...Everything sacred is a tie, a fetter. 31.24; p.239

...for only he who is alive is in the right. (Whose verse?) 31.24; p.239

...I never believed in myself; I never believed in my present, I saw myself only in the future... a proper I... a "citizen"... a "free or true man"... an alien I... an I that is neither an I nor a you, a fancied I, a spook. 31.5; p247

...But I love... because love makes me happy... because loving is natural to me, because it pleases me. I know no "commandment of love." 39.15; p.324

...I sing because - I am a singer. But I use (gebrauche) you for it because I need (brauche) ears. 39.37; p.331

...That society (e.g. the society of the State) diminishes my liberty offends me little. Why, I have to let my liberty be limited by all sorts of powers and by every one who is stronger; nay, by every fellow man; and, were I the autocrat of all the R...., I yet should not enjoy absolute liberty. But

ownness I will not have taken from me. And ownness is precisely what every society has designs on, precisely what is to succumb to its power. 41.7;p.342f

...We are equal only in thoughts, only when "we" are thought, not as we really and bodily are. I am ego and you are egos but I am not this thought of ego; this ego in which we are all equal is only my thought. I am man and you are man: but "man" is only a thought, a generality; neither you nor I are speakable, we are unutterable, because only thoughts are speakable and consist in speaking. 41.15; p.348

...Henceforth the question runs, not how one acquire life... but how one can dissolve himself, live himself out. 42.6; p. 348

...Possibility and reality always coincide. 42.3; p368f

...No sheep, no dog, exerts itself to become a "proper sheep, a proper dog" 42.47; p372

...I receive with thanks what centuries of culture have acquired for me for I am not willing to throw away or give up anything of it... But I want still more. 42.53; p.372

...All truth by itself is dead, a corpse; it is alive only in the same way my lungs are alive - to wit, in the measure of my own vitality. The truth is a - creature. 43.64; p.398-399

...No idea has existence, for none is capable of corporeity. What, am I in the world to realize ideas? 45.5 & 13; pp. 408 & 411

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THE EGO AND ITS OWN – The Choice of a New Generation

Svein Olav Nyberg

"Knowledge must die and rise again as will and create itself anew each day as a free person."

Max Stirner, *The False Principle of Our Education*

Those of us who reached adulthood in the eighties have not avoided noticing all the literature and the ideas about self-love that has been around. Even the nursery-eyed girls with the concerned looks sometimes stutter that they think you should love yourself as much as you love your neighbour. Most of this literature and most of these ideas come from psychologists. Wayne Dwyer reasons that since loving your neighbour as yourself will not amount to much love of neighbour unless you love yourself first, you should therefore set out by loving yourself. The link is claimed that other-love is psychologically impossible without self-love. So we should think we are at a magic time in history; the omnipresent Society gives us permission to love ourselves!

But there are those of us who are not such well-bred rats conditioned to do whatever we are told benefits our neighbour. We do not love ourselves to please our abstract or concrete neighbours, but just love ourselves, plain and simple. Our kind of people see these trends as nothing other than the old hogwash in a new disguise. Not only shall you sacrifice yourself, but you shall bear the illusion that you do it for yourself. We penetrate deeper, we go into philosophy.

Philosophically, also, it has been a decade of praising the self. Why, has not the notorious Ayn Rand sold more books and increased her organized

following more than ever? Has not the libertarian community accepted selfishness as a rule? Again, ever more illusion! Randian self-love is the love of Man, the Essence within you, and the hatred of the Evil un-Man, lurking at the boundaries of the Omni-Good Rational Thought. Libertarian ideas are in this respect nothing more than the ghosts of departed Objectivists.

It is amid all this confusion that a young man of today will find himself as he picks up his first copy of *The Ego and Its Own*. Usually, as in my case, he will have a background in libertarian thought and will smile at the thought that "Here we have a guy who is even more consistent than Rand. Wow, these ideas will be useful for my libertarianism!" As the reading of the book proceeds, the young libertarian will look at the pages in amazed horror: is not this Stirner guy just picking libertarianism logically apart before his very eyes? Oh horror! No, this must surely rest on a misunderstanding. Stirner never knew modern libertarianism, did he? So, he is really running loose on something else. Yes? But, no, realisation dawns that libertarianism - after all a very logical and aesthetic system which even works, given a faint "best of society" premise - is without the foundation our young libertarian wants.

Rights are spooks, his head is haunted and his pride is hurt.

