

John Henry Mackay

Summing Up

Marginal Notes to Life and Work

Edited and Translated by

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Preface

In his last published book *Summing Up: Marginal Notes to Life and Work* (*Abrechnung: Randbemerkungen zu Leben und Arbeit*; 1932), the Scotch-German John Henry Mackay (1864–1933) claimed that it was neither an autobiography nor memoirs. Nevertheless it is the closest to either that he wrote, so that I included it along with *Dear Tucker: The Letters from John Henry Mackay to Benjamin R. Tucker* in a print edition in 2000 under the general title *Autobiographical Writings*. After referring to the book as “marginal notes,” Mackay added: “If they appear to you to be a confused mix—well, just order them otherwise; put them together as it pleases you.” With this permission, I have taken the liberty of adding numerous annotations, all of which are in a different print font and inside brackets [thus]. Mackay deliberately excluded names; in my annotations I have added those that are known to me and have also tried to identify places and events mentioned by him. References are in the usual author-date form and a list of references follows the text.

Mackay noted that the critics did not know what to do with his writings, since he wrote in a variety of styles and forms—and he illustrated this once again in *Summing Up*, which is written almost entirely in aphorisms, a departure from anything he had previously done. But this time he was ignored by the critics, for Mackay died the following year, shortly after the assumption of power by the Nazis, and was quickly forgotten. His homosexual writings under the pseudonym Sagitta were put on the Nazis’ list of forbidden books, where Mackay’s identity as Sagitta was stated, but his reputation as an anarchist would have made him *persona non grata* anyway. (One of the rare announcements of his death, in the *New York Times*, said he was called in Germany an “anarchistic lyricist.”)

Revival of interest in the writings of John Henry Mackay began only in 1972 with the publication of a biography (essentially his Ph.D. dissertation) by the American Thomas A. Riley. In 1974 a new Mackay-Gesellschaft was founded in Germany by Kurt Zube; it reprinted Mackay’s most important works, many of

which have now been translated into English. There have also appeared numerous literary studies of Mackay's work, both in German and in English.

Hubert Kennedy

SUMMING UP

*Whoever the truth spake
did not his happiness make.*

Ancient inscription

I want to make a summing up, brief and to the point, but thorough.
I have never suppressed a word in my books out of regard for other people and their prejudices.
I have said the last word, if it had to be said.
I have told the truth. Always.
I will also tell it here. (Here more than ever.)
It will be bitter, this truth. Truth is mostly bitter.

*

“One should not speak of himself!”
Yes. One should speak of himself.
At the end of his life.
Then: if no one has yet done it or is doing it.
Then: if one has accomplished something, and sees how it is denied; rejected; forgotten; disparaged; hushed up; falsified; falsified again and again; and always further and further hushed up...
No one has ever spoken for me.
So I intend to speak for myself.
Only once. Here.

*

I have never spoken of myself. Have never answered attacks, however base they may have been. Have never placed myself before my books, so as to defend them. I was always of the belief, my books had to defend themselves.
I have never intruded myself into the struggle of the day and taken part in it. I always stood off to the side.

And I have gone out of the way of everything that calls itself “journalism” and “politics”—as far as ever possible.

*

Why do I nevertheless begin to speak in this late and final hour (I write this: an almost seventy-year-old)?

Silence, as before, silence up to the end, when it will be too late? No. It does not mean, to be sure, admitting they are right. But it leaves them in the belief that they are right.

One should defend himself.

One must defend himself.

Today more than ever.

I have never spoken of myself.

But introductions and forewords to one and another of my books gave me a welcome opportunity to express myself regarding them and their origin.

Here (with one exception [the sixth edition of *Sturm*]) is nothing to be repeated from those introductions and prefaces, but rather they are only to be recalled as not unimportant components of my work.

[Of special interest is Mackay’s introduction to his biography of Max Stirner, in which he gives details of his work on that project in the years 1889–1914 (Mackay 1977, 5–24). Mackay only hinted at his Sagitta project in his *Summing Up*, but he elsewhere gave its history (Mackay 1979, 13–69; 1988, 134–166). That project is mentioned several times in the letters of *Dear Tucker*.]

Marginal notes and, by their nature as such, light, superficial, erratic. (Light? Superficial? Yes, certainly. But still probably not all...)

I have sought to bring these notes, so randomly written down, at least under a certain clearness by setting next to one another things that easily belong together;

after a preparatory defense, I give expanded data on my life in a first part; I let follow such for my writings in the second part; in a third I throw a sidelight on my weltanschauung of anarchism; and finally, in the fourth and last, I touch on the postwar period and this last decade.

*

One is to expect on these pages neither an autobiography nor so-called life memoirs. My life was too poor in exterior events to justify even the attempt of such records. I have experienced nothing that would be worth the telling (and that would be allowed to be told without regard for others). I search in vain even for the few anecdotes that are supposed to make so many “memoirs” really appetizing.

*

Marginal notes—a nasty bad habit, doubtless, with which to mar books, even if they are one’s own. But in his very own, those written by himself, one is allowed to write them.

Thus is everything presented here, just no self-contained book is presented and no such is intended.

Whoever, therefore, who does not know my books and does not want to get to know them, should also rather leave these notes unread. He will hardly know what to do with them.

Whoever perhaps believes, if he leafs through these pages, that he now knows me, is in error.

It may be that this small (and last) book lands in the hands of someone who knows nothing about me—if it incites him to read pages instead of margins, let him be greeted!

Marginal notes—set down here and there, without knowing or being concerned about how they fall and where...

In them, thus also in contrast to the usual autobiographies, one will miss names. After mature reflection I have preferred to name none. Not those of my friends; not those of my enemies.

It is better, it is more appropriate this way.

Not empty curiosity is to be satisfied, but rather merely one or another, not unjustified question is to be answered.

I know, among these marginal notes are many that may appear insignificant, unimportant, pretentious (and probably are). But they are to remain as they were written—intended, as was said, for the friends of my books, who will also have indulgence and patience with them.

If they appear to you to be a confused mix—well, just order them otherwise; put them together as it pleases you.

*

Thus these are only marginal notes to my life and its work that I give you here—glosses written on the margin of my books: sidelights, end lines; and—a few innuendoes.

They are not meant for a wider circle, just because such a circle about me does not exist.

They are intended, as was said, only for the readers, better said, for the connoisseurs of my books. Of which there were and are not all too many. (Could there ever be all too many?)

But they exist. They still exist.

To make a critique, therefore, of these notes without bringing in my books, on whose margins they are written, would be fruitless and unjustified.

(Naturally this critique will nevertheless be carried out without prerequisites, just as if these pages were a book—a new book.)

*

Two things in my life I have detested and hated like nothing else in the world—politics and journalism.

Even the naming of the names makes me nauseated. A clean person can and should have nothing to do with them.

Politics: the fight for the power of the day.

Journalism: the struggle for the success of the day.

Politics will be spoken of later... Here journalism first.

*

Between journalism and literature gapes from time immemorial an irreconcilable opposition: the opposition between the artificially created and the conceived, the born work; between the made and that which arises; the fetched work and that which comes uncalled.

Between unproductivity and fruitfulness.

Journalism and literature—eternal opposites! Death and life.

[Mackay used the terms “Literatur” and “Dichtungen”; while not strictly equivalent, they are given here by “journalism” and “literature” respectively.]

Literature stands in the corner to which journalism has banished it.

It is the victor, this journalism. Against it and its beloved methods every fight is in vain.

It is the ruler of the day, the press its servant. It determines the market value of the book; creates great men from nonentities and knows no respect for true greatness (just as it knows no respect altogether). It imposes on those who incur its displeasure the punishment of silence (displeasing is everyone who does not join in); and bows to only one thing—success!

Itself unproductive, it hates living literature as its deadly enemy (and rightly).

Journalists: what, according to their opinion, quite without authority, is so, as they see it, and which they should present modestly only under this reservation, this they stamp, boldly and piously, dictatorially with their: “It is so!”

Their impudence, their unscrupulousness, their superficiality are simply boundless.

One certainly does not need to know everything. But one should know what he is writing about.

“C’est littérature!”—the disdainful expression of one of the greatest poets who ever lived (and one not at all naive, as has often been supposed).

[Mackay is referring here to Paul Verlaine (1844–1896). The expression is from his poem “Art poétique” in *Jadis et naguère*:

De la musique avant toute chose...
Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure
Eparse au vent crispé du matin
Qui va fleurent la menthe et le thym...
Et tout le reste est littérature.]

*

Why, I asked, this late coming forward before one’s own work?

So as to take away from the falsifiers their excuse that one's own silence is guilty of the misunderstanding; so as here and there to set right what was falsified again and again; and also to—unburden oneself.

Journalism—the weather vane of their judgment is guided not by value, but rather only by external success.

But how this success is achieved—to show this simple marginal notes do not suffice.

Journalism. Whom the big shots of journalism have proscribed, he remains forever cast out from it.

Directions—today this, tomorrow that... whosoever sells himself to one has tied himself down, but in return has also gained a sure place in “journalism.”

To forestall the objections of the falsifiers, that there are no trustworthy data to depend on, these marginal notes have been written.

It will not help. Not in the least.

To put a stop to the practices of the falsifiers is impossible and was always impossible.

They will further falsify and falsify. It is their profession.

But to tell them to their face that they are falsifiers—that is to happen here.

*

I have committed the crime of writing all too diverse books.

Literary works that were meant to be such and nothing else; others that were not meant as fiction at all [*Die Anarchisten: Kulturgemälde aus dem Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (1891) and *Der Freiheitsucher: Psychologie einer Entwicklung* (1920)]. The first, in particular, has almost universally been called a “novel” (Roman); the 1992 edition of the Forum Verlag Leipzig even has “Roman” on the dust jacket. Mackay insisted that it was not a novel, but a “Kulturgemälde,” as expressed in its subtitle. The genre appears to

be unique to Mackay]; and a purely biographical [*Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk* (1898)].

That crime they will not forgive me.

As little as the other: to have spoken the truth in a world of lies.

I write one of my stories. Immediately I am a renegade, a betrayer of my cause.

“That is what is left over from unheard-of acts of boldness,” wrote recently one of those dunces.

I never needed to look for materials for my books... They flew to me, and that they were so very diverse is not my fault.

*

There is a means—the falsifiers of journalism know it precisely and gladly make use of it—to kill each book: to take it for what it is not meant to be; to represent it as something it made no pretense to be (and therefore also could not be).

Falsifiers—call a scientific investigation a novel; a story an epic poem; a novel an idyll, and you have an easy game to destroy the hated object and its author.

More dubious and malicious in their consequence than these “voices of the day,” which can restrain an external success, yes prevent it, are the—only all too often conscious—falsifications of the thick, heavy volumes of handbooks and encyclopedias, and above all those of our unspeakable “literary histories,” from all of which “the people obtain their knowledge,” and which, instead of being pioneering, as they should be, are only copiers and announcers of external success. [For “copiers” the German text has “Nachschreiter,” which may be a misprint for “Nachschreiber.”]

*

It has not even always been malicious will, it has not always been the individual work that was passed over in silence—(on the contrary: one and another found on publication unusual attention): it is the personality that was shoved aside, because they did not know what to do with it, the displeasure with the uncomfortable, which just let itself be classified nowhere. Where to put it, which looked out again at every corner, when one believed to have happily disposed of it? Where with the anarchist, who was a poet?—the biographer of Stirner, who wrote “stories”?

The surest thing, to simply pass over him.

*

Never has even the least attempt been made to take and view my work as a whole. Never, to trace and follow up its inner connections. [Precisely this has now been done by Edward Mornin (1983).]

Never, to analyze the questions thrown out honestly and without prejudice (or, for all I care, dishonestly and with prejudice).

And never has the right been granted me, to say what I had to say without limitations, if a predetermined form appeared to me too narrow a space for it.

Slander and distortions, lies and enmities of all kinds—the whole rubbish of nonsense, superficiality, and base way of thinking that adhered to my work, is gone and forgotten, and only one word remains in memory, perhaps the only truly pertinent, which one clever pen said about me: “...this so entirely unjournalistic person...”

In whose hands these notes fall, therefore, without his knowing my books, let him take stock of it and acquire as soon as possible, if he can afford it, my *Werke in einem Band* [1928; this contains: *Ausgewählte Gedichte*, *Der Schwimmer*, *Zwischen den Zielen*, *Die Anarchisten*, and *Der Freiheitsucher*]; but at least the second of my “Books of Freedom,” *The Freedomseeker*.

I

High on watch I stand
And when you look at me
You see held in my fist
The flag of liberty!

I know now no defeat
For though the path is long
My victory will last
To celebrate in song.

And calmly will I speak
With smile upon my face,
My eyes they may grow dim
My courage lose its place:

As once and at the end,
And at the close of day
I was a happy man,
And of myself could say:

I had the courage to choose
My own life as I would!
Though it has been a fight—
Yet it was very good!

(Introductory poem in *Sturm*)

In the appendix to the edition that I will always view as the crowning of my life's work, and which I would like to lay in the hands of every single one of my known and unknown friends, if I were not entirely without the means, my *Werke in einem Band*, are found in a few, short lines some authentic data to my life.

[The following paragraph is from *Werke in einem Band*:]

John Henry Mackay was born on 6 February 1864 in Greenock, near Glasgow, in Scotland as the first son of a Scottish father and a German mother; after the death of his father, he came with her, in the third year of his life, to Germany, where he received his education; he studied philosophy, art history, and the history of literature at the universities of Kiel, Leipzig, and Berlin; in 1887 he went for a year to London, where he became acquainted with the social movement at first hand; he spent the next five years in Switzerland and in traveling; in 1892 he came again to Berlin, so as to bring an end here to the research begun in 1889 on Max Stirner, whose rediscoverer he is; as the first in the German language he represented in his two "Books of Freedom," and indeed in blunt contrast to revolutionary communism, which is still always falsely called "anarchism," the weltanschauung of individualistic anarchism; he lives in Charlottenburg (Berlin).

[Mackay was only nineteen months old when he father died on 11 September 1865. The statement here that his mother returned with him to Germany "in the third year of his life" contradicts the statement in the text below that he was "not yet two years old."]

What stands there is not to be repeated here, at most it will be supplemented in a few details as far as appears justified.

For, as should be repeatedly emphasized, these glosses are written for the readers of my books, who are at the same time their connoisseurs and—their friends.

[In the "Definitive Ausgabe" of *Die Anarchisten* (1903), Mackay gave a somewhat longer biographical statement:]

John Henry Mackay, the author of *The Anarchists*, was born on 6 February 1864 in Greenock, Scotland, but after the death of his father he came in early childhood to Germany where he grew up. After an unsuccessful attempt to interest himself in another profession than his own, he was an auditor at the universities of Kiel, Leipzig, and Berlin for five semesters of philosophy and the history of art and literature, and published at the same time his first writings: At the beginning of 1885 a poem of his homeland, "Kinder des Hochlands," to which in the next two years followed the attempt at a tragedy [*Anna Hermsdorf*], the first volume of his "Dichtungen," a collection of novellas, "Schatten," as well as the social poem "Arma parata fero!," which immediately encountered the Verbot of the "Socialist Law."

In 1887 the author went to London; he went abroad again where he had already made longer trips, so that in the course of the next five years he only occasionally returned to Germany. In the summer of that year he was still very occupied with completing his Berlin novellas "Moderne Stoffe," the love poem "Helene," which appeared anonymously, the first sequel of his poems, "Fortgang," and with translations from the English "Jenseits der Wasser." Only in the fall did he become acquainted with the social movement, wrote during that eventful and remarkable winter the poems of his "Sturm," which were immediately published under the image of a torch-bearing hand and caused a sensation, and he formed the plan of his great "picture of civilization," for whose carrying out he sought the quiet and solitude of Switzerland. There, more intense and extensive studies brought him to those results that changed very much the original draft of his work and so delayed its realization that its completion came only three years later, in 1891 in Rome. In the course of those years, which were again often spent in travels, there appeared in addition to a new edition of "Sturm, which was enlarged by twelve poems, the second sequel of his poems under the title "Das starke Jahr."

In 1892 Mackay returned to Berlin, principally driven by the desire to bring to a close his years-long research into the life of Max Stirner, and he has mostly lived there since. A series of novelistic works (“Die Menschen der Ehe,” “Die letzte Pflicht,” “Albert Schnell’s Untergang”), as well as a new third sequel of his poems, “Wiedergeburt,” still preceded the conclusion of the research mentioned, which appeared in 1898 as the biography: “Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk”; there also appeared a volume of Stirner’s “Kleinere Schriften und Entgegnungen.”