There are now two possible lessons to learn: either to learn from Stirner to speak about selfishness - universalise that we are all (and implicitly ought to be) selfish and use this as a new basis for libertarian idealism - or, to delve into oneself to find one's own cause.

Now, what is not supposed to be my cause! From society we learn that selfishness consists in filling your wallet and emptying your balls as best you can. From religion we learn that our true interest lies in the contemplation of ideas and renunciation of the body. But these are both very one-sided goals and do violence to me. They are both follies of one and the same type - formal egoism. Formal egoism is what arises when you conceive of yourself as an object, a sum of predicates, and not as beyond predicates - as an Einzige. Modern man hypostatizes - makes objects of - everything, Including himself. For a modern man the choice is only which object among the objects is to be chosen as the ultimate value. So why not the object he knows as "me"? But when you serve the interests of an object, you need a recipe, a guideline - some rules. These might be explicit, or they might be, as for most people, implicit. The formal egoist then serves the himself-object as best he can according to the predications of what selfishness means - and, mind you, he might even have so much success as to obtain some predicated goals that he thinks a selfish man should attain -but he never gets to the bottom of his interests. He is formally indistinguishable from the selfish man, but in reality never attains anything more than being a boy-scout at satisfying the himself-object.

Stirner is a good teacher of lessons. In *A Human Life* he shows the dialectical development towards a full understanding of one's own cause. One starts out as a child who thinks that all that matters is - matter. Thereafter the procession goes to the realm of the Mind - ideas - where all importance and values are to be found in the relation to the idea. Only thereafter does it dawn that there is something beyond all the material and spiritual objects, yet more immediate, namely I, myself.

It is easy to come to the protest "Now what is the I?" As Stirner answers, I am not a "what" but a "who". Grasping this distinction, and why Stirner emphasises it, is essential to understanding Stirner, and why *The Ego and Its Own* is so different from any other book about selfishness.

A question that seems to have puzzled both the older and younger generations is "If Stirner was such a self-loving man, why did he bother to write a book that gave him so much trouble and so little reward?" I do not

propose to answer this question in specifics, but look instead at how he has developed his theory of relations to other people.

Stirner has been described as a man who has taken the full consequences of being alone in the world. I take this description as coming from people not fully knowledgeable about Stirner. Stirner does not advocate the life of the "sole-ego-on-the-hill," out of contact with other people. Rather he seems to derive much enjoyment from the company of his peers, and even babies with their competent smiles.

But it is easy to be intoxicated by a book-such as Stirner's, - and fail to read what is written. What Stirner actually writes about is that there are basically two forms of interaction, namely that of standing as an I against a You versus meeting one another as predicate-filled objects. The understanding of this demands that one understands the difference between the Einzig that one is, and the objects we are conditioned by culture to see ourselves as.

The meeting of the I against the You actually comprises more than half of Stirner's book. This, I propose, is the key to why he wrote it. All around him he saw, and met, people whose only mode of interaction was as object-to-object. He met "good citizens", "Christians" and even "Humans", all playing out a social role according to the predicate of the day. Meeting one another with that veil of predicates removed was a scarcity, as it is today.

Meeting Einzig to Einzig is scary. Then you stand all for and by yourself with no predicate to hide behind. That is why people continually choose to interact via predicates - object -to-object. But this is no different from the mad-man in the asylum who is unable to face the world as anyone but Napoleon. We live, as Stirner put it, in a mad-house among mad-men. Do you dare accept the therapy offered by Stirner?

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sometimes tween man and man
like shed
rain on a parch'd plain
in a language imperfect ployless elemental
like bread
intellect-play at bay
something as tween man and dumb-animal
is said

Wm. Flygare

LAST AND FIRST WORDS

John C. Smith

The Ego and His Own didn't exactly take the world by storm when it first appeared in 1844 and hasn't since. But its publication certainly caused a stir among the Young Hegelian circle in which its author moved. Karl Marx, for one, was so provoked by Stirner's book that he, together with Engels, devoted some two thirds of their book, The German Ideology, to vilifying Stirner, seeing him as a dangerous challenge to their creed of social salvation.

In this country it is hardly ever mentioned in polite society. Any new edition is largely ignored by literary editors. Yet it is reprinted regularly and never lacks readers. Some, like the anarchist Herbert Read, for example, have to admit "One book I read in my youth I have never wholly forgotten. To say that it had a great influence on me would not be correct, for influences are absorbed and become part of one's mind. This book refused to be digested - to use our vivid English metaphor: it stuck in the gizzard, and has been in that uncomfortable position ever since. I refer to Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, *The Ego and His Own* as it was called in the English translation, published in 1913." (*The Contrary Experience*)

The main religio-political ideologies, Christianity and Marxism, have failed to provide an answer to the world's ills. The human selfishness they were meant to triumph over has triumphed over them.