The story of a passion, “Der Schwimmer,” is Mackay latest work. But there still fell in that year, 1901, the completion of his entirely new concept of a collection of “master poems on single sheets” (“Freunde und Gefährten”), whose first thousand copies has been published and already widely realized the basic idea of the editor: to make it possible for everyone to create his own anthology with the most modest means. Mackay’s “Gesammelte Dichtungen,” the complete poetic production of his youth from 1882 to 1890 inclusively, appeared in 1898.

Already in the same year as its first publication *Die Anarchisten* appeared in Boston in the translation of George Schumm; in 1898 it was translated into French by Louis de Hessem, not without avoiding great errors and with a mangled title. In addition there are translations into Czech and Dutch.

*

[*Summing Up* continues:]

I was born on 6 February 1864 in Greenock near Glasgow in Scotland.

My father was a Scot: John Farquhar, insurer and insurance broker in ships.

My mother was of an old Hamburg merchant family: Luise, née Ehlers.

[Mackay spells his mother’s name here Luise, but in the register of his birth (in facsimile in Solneman 1979, 15) her name is given as Louise.]

After the early death of my father, she returned with me, not yet two years old, to Germany.

In my tenth year she married a second time—with a Prussian official [Alfred Dumreicher (born 19 May 1833)].

The correct pronunciation of my name? As it is written (with the accent on the second syllable).

[The phonetic German pronunciation described by Mackay is, in fact, the Scottish pronunciation of his name. Erich Mühsam must have been ignorant of this when he wrote that Mackay “held himself pedantically correct in every situation, but became very sharp if someone, say, committed the faux pas of pronouncing his name according to his Scottish origin: ‘Mac-kei! If you please!’” (Mühsam 1977, 86).]

I therefore learned to speak—my “mother tongue”—in Germany (English only later) and here I received—I cannot say “enjoyed”—my upbringing.

*

In school I was a remarkably poor pupil. Always interested in a hundred things, only unfortunately not there where I should have been. I am able to recall my school years, even today, not otherwise than with a shudder: a prison and torture chamber.

The school should concern only three parties: the parents, the teacher, and above all the children themselves.

But a fourth mixes in, the state, in that it assumes for itself the overseeing of it.

Why? Because it wants to rear subordinates, instead of independently thinking people, who could one day be dangerous for it.

Poor teachers, who do not teach; poor children, who are not allowed to learn—what they would like to teach and learn.



John Henry Mackay (age 16)

I am unable to believe in the love of parents, who even today deliver their children from cowardice and convenience to the state schools.

Then it was still different. There were hardly any private schools, whereas today such exist here and there (which the state only tolerates and for which it makes life troublesome).

But in my time too it really needed to be better and not quite so difficult.

Exams: I never took an exam and would also never have passed an exam. Even if I had known everything that I was supposed to know (whereas in truth I knew as good as nothing about it)—in the moment I would be questioned about it, I would have forgotten everything.

To pass an exam means, by the way, not to know things, but rather to know them at the moment asked (which are two different things).

I learned in school as good as nothing, and also from the universities, as auditor, I took away little enough for my life.

But finally there are other ways than the school by which one can learn.

Life, our best teacher—if it is truly life and not vegetating—teaches us gradually, but incessantly, everything that we need for it.

“One cannot learn enough...” Yes, from it, from life.

But as a rule we learn much too much and what is not forgotten lies undigested in us and heavy on our stomachs.

“Dead, undigested knowledge”—pertinent words.

If I need historical dates and stuff like that I look them up. Why store it in my brain? Useless ballast in what is in any case already overfilled.

Just as the best government is that which governs least, so the best training is that which trains least.

[Mackay is recalling Henry David Thoreau: “I heartily accept the motto, ‘That government is best which governs least’” (*Civil Disobedience*, 1849). He certainly agreed with Thoreau’s conclusion: “and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which I also believe, ‘That government is best which governs not at all.’” In 1908 Mackay planned to publish a German translation of Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience* (see *Dear Tucker*, no. 17), but this was not done.]

We will have a world language only in a world peace.

[Mackay is probably thinking of Esperanto. “When the League of Nations published its ‘Report on Esperanto’ in 1922, it estimated that four million people worldwide had picked up the language. In 1932, more than 2300 Esperanto programs were broadcast via radio. The International Red Cross Conference asked its organizations to encourage Esperanto study as ‘one of the most powerful means of attaining mutual understanding and cooperation.’ Attendance at the yearly Universal Congresses averaged more than 5000 delegates in the years before World War II. Esperanto appeared poised to become the global presence its creator had envisioned” (Weiner 1999).]

Dead languages. Living languages.

It is senseless to want to reawaken the dead at the cost of the living.

[Mackay is probably thinking here of his study of Latin in school. A simplified Latin was proposed as a world language by Giuseppe Peano in 1903. There were, of course, many attempts to revive classical Latin, including, for example, that of the early homosexual theorist/emancipationist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in the years 1889–1895.]

Less knowledge, more discernment!

*

A one-year, entirely unsuccessful attempt to fasten foot in a bourgeois profession first brought me—under one of its chiefs—so close to “journalism” that I learned to forever hate and abhor it and its whole business.

[Mackay was an apprentice in a publishing house in Stuttgart (Solneman, 1979, 28).]

I wrote my first books. (About them shortly.)

And made myself free with them. (Do not believe that that was so simple.)

*

One of the universities at which I was an “auditor” was Berlin, and again, even if this time not professionally, I came in touch with “journalism,” with its latest, its most naturalistic, and its more or less pure representatives [i.e., in the direction of naturalism, e.g., Arno Holz (1863–1929), Johannes Schlaf (1862–1941), Heinrich Hart (1855–1906), Gerhart Hauptmann (1862–1946)].

They were all geniuses.

I felt that I did not belong and went to London.

*

I went to London, and there, in London, was where the great transformation in my seeing and thinking took place, which was to give to my life its direction and to my work its meaning: the immense movement, which called itself the social, gripped me too and dragged me into its whirlpool. I began to realize that it was the question of all questions and experienced the highest that a young man in that age, which alone is able to think so feverishly and to sympathize with so much down to the last fiber, can experience—to be shaken to the depths under the iron grip of new perceptions.

The social movement!

Where to in it? To the right or to the left?

There was no hesitation or wavering.

I went to the left, always farther and farther to the left, until I landed there where it went no farther, and where I still stand today.

The social movement!

What was in contrast to *it* that other one now, which conducted itself likewise as so revolutionary: the literary one of naturalism?

A tempest in a teapot!

London—your unforgettable year, which gave me my book! More than that: which gave me myself!

[Mackay wrote in the introduction to *The Anarchists*: “London and the events of the fall of 1887 have served me as the background for my picture.”]

*

So as to come to terms with its tremendous impressions, I needed rest and quiet.

I buried myself in a small town [Rorschach] on the Swiss side of that broad lake, whose green waters wash so many “sovereign countries” [Bodensee, or Lake of Constance, which borders Switzerland, Germany, and Austria], to then, in late summer, enter for the first time the beautiful city on another lake, the city to which I was then to return again and again for years: Zurich.

*

In my youth, and also later, I traveled much.

Almost always to the South, to sun, to warmth.

Mostly it was not what one calls travel, a change from place to place, but rather a usually longer stay in the large cities abroad, until I definitively settled in Berlin.

I then seldom left Berlin anymore for long, and—since the war—only for short weeks.

Only once, 1893, did I go farther, beyond the West of Europe: to the States and there all the way to Chicago and its world exhibition, a quarter year's stay, which brought me into happy touch with the best friends of our cause.

[The World's Columbian Exhibition, which was formally dedicated in October 1892, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus, opened to the public in May 1893 for six months. On his trip to the United States Mackay visited Robert Reitzel (Detroit), Benjamin R. Tucker and Emma Goldman (New York), Georg Schumm (Boston).]

I have always loved them—the large cities (and the independence, which only they are able to give): Rome, Paris, and not least Berlin, in which I have now lived such long years.

*

The years came and went: they ran... ran... ran...

What am I to say of them, except that which speaks out of them itself—my work?

Times over which only one word stands: work.

And such as I must write over them: "Without success, not without courage."

Cities and towns—oh, there were so many—why name them?—to what purpose count them?

Whom can that interest?

Whom does it concern?

*

The years ran... ran... ran...
—summed themselves up to decades...
—two... three... four decades...

There came times in which the all too tensely strained will threatened not to obey and no longer wanted as I wanted...

Times in which I only lived, and yet that life was not the right life.
Other times in which I only lived and that life was absolutely the right life.

Years—why label them?
Numbers clarify; numbers confuse.
Milestones on the paths of your life: at best you walk on by them and farther—
what do you want to know, how short the path is yet?

And again and again the return home to the maternal hearth and heart: again
and again the departure—to where?—where?

*

In the year 1902 I lost my mother.

*

Years then in which my life was no life anymore, but rather only just a tired
breathing, as if under a heavy burden—a losing-oneself in a strange foreign
country, in which I now no longer knew: to where?

Life can become more difficult at times, and then again lighter at others, to no
other person, than to me.

It is not true that time heals.

There are wounds that never quite heal over.

*

And there came the times of awakening again as if from a deep stupor, and with it the arousing oneself to new deeds.

Lose yourself, but find yourself again.

If you have never lost yourself, you have never found yourself.

If I had not again and again found myself in my work, where would it be!

In the middle of my life there arose, like a rescue to a new goal, the task of which it still seems to me to be too soon to speak (as late as it already is).

From reasons that are mine, and are therefore untouchable.

[This is the only reference in *Summing Up* to Mackay's Sagitta project.]

Travel and work.

Work and travel—to where, where?

Restless person that you were; and never satisfied with yourself...

To draw to oneself and throw away—is that a contradiction?

Again and again that arising from tired and wounded knees—to new work, to new wandering...

*

And the years came and went until suddenly, overnight, those came in which the heart was stopped by what happened—by living through the monstrous:

years, bearable only if one went through them with covered head;
years in which there was no word more that was not a lie;
years in which the least thing was suppressed and assassinated, which wanted
out to truth;
years of dread and silence;
years in which the great criminals of mankind carried out their bloody game
with the peoples (and these let it be done to them), to then, at the end, see
nevertheless how very much they had miscalculated—
the years of murder, a murder without reason or goal, a murder without end!
[Mackay is, of course, describing the First World War.]

But also years in which it had to be shown whether that which had been gained
with such difficulty would hold, or would be drawn along into the whirlpool of
madness to thus be lost forever...

Years in which it was proven that it was firmly built on good ground.
[Mackay appears to be referring to his philosophical view of individualist anarchism.]

And there came the years after... But of them, of *them*, only in the last of these
sentences.

*

Back to my youth.

I had freed myself. The modest independence, in which I was then allowed to
live the next decades, I used to tell the truth—without the least fear of God or
man.

I wrote the books that I wanted to write, not those that others wanted me to
write.

And I lived as it pleased me, not others, to live.

There is no merit in what I did.

I claim none for myself.

Everything that I did, I did because I *had* to do it.

My works always came to me—with the inexorable demand to be done.

I always resisted them, as a demand, as long as possible; and only when no choice remained to me—the choice between the dissatisfaction of not having done them; and the attempt to avoid that dissatisfaction, to appease it with excuses and thus to scare it away—only then did I set about it (then usually to end it quickly and in one stretch).

There is no merit and no claim to reward may be made. Unless it is the reward that every worker may claim for his work (and which I did not receive).

*

If life and conviction are not one—what are the two worth?

I am much too self-conscious to be vain.

Without self-consciousness—how would existence—today—be bearable?

If the others are not conscious of what you have done, you yourself must be.

I do not know why the word “goodness” has such a fatal aftertaste for me. There is something in it of condescension, pretension, of pharisaism.

Your book (*The Freedomseeker*) should be introduced into all schools as instructional material, someone said to me.

I would certainly have nothing against it.

But: what a downright grotesque thought!

I am not ready-witted.

I must reflect before I find the right answer (and then it is usually too late).

I cannot think if other people around me are talking.

I see many things with difficulty, but if I have recognized them, I hold them inflexibly.

I am a person entirely not to be influenced by others in that which I have thus found and firmly hold, and I let myself be taught better only through reason or through experience.

I have no sense for festivity and celebrated the festivals as they came (that's long, long ago...).

Cool head and warm heart—is that such a bad mixture?

There is one characteristic that has always remained entirely foreign to me: envy.

I could perhaps have become a quite good architect.

But for two types of profession I would have been entirely unsuited: to that of teacher; and to that of martyr (for that can also be a profession).

Have I been aggressive? Then tell me, and I will regret it and make good, as far as possible.

But do not call me aggressive because I did not want what you wanted and have led my own life (in the eyes of many people already an offense).

*

Before the inflation [of 1923] I was in the position of being allowed to choose my work myself; there began with it the struggle for each coming day—a long series of immense disappointments and failures of every kind. But also of that only later...

*

I was always very much alone in my life, especially in its last decades.

Only whoever is alone with himself gains the right relationship to himself and to others, a relationship that only too often is disturbed and destroyed through their all too frequent and continual presence.

The greatest misfortune that in my opinion can befall a person is: not to be able to be alone.

A misfortune that can only be exceeded by one other: not to be allowed to be alone when one would like to be alone.

Social life, cheerful and unforced, especially if one is young and among like-minded people, is certainly a splendid matter.

But social life in the form of societies, as they existed and still exist, is an irresponsible robbery of oneself—a senseless waste of our most precious good: time.

Social duties: who dreads them more, the guests or the hosts?

I know no loneliness. I have only felt it when I could no longer be by myself, but had to be among people.

Isolation itself does not always need to be abandonment. It can also be a dismissal of the others, so as to live in freely chosen solitude, which is then no longer isolation.

Solitude is the price that you have to pay for your freedom.
Pay it without worry! It is not too high.

I have spent happy hours with people who were close to me—whom I loved
and who loved me in turn.

But blissful hours, blissful ones, only with myself alone.

Splendid isolation! How else could I have been able to live and work, but in
you!

[The phrase “splendid isolation” was in English in the original. It became a cliché after
being used in reference to England by Sir Wilfried Laurier in a speech in the Canadian
Assembly in 1896.]

*

Friends—what a serious and long chapter, not to be finished off in glosses!

Friends, few and best—they belong to the highest goods of your life.

Friends, many and good ones—certainly an enrichment of this our life.

Yet, if we want to be honest: they can give you many things (and do give you
many things), but they can also take many things: from the short time that you
have to live.

It is an old truth: it is easier to defend yourself from your enemies than from
your friends.

A truth that one always has to learn anew.

You do not need, perhaps, to be on your guard against your friends; all the
more against their advice.

(Is this advice?)

At times I have been tempted to ask whether my unknown friends are not my best friends.

The strongest bond between friends, the uniquely unbreakable: the same conviction and way of thinking.

It is an old, incontestable fact that those who—purely spatially—stand closest to you, relatives and friends, are usually also those who know the least about you.

Relatives? A question mark after it.

I am of course not speaking of the closest blood relatives, but rather of the “family,” that swarm of hornets that disturbs, molests, and torments you your whole life long with their—entirely unjustified—claims.

Relatives are as a rule a pure waste of time. To give yourself to them in extended intercourse means: to lose yourself on them.

So is it also with “so-called” friends. They are and always remain an expensive matter.

And why do they always spread salt into your open wounds?

Acquaintances, however, are made according to inclination and mood, and are dropped as soon as they begin to be burdensome.

I have never rightly understood what pleasure people could have in telling others unpleasant things. But it must indeed be a special pleasure, since so many do it.

Tact—you finest blossom on the tree of freedom. But who still possesses you?

*

I chose for myself the loveliest profession. The loveliest and—the most responsible.

But what is a profession?

Is it not rather an activity, writing of books?

I have written a series of books—that is all.

The well-behaved writer year after year writes his book (or two), even if he has nothing to say, and his publisher releases them, more or less pleased.

I fear I was neither a writer nor well-behaved, for I only wrote when I had something to say, and between the publication times of my books yawn gaps of years.

I say it again: I chose for myself the most splendid profession that there is—the most splendid because the most independent.

And that in which the most correct relationship reigns between supply and demand—the most correct because the most independent.

For the relationship between my readers and me lays not the least duty on the two of us. It is entered into without force, it lets itself be dissolved at any time without force. And without force be taken up again at any time.

I write a book.

You buy it for a small amount. It is yours and you can do with it what you will.

You call for it and it is there.

You say farewell to it and it goes.

Patient for every one of your whims and moods, ready for each of your wishes. It is your friend, as long as you want to be its friend.

You can never lose it, this friend. Even if you “lose” it, you can replace it at any time.

The book: you can take it with you wherever you go. It accompanies you, without burdening and molesting you—your friend and your companion

And never can you have all too much from *it*.

The book: everything has its time, only the book does not, if it is life.

It can be missing, forgotten, not to be found, but the day comes in which it arises again in a new dress, and its silent mouth speaks forth to you again over all times in its trusted speech.