Christianity, which promised individual salvation (freedom from the sin of selfishness) and brotherhood, has lost out to commerce. Shopping has replaced going to church. New temples, indoor shopping malls which are usually ugly and unnecessary, have sprung up all over Britain. The early Christian churches at least served a useful communal purpose and were beautiful to look at.

In the Soviet Union the very understandable desire for personal reward undermined and eventually overthrew the state socialist system. There have been the inevitable attempts to explain this away by Marxist purists asserting, as did G.K.Chesteron about Christianity, that Marxism has not failed because it has never been tried. But, of course, it was tried, the theories that were espoused in Russia before the 1917 Revolution being more or less the same as what these apologists would call "real socialism."

It need hardly be said that the lesser religions of anarchism and national socialism have also failed to deliver the goods. Anarchism, offering individual autonomy and group solidarity, is also concerned with a perfect society free from the sin of selfishness. It is, ostensibly, a morally purer religion than either Marxism or national socialism since anarchists reject, in theory, involvement in existing political and social structures. They also complicate matters by insisting on self rule for the individual. This has ensured that anarchism has never enjoyed a mass following.

Except for the fact that national socialism originated as a scheme for the salvation of white Europeans it is, as Roger Scruton has pointed out, very similar to Marxist socialism. Its most famous promoter, Adolph Hitler, was more than a bit bonkers. This, along with a similar obsession with a selfishness-free society, ensured that it has suffered the same fate as that of Marxism.

If the collectivist panaceas have been tried and seriously found wanting what about the 'individualist' answers? Of these, existentialism of the kind propounded by Jean-Paul Sartre in his earlier, non-political phase appears to have the most in common with Stirner's ideas. Sartre rejected the Christian God and the Hegelian Absolute, his central doctrine being that man is what he makes of himself and "an insistence on the actual existence of the individual as the basic and important fact instead of a reliance on theories and abstractions." (*Readers' Companion To World Literature*)

As Stirner was himself more concerned with the projectionist rather than what was projected he would not have found much to disagree with in this, but a closer examination of Sartre's position reveals that he and Stirner are worlds apart. For instance, Stirner confidently abandoned God whereas Sartre found it "extremely embarrassing that God does not exist... man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself." (*Existentialism and Humanism*)

Sartre later sought to overcome this "embarrassing" forlornness by committing himself to the collectivism of Marxism while still clinging to the shell of his individualist existentialism. He hovered uncertainly between the two for the rest of his life. Stirner never made this mistake. He stubbornly, famously and usefully refused to be anything other than himself.

The fact is, as Stirner himself could have pointed out, all of the foregoing answers are based on a flawed analysis - the lack of understanding of the difference between "egoistic" and "egotistic". Recently, Brian Walden observed that the Utopian mentality reveals a faulty perception of individuality. And more recently Matt Ridley commented that most Utopians are hopelessly naive about human nature: "I believe that... human beings are and always have been driven by three cardinal ambitions - for wealth, for reputation and for status - and that you ignore such facts at your peril. Look no further than Russia for proof. Marxism fails precisely because it indulges a fantasy that human beings will abandon these three and replace them with the greatest good of the greatest number."

Nevertheless, Ridley has left out something important. It is the perennial appetite for self-delusion - to be other than what you are - that mostly fuels these power drives. Most people, as Nigella Lawson observes, "need to escape the resented meagreness of their own existence... They want magic and mysticism. They want to have others - other worlds, other beings - dictate what is, what they are and not to have any responsibility for themselves." Given these facts it is not therefore surprising that Max Stirner's impassioned defence and celebration of his individuality is unique. Based as it is on the revolutionary stance that self interest is the basis of all human endeavour The Ego and His Own may not be the last word on the subject of human selfishness, but it contains some essential first words without which we would be even more in the dark than we are.

READERS - PLEASE NOTE

From the next issue Ego will be incorporated into Non-Serviam, which is edited and published by Svein Olav Nyberg. However, I intend to issue occasional "viewsletters", usually consisting of one or two A4 size pages. Any reader who would like to receive copies of these should write to me at 19 St Stephen's Gardens, London W2 5QU.

I would like to thank all who have supported Ego and its predecessors during thirty one years of publication, particularly those who belong to the now much reduced few who were there at the start.

S.E.Parker