Not only in its own. It is also able to conquer for itself the foreign and most foreign.

The book: there are books that have been and are more to you than even a friend was and is.

They all go through the sieve of time, the good and the bad; the small and the great.

*

The chaff blows away, the substantial remains.

There is no living book that is forgotten for long, that is dead forever. Buried by its own time it awakens by the next or the one after that to new life.

(I found such a book, and it lives). [Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1844).]

You cannot spare your reader the effort of reflection.

But you can probably make it easier for him by yourself thinking and writing clearly, distinctly, and understandably.

Certainly a living breath is worth more than all the books.
But if that free breath is created from a living book?

*

The years have come and gone, and today they are only just a memory.

The sorrows are past and the scars still hurt only seldom. (But then as their wounds once did.)

The joys are past—softly here and there one still quivers.

Past! Past! Has been...

*

Memories:

One should not look back too long, if one does not wish to lose himself entirely in the past.

(Above all not when one is old.)

Memories: burdens that weigh all the heavier, the longer life lasts.

But how unbearable it would be if there were not also such in which one is allowed to rest.

Memories: curiously, not the strongest impressions always leave the strongest memories.

Often it is the only relatively weak that suddenly announce themselves after many years (and then do not leave you for a long time).

Hours that must have had something in them to make them so unforgettable.

Memories:

Of people?

No, not of them.

For—it was decided: no names.

Memories: what good ones come to me immediately?

A couple only from many... from hundreds... from many hundreds:

—the enchanted garden in Taormina...

—the solitary small Baa Lake at Freienwalde and the return home with the scurrying shadows of the wild pigs over the evening path...

[Mackay was in Freienwalde a. O. in January 1920 (see *Dear Tucker*, no. 112).]

—the cypresses of the Villa Falconieri...

[Villa Falconieri in Frascati (Italy) was founded in the sixteenth century. Before the First World War it was owned by the German Emperor Wilhelm II. Since 1980 it is the seat of CEDE (Centro Europeo dell'Educazione).]

—the bougainvilleas of Cava dei Tirreni: comforts after a severe fall...

["When the Sagitta trial was lost [October 1909], the poet fled to Cava dei Tirreni, a very picturesque little town at the highest place of the railroad between Naples and Salerno" (Dobe 1987, 23).]

—an evening, damp with fog, as a twenty-year-old on the last visit to my homeland—in its whole unreality, on the banks of the Clyde. [Mackay's birthplace, Greenock, Scotland, is on the southern shore of the Firth of Clyde. He visited there in 1884.]...

—the last walk of many on that late fall day, over Nikolskoje down toward Moorlake and Potsdam [Nikolskoje is on an island in the Havel in the southwestern part of Berlin]...

Memories (not the most uncomfortable) of—well yes, of restaurants:

—the tiny, cool Löwenhof with its three tables in Florence...

—that loved and praised by all connoisseurs in the Via Mario dei Fiori in Rome (does it still exist today?)...



Benjamin R. Tucker

—my Taverne Anglaise in Geneva (and the regal Barry)...

[Mackay described the Taverne Anglaise in his short story “Der Sybarit” (Mackay 1984, 65–86); in English in Mackay 2000, 70-89.]

And—oh!—the Parisian ones... the Parisian!... under the appropriate guidance of a connoisseur, my friend, the great anarchist and—great gourmet [Benjamin R. Tucker]...

Memories of a rich, at times too rich life:

—out of deep darkness float, ripple, glide strings of light down to earth, like stars arranged in rows: the nightly illumination of the Eiffel Tower at the World Exhibition of 1900—a sight quite unforgettable...

—the train that carried me through the night, stops its four minutes: Falls View Station. Niagara Falls itself is still shrouded in spray and fog. But its thunder, that indescribable, never-heard thunder! Four minutes only in the presentiment of the monstrous, but the greatest of those great days...

[Mackay visited the United States in the summer and fall of 1893.]

—a terrace, built wide out into empty space, free-floating over the precipice—and the dizzying sight from here over the illuminated land, the shimmering sea (Le Vistaéro: a small restaurant on the Grande Corniche overlooking Monaco)...

Other hours:

—summer nights on the vine-grown verandah of the wooden house on the heights, the broad lake in the distance and before me wine in a glass, around me the buzzing of my “nocturnal butterflies” and uncounted strophes—(“Up, raise the sparkling cup...”)—on the lips: the long summer nights of Rorschach...

[“Up, raise the sparkling cup...” is the first line of the poem “Heimliche Aufforderung,” one of four poems by Mackay that were set to music by Richard Strauss. Rorschach, Switzerland, is on the Lake of Constance (Bodensee). Mackay spent the summer of 1888 there.]

—restful mornings in the small bay of Santa Margherita Ligure [on the Riviera di Levante]...

—Indian summers days on the Hudson [the Hudson River in New York, October 1893]...

—and those sunny mornings full of unheard-of sweetness in the Conca d’Oro [near Palermo]...

And—how often not!:

—the intoxicated view from mountain heights down into the broad distance...

—the longing one up to the distant and unreachable peaks...

—and hours, many hours on many a sea...

*

II

My Name

Do not thrown my name into the crush
Of the days that fault the better future.
For it will founder in them. It can with difficulty
Be added to the crowd of other names.

It stands alone. Where it always stands,
It finds no place in the day's chronicle.
The future, which I see slowing approaching
Will write it soon enough in its correct place.

(1900)

In the data already given at the end of my *Werke in einem Band* stand, after the brief sentences about my life, more extensive data about my writings: bibliographic details whose carefulness and completeness leave nothing to be desired, and to which I may refer those who should take any kind of interest in them.

[Mackay wrote the following paragraph in *Werke in einem Band* (p. 1171):]

Die Anarchisten has been translated into seven languages; there have appeared one American (as first), two French, one each Dutch and Italian, two Russian, one Swedish, and one Czech—in all nine non-German editions.

[Curiously, in Mackay's list of the translations of *Die Anarchisten* he omits the Yiddish translation published in London in 1908–1910, which he surely knew of. In addition there has also been a Spanish translation.]

To those bibliographic details nothing remains to be added but—in another place—those for the planned great Stirner Edition and those that did not come about with it.

*

If my life was poor in “exterior events”—as much, for that matter, which most people think eventful, is basically quite insignificant and unimportant—it was all the richer in interior experience.

Some of which, much, found expression in my books.

They called those books heavy. A kind of excuse, by which one does not need to read them, eh?

Well, better that they are heavy than that they are light.

The majority abandon and betray their cause, if they see no more success in it.

I never asked for success.

Or indeed only, and then rejoiced in it, if it benefited my cause.

“Whoever has never written for the sake of the success of the day, why does he await it?” I wrote in 1898. About the middle of my life.

But what does it all mean at the end—whether recognized or unappreciated, known or laughed at by the great “successes” [Erfolgern] of literature (if such an ugly new word is allowed)—what does all that mean in contrast to the fact that it was *done*!

*

Precisely because they were passed over in silence, my books, are they here—and again and again—to be named.

I never begged for a critique, and never responded to a critique.

Almost always I had the feeling that those who wrote about me had not at all correctly read what they wrote about.

It is striking how many people wanted to write about me and then never did.

Never—I said it already—has an attempt been made to take and view my work as a whole.

That this work in itself is so diverse and many-sided can yield no excuse for the lack of attention to a demand that every creating person has a right to make.

*

I spoke about making myself free.

To be able to do that, I had to “produce something.”

—And here I will speak right away about something that I later deplored more than anything and still deplore today: the too early, hasty publication of the first, still immature, and thus inadequate works.

I count my first books among them.

They are today long out of print and forgotten.

But they have—for decades—determined my place in “literature” and have given my opponents the possibility of fighting me with weapons that I myself put into their hands.

They show a striving, those first books.

But one should not show his striving, but rather only the achievement.

Whoever absolutely wants, nevertheless, to become acquainted with those first productions, will know how to acquire them in some way (the curious are warned!)...

*

But wait—among them is found one that was actually destined to enter into the immortality of literary history, if the falsifiers had not also been successfully at work here: under an impossible title [*Moderne Stoffe*] two “realistic novellas,” introduced by a poem as programmatic as it was problematic, demonstrably the first of that direction aspiring at that time, which under the name of naturalism stirred up so much dust in dried-out brains.

They were, of course—since from me—passed over, and among the names of the pioneers of that direction one seeks in vain for my name.

I would not know what would be more indifferent to me.

*

Thus I threw out—young and careless as I was—book after book: in verse, in prose, just as it came, all more or less inadequate, and therefore quite dispensable in my oeuvre.

Let us leave them—a round dozen—unnamed and without marginal notes to their merciful destiny, to be out-of-print and forgotten,

[The “round dozen” would appear to be: *Kinder des Hochlands* (1885); *Anna Hermsdorff* (1885); *Dichtungen* (1886); *Im Thüriger Wald* (1886); *Schatten* (1887); *Arma parata fero!* (1887); *Fortgang* (1888); *Helene* (1888); *Moderne Stoffe* (1888); *Jenseits der Wasser* (1889); *Das starke Jahr* (1890); *Wiedergeburt* (1896)]

and name as first title that of a remarkable, thin booklet, which—with the torch hand instead of the author’s name on the cover—appeared in Zurich in 1888: *Sturm*.

Remarkable because it was in such a pure, even if artistically contestable form, a first setting down of what that London year had roused in me.

For it turned out, without I myself really being aware of it, I who was reared and grew up in thoroughly bourgeois views, that these poems were about the most revolutionary ever printed.

It had fermented and boiled up for a long time in my always rebellious brain, since I was able to think, and many rising bubbles compressed themselves into poems—poems that today I would certainly view with one moist and one cheerful eye, if I could indeed bring it upon myself to read again what has been expelled from my work.

But here, in the poems of that *Sturm*, was first manifested an unbounded indignation: indignation over the injustice; the mendacity; the arrogance; the hypocrisy, the incessant crimes committed on and on by the ones, the strong, against the others, the weak—the indignation over everything that I heard and saw around me.

The collection with its “provocative title” caused a sensation, was soon sold out, and after a year or so there appeared a second, enlarged edition, still without my name, and not less remarkable than the first.

Not less remarkable because in the meantime the greatest perception of my life had taken place, which received its strongest expression in the new introductory poem “Die Selbstfindung” [Self-discovery].

[In the second edition this poem did not yet have this title; it was simply called “Zur zweiten Auflage” (On the second edition). The poem reflects Mackay’s acceptance of the egoism of Max Stirner, whose *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* he had read after the first edition of *Sturm* appeared.]

If it is otherwise my effort in these marginalia to repeat nothing that I said in my books (and their introductions)—reminiscences are by their nature not always to be avoided—then this time the temptation will not be resisted to set down here some paragraphs from the preface to the sixth edition of that same book *Sturm* of 1919. I may do it all the more readily since this preface already had to be left out of the seventh edition of 1925 for reasons of space, and then also because there is little hope that the book will ever again appear in such a complete edition, although it, with the exception of *The Anarchists*, is the only one among my books that was allotted a wider distribution (over twenty thousand copies).

If *Sturm*—in later days—should indeed have a new edition, an eighth, it may be based on none other than the text of the sixth, with its preface, here only excerpted, but shortened, however, by the omission of the sections “Moderne Jugend” [Modern Youth] and “Träume der Zukunft” [Dreams of the Future].

[Curiously, when Kurt Zube took over the reprint of the seventh edition that was reprinted in 1974 without permission and issued with it a pamphlet with additional poems, he included the preface, not of the sixth edition, as requested by Mackay, but of the fifth. This was also done in the new edition of 2001.]

I quote, therefore, in connection with what was just said:

“...the recognition that freedom, that uniquely to be desired and striven for social condition of human society, is never the decision of the masses and their power and therefore may never be expected from them, that is, can never be given; but rather, as the most mature and noblest blossom of culture, only from one to himself—to the individual awakened to the recognition of his value and his interests, who joins with other individuals for the same goal—must first be demanded and then taken. This recognition enlarged that little book by almost a third, forfeited from it, however, the previous favor of all communist-altruistic-feeling socialists (and that is by far the majority even today) and also came here onto the Index.”

Although I intentionally and carefully separated the contents of *Sturm* from my genuine “poems,” that of course never hindered the falsifiers from judging my lyric poetry by it and, as it could not otherwise be from an artistic viewpoint, condemning it.

I therefore quote further:

“...If here (the selection of my poems is meant) I had to start with the proposal of leaving out where possible what I felt was unable to hold up from a purely artistic viewpoint, there ceases the consideration: to give a picture of the interior development of my youth to freedom, in which that too must not be lacking, which otherwise would be thrown away, its first freedom-demanding stammering as little as its future-intoxicated phrases; not its exuberance and not its powerless indignation, everything that the artist laughed over, but which the human being would not want to dispense with for anything in the world—to give such a complete as possible picture seemed imperative here.”

Tendentious poetry? Well good! But only that!

I have never felt the need to repeat what I have said.

To say once what one has to say; thought through, to say it briefly and above all clearly, that is the important thing—it seems to me.

Why then must everything always be said anew and expatiated on to satiety?

A final quotation therefore against an unjustified accusation:

“...The accusation has never been spared the revolutionary poets of all time and peoples that they, if they kept silent after they had spoken, were pointed out and represented as ‘disloyal to the cause.’ Nothing is more false and unjust than that. Precisely *that* they kept silent after they had said what they had to say shows that their indignation was honest and their scorn genuine. Only the chatterbox again and again complacently repeats himself, and what was once a flame now becomes only smoke, the word, however, a cliché. One should therefore only very carefully guard against expressing this accusation before the proof for such a charge is brought in the life and work of those so reviled. Against me too this accusation has of course been raised. I have always only laughed at it.

“For, of nothing that I have done am I so proud as of this little book! I know how disdainfully ‘journalism’ rejected it. But for that, indeed, I also did not write it. I wrote it—‘once, in the days of my youth...’ to free myself from their doubts and fears, their indignation and their hate, and what remains of them stands on other pages. The doubts have lifted, the fears withdrawn, the indignation has become unquenchable hate, but that hate has remained the same. Or no: it has become colder and therefore all the harder.”

*

If one still nourished until then the weak hope of seeing the strayed sheep one day repentantly return to its flock (*Sturm* was considered a “straying”), [Mackay may be referring to the group who published *Die Autonomie* in London. Riley (1972, 53) states that in 1890, “after a crushing review of the new individualistic edition of *Sturm*, *Die Autonomie* published nothing more of Mackay’s”] then this hope had to be given up definitively when, after not too long a time, there appeared *that* one among my books in which I set out the weltanschauung I

had won, not in the disconnected form of poems, but rather elaborated [in *Die Anarchisten*].

In my inner life had happened in the meanwhile the two events that were to give it support and assurance forever: I had found Max Stirner and his forgotten work [*Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*]; and there had penetrated to me news of the activity of the man, with whom a lifelong friendship was to unite me [Benjamin R. Tucker, whom Mackay met in the summer of 1889 (Riley 1972, 53)].

I have sought to thank both: the one [Stirner] by seeking out and writing his life; the other [Benjamin R. Tucker] through the dedication of the two books in which I endeavored to serve our common weltanschauung. It reads: “In the friendship of a life.”

*

I wrote, always traveling very much, in the years from 1888 until 1891 that first of my two Books of Freedom [*The Anarchists* and *The Freedomseeker*] (which, however, only many years later, after the appearance of the second, did I unite together under this title), the “Picture of Civilization at the End of the Nineteenth Century”: *The Anarchists* [Here, and later, Mackay puts the subtitle of the book in quotation marks before the title], and brought the manuscript to my old friend in Zurich [J. Schabelitz]. He printed in his shop everything, but everything, that was offered to him—for the greatest part, of course, worthless stuff—but in return he did nothing for the works of his publishing house. What did not move of itself, remained lying where it was.

My new book moved, although its price, in consequence of a too splendid get-up, which makes the first edition [1891] even today its most beautiful, was too high. It caused an unusual sensation; was reviewed a great deal, often in long articles; and it experienced one translation after another. I saw myself “famous overnight.”

With a “People’s Edition” [1893] I fell into the hands of swindlers, yet it gave me the occasion for a new foreword, which addressed “the German workers,” who to their detriment, have until now not taken its truths to heart.

The last separate edition, designated “New Edition,” dates in its eleventh and twelfth thousand from 1924.

A certain indestructibility that must belong to the book has carried it through the decades and maintains it even today [see now Mackay 1999].

As the last thing in the book I wrote the introduction, dated from Rome where such a great part of it had originated. In Zurich, while the messenger from the printing shop was waiting for the manuscript, in an attic room (which is not to say that I always lodged in attic rooms), a gust of wind pushed the window open and drove the pages out. With a clothesline around my body I climbed after them and fortunately fished them out of the gutter.

Thus was *The Anarchists* finished.

*

I spoke of the falsifiers of literature.

Here a further example:

In my Books of Freedom I wrote two books that made no pretense to being works of art. They are anything but: *The Anarchists*, a piece of cultural history; *The Freedomseeker*, the psychology of a development.

Both were so designated in their titles and in both of their introductions it was emphasized that one was not to take them for what they were not intended.

The result? That both were unswervingly called “novels.” Novels!

*

There are a great number of people who only become famous by being present everywhere.

Well, in the time of my life I have never and nowhere been “in the right place at the right time”—and yet I was one day: through a book that probably owed its fame in the first place to its subject matter.

Thank God the story did not last long.

If anything in the world is quickly fleeting, it is “fame.”

Above all today, when we live so quickly—in our time of electricity, of wireless telegraphy, of airships. You can be famous today and tomorrow no dog asks about you.

Fame is always a dangerous enemy of him, on whom it lies. Private life ceases; public life under the eyes of people begins, and you are influenced by them, by their judgment and their applause, without your wanting or knowing it.

Fortunate, therefore, the one “on whose forehead the laurel quickly wilts” and who is allowed in time to draw back from “fame” into the safety of his four walls.

*

After *The Anarchists* a brief side-leap, the “Descriptions of a Small Town”: *Die Menschen der Ehe* [The Marriage People, 1892].

It was a disappointment. One had—I know not why—expected a voluminous discussion of the problem of marriage.

I am sorry. I feel myself quite incompetent here, although, many years later, in 1930, I once more dared that dangerous field with a small one-acter, the “Scene”: *Ehe* [Marriage].

All that I wanted, there and here, was: to show in an example how very much more beautiful and pure the—even then!—so much slandered “free love” was

than the—even today!—so vehemently defended institution of marriage, and how much more correct it is to separate than to remain together if one no longer loves.

*

And yet another book—to be sure from later and more mature years than the unnamed first productions—although dispensable from my work, as it occurs to me, does not necessarily need to be touched by the expressed warning: the “Stories Without Action”: *Die letzte Pflicht* [The Final Duty, 1893] and its conclusion: *Albert Schnells Untergang* [Albert Schnell’s Downfall, 1895]—“A Double Story,” as I later named the two together.

(One sees that I am seeking to rescue what is still rescuable.)

*

I no longer know when it was, but it must have been in those years—later such points in time never let themselves be established exactly—that the responsibility which I had taken on myself became conscious to me in all its seriousness—the tremendous responsibility of the printed word.

I recognized the task that I had set myself, if I wanted to give my life a meaning, a task whose fulfillment alone could make this my life into a happy life.

I set it for myself and gave my life its meaning.

I have fulfilled the task as good or bad as I was able, and I have been as happy as I could be.

Not that I would have believed in a duty of any kind, which had been pointed out to me by “fate” as “destiny”—I set it for myself. I entered into it freely with myself and it was up to me whether I wanted to keep it or throw it from me.

From now on nothing stood between me and my work.

I was alone with it and there was nothing that could intrude between me and this work: no judgment; no distraction; no success; no failure.

*

Man has only the one “task,” to *live*—that means: to be as happy as only possible. Everything else exists only in his imagination.

Like every other living being he preserves his life only in the struggle with his environment. To make this struggle of people among themselves as bloodless as only possible is the aim and goal of all knowledge and all culture.

“Civilized humanity”—how eons-distant we still are from you!

To whom would it be given to lead a life without meaning, a godlike one without the sufferings of struggles—but who is capable of it?

Who is capable of it today?

And yet it would be the final happiness-goal in freedom.

*

All those years, from 1888 on, my researches into the life of Max Stirner kept me on the move and working.

But only in 1897 did I decide, in the conviction now of no longer being allowed to hope for new and important finds and after the tiring preparatory work of a decade, to give a provisional end to my researches.

If it had been difficult to seek out and bring together the material, it was more difficult to give the sparse and fragmentary a readable form.

The biography appeared in 1898 in Berlin under the title: *Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk. Mit drei Abbildungen, mehreren Faksimilen und einem*

Anhang [Max Stirner: His Life and His Work, with Three Illustrations, Several Facsimiles, and an Appendix].

It's origin and growth are set forth exactly in every detail in the introduction: "Die Geschichte meiner Arbeit 1888–1897" [The History of my Work 1888–1897; see Mackay 1977, 5–24].

Since it did not come to the later planned great Stirner Complete Edition as a result of curious circumstances, at least the bibliographic data [of the biography] should be recorded here.

[In 1925 Mackay planned a 3-volume edition of Stirner to be published by Erich Reiss in Berlin, but Reiss went bankrupt in 1926. In 1927 the appearance of a "millionaire" patron against raised his hopes, but they too disappeared—along with the millionaire (mentioned below). See *Dear Tucker*, nos. 144 and 154.]

The second edition under the same title (only that in it four instead of three illustrations were included) and with the addition: "Second edition, revised and enlarged by a postscript: 'The Stirner researches of the years 1898–1909'" appeared in 1910.

Each of these two editions was printed in a thousand copies.

The unfortunately selected form of a postscript was allowed to fall in a new edition, by reworking the results since 1898 in it to a new unity. The third edition appeared in 1914 as a Private Edition in 325 copies, a beautiful quarto volume of 248 pages, named: "Third edition, privately printed, completely revised, provided with a name and subject index." I was allowed, as a special ornament, to add a facsimile of Stirner's article "Art and Religion," which first appeared in the *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842—until now a not sufficiently prized unique object [a facsimile of Stirner's manuscript]. This Private Edition is also long out of print.

A new, fourth edition of my biography of Max Stirner was unable to be realized in these times.

Also translators into foreign languages have conspicuously not been found up to now. [An English translation was announced by the Revisionist Press in New York in 1978, but the book never appeared.]

This new edition was besides not entitled to be called an enlarged, but only an “again revised.” Researches also from another side—with great care undertaken and carried out—have not been able to add anything new to the picture sketched by me, so that today even the last hope must be given up of being allowed to add to it features that would sharpen or even be able to change it. We must finally be content with what we—in spite of everything—have.

Probably never under more curious circumstances has a search for a forgotten life been attempted. Picture it: someone barely separated from us, still lingering among us those who pressed the hand of their contemporary, whose voice they heard, and already so thickly covered by the shadows of oblivion that the traces of his days are lost in it even to unrecognizability—a unique work, rich in surprises, overrich in disappointments—an unprecedentedly exciting work through years...

*

Nothing has been so slandered as my engagement for Max Stirner.

The rage of those in the guild broke out against me.

Because I did what they left undone.

Because I saw where they were blind.

Because I found and lifted up what they threw away.

For, what disgrace for the school philosophers: an outsider, a non-philosopher, finds a philosophical work that they themselves had disclaimed, overlooked, placed in the corner, and which then showed itself avowedly as one of the most important ever written!

Their rage left me unconcerned.

As always I did not answer them.

But here I would like to pose a question.

Only the one:

What would one know today of Max Stirner and his life without me?

The falsifiers also avoid this question.

So I will answer it here myself:

“Nothing!”

Naturally they were also immediately at work here.

Stirner was mentioned years ago somewhere once in a history of philosophy (not quite so nonsensical, as commonplace)—thus the author of that history is his real discoverer... And so forth...

Today “vigorous” plagiarists are taking part in parceling out my work in all directions, without finding it necessary any longer even to mention it, and have the impudence—shameless enough—to let themselves be called “biographers of Stirner.”

But my history of his life, substituted for by a few, not once correct lines, no longer finds a publisher...

Still, in 1927 I was able to replace the impossible foreword to Stirner’s *Der Einzige* in Reclam’s Universal-Bibliothek by my own. I place particular value on that concise summary.

[The 1972 Reclam edition does not have Mackay’s foreword, but has an afterword by the Marxist (!) Ahlrich Meyer. Mackay’s foreword is, however, included in the 1986 edition of the Verlag der Mackay-Gesellschaft.]

*

Contemporaneously with my biography of Stirner appeared, edited by me: *Max Stirners kleinere Schriften und Entgegnungen auf die Kritik seines Werkes: “Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum”. Aus den Jahren 1842–1847* [Max Stirner’s Lesser Writings and Replies to the Criticism of His Work: *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*. From the Years 1842–1847]. The first edition appeared in Berlin in

1898; the second, revised and enlarged by almost twice the amount, in 1914 in Treptow bei Berlin. It has likewise been out of print for years.

[A facsimile reprint of the 2nd edition appeared in 1976 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-HolzboogVerlag).]

To give the unique work of Stirner a form worthy of it suggested itself and was only a question of time. I gave it to it in my edition of 1911, called “Monumental-Ausgabe” [Memorial Edition]. The 980 copies have long since found their fanciers to the last one.

A second “Monumental-Ausgabe” in the same beautiful get-up was added: *Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung oder der Humanismus und Realismus* [1911; see also Stirner 1967].

One man had written a work. All the volumes of all the libraries of the world could not replace it, if it were lost.

Everything said before and after it seems rather superfluous in contrast to it.

A unique work and again today our property. [This is a pun on the title: The Unique One and His Property. When Benjamin R. Tucker published Stirner’s book in 1907 in the brilliant translation of Steven T. Byington, it was Tucker who gave it the title *The Ego and His Own*.]

*

I was always a passionate swimmer, and where there was water, there I have swum. Preferably in the lakes of Switzerland—the blue one of Geneva; the green one of Zurich.

But swimming never became or has been a sport for me.

Nevertheless I wrote the “Geschichte einer Leidenschaft”: *Der Schwimmer* [The story of a passion: *The Swimmer*] (with its dedication) [“Dedicated to my beloved art of swimming”].

It appeared first in 1901 and until today—in our age of sports!—has remained untranslated and long since out of print... [reprint 1982 (Berlin: Foerster Verlag); reprint 2002 (Berlin: Espero)].

Der Schwimmer is a work of art; was appreciated as such; and is intended as nothing else.

[The novel has been discussed by Edward Mornin (1976). It is historically important for its description of early swimming and especially diving competitions. See also the afterword to the English translation (Xlibris: 2001).]

The sport of swimming itself should have been genuinely happy to call such a book its own. So far as I know, it was not happy.

Moreover what an artistically beautiful film could be made of it! [In 1913 Mackay tried in vain to have a film made. See *Dear Tucker*, nos. 104 and 105.]

*

As superfluous as it may appear to still speak of an undertaking that today is so long past and forgotten that only a few will still remember it, my *Freunde und Gefährten* should not be passed over here.

Freunde und Gefährten. Meisterdichtungen auf einzelnen Blättern [Friends and Companions. Master Poems on Single Sheets], that was the idea that “was to put everyone in the position to create for himself his own anthology according to his own, free judgment.”

It was realized in 1901 [apparently a misprint; it was published by Schuster & Loeffler in Berlin in 1902] through the publication of—provisionally—a thousand poems on single sheets, which allowed their separation and rearrangement at will.

The undertaking, also exteriorly not turned out as I had imagined and wished, did not catch on and the publisher lost desire and courage. It threatened to collapse.

In spite of everything I was always so very much convinced of its practicality and usefulness that, eight years later, I took it on myself to carry it through in new ways.

But also this last attempt to put new life into the casualty failed and again—with my old urge to do everything myself—much work and time were spent in vain.

Thus it shared “the fate of almost all new ideas, a fate that,” as I said, “its discoverer may not complain about, but rather that he, as far as it concerns him, must accept as something unalterable.”

Today the two million sheets [= 2000 sets] are scattered to all the winds and only a few complete copies of the thousand master poems may yet have been kept together.

Remaining is the happily discovered name, which the guild of book dealers has chosen for its advertising.

Only a word more as a defense. That they were not all “master poems” (as I had to call them), which I collected in the first and last thousand, no one needs to tell me. It was not **my** anthology that I brought here. What was important in the first place here was: to bring to as many as possible as much as possible and therefore to let exceptions to an all too strict judgment prevail, where “the poetic value appears to be replaced by the long favor of wider circles.”

Not the selection, therefore, but rather the novelty of the idea is what even today I claim for myself.

*

Among my books were scattered all kinds of short and tangled stuff, the “Short Stories”: *Zwischen den Zielen* [Between the Goals], “originating between more extensive works, the goals of my life, and so called so as for once to avoid the worn-out names, such as novellas and tales, and then too the common titles seldom suitable for such diverse found and worked through material, as seldom correctly characterizing them.”

“Stories”: I also retained this subtitle for all that originated after the appearance of the first and out of print collection, with a catchword each time that characterized the content.

*

In 1909 I reacquired from my previous publisher the rights to my books, so as in this connection too to be quite free, and I first arranged a selection of my *Gedichte* [Poems, 1909], in which I put only what in my view could stand a strict artistic consideration, to then let follow it a first complete edition: *Gesammelte Werke* [Collected Works, 1911] in eight volumes, and besides them five separate editions of the books that might more justly lay claim to such.

[*Gesammelte Werke* contains:

- 1–2. Poems, including Mackay’s translations from English and American poems
3. *Kinder des Hochlands, Helene, Sturm*
4. *Moderne Stoffe, Die Menschen der Ehe*
5. *Die letzte Pflicht, Albert Schnells Untergang*
6. *Zwischen den Zielen*
7. *Der Schwimmer*
8. *Die Anarchisten*]

All these editions are out of print and except for two have been replaced by no new ones.

[The two were: *Die Anarchisten* and *Die letzte Pflicht und Albert Schnells Untergang* (from 1910 until World War II in Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek). But note that *Die Anarchisten* and *Der Schwimmer* were in *Werke in einem Band*.]

*

Should I, at the mention of this selection, really say a word about my poems?
What for? Who knows them? Who still reads “poems” at all today?
Metrical poetry is dead.
Today poems are only just “made”—verses, rhymed prose, more or less clever.
Or rhymeless prose pours out in “free rhythms” and poses as poetry.
Wherever it still lives, however, genuine poetry, timid and modest, it is neither understood nor felt.

The genuine poem: sound, scent, breath—the rare grace of never returning hours, unconsciously conceived and born, venturing from the mysterious depths of the soul into the light of day, an incomprehensible secret even for him, in whom it originated—where is it? Where is it today?

There are no longer a hundred people today in this land of poets, who are able to distinguish it from the made up. The new objectivity—splendid slogan of a splendid age, applied everywhere, only not there where it should be applied: in the knowledge of the social question—has murdered poetry.

In vain, O soul, do you speak to a soulless race!

Do poems at all originate for others?

The judgment removed, the critique withdrawn, they speak either to the related soul or they are empty words without sound and meaning for strangers...

Are poems written for others?

Is it not merely a dialogue between you and yourself?—you and nature?—you and eternity?

Between you and a dreamed being—a call of longing out into a mute and unknown distance?

What am I to say of my poems!

A small selection: *Zwanzig Gedichte* [Twenty Poems] appeared at the beginning of this year [1932] as the second printing of the Mackay-Gesellschaft.

*

The war years naturally forbade any publication, but did not prevent further work (and always new reworking) on the book that I view as by far the most important among my books.

In 1921 I completed this work of long years; the “Psychology of a Development”: *The Freedomseeker*. [The “Vorzugs-Ausgabe” appeared in 1920. Mackay’s “1921” here may simply be a typographical error.]

Naturally any attempt to find a publisher for *this* book would have been hopeless from the beginning. The sale of a small property in the Riesengebirge just sufficed to make possible the printing of two editions (altogether three thousand copies; a first “Vorzugs-Ausgabe” [Special Edition] and a second “Private Edition.” [The property Mackay sold was his Haus zur Freiheit (Freedom House) in Schreiberhau (Riley 1972, 176), a village and climatic health resort in the Prussian province of Silesia, situated in the valley of the Zacken in the Riesengebirge. Today, Szklarska Poreba, Poland, it is a winter sports center.]

Today, when for the first time since its publication I pick it up again and leaf through it, so as not to run the danger of repeating here what I said there, I would hardly know what I would have yet to add to it.

The last thing that I had to say was said.
But nothing was heard and understood.

Never has a book been more shamelessly passed over in silence than this book.
What a contrast to the time when I was young and *The Anarchists* appeared!

Then: uproar about the work and about me.
Now: silence. Only silence.

That the conservative and reactionary press passed over a book like this was only self-evident.

But that the whole so-called free-thinking, progressive, left-directed, yes, the total socialist press found not a single word to greet a book that in truth stood as far left as was only just possible, that was—well, let us say: characteristic of it.

That press which continuously talks of “freedom,” without having even the least idea what freedom really is and wants; which, in its lukewarmness and half-heartedness, its inconsequence and pettiness, its cowardice and hypocrisy, dares indeed to touch lightly on all kinds of improprieties in the state, but never ventures onto this root of all evil, would even now prefer to have lost a subscriber than to have mentioned my name.

Thus also this book of mine had to go its difficult way alone.

It has gone it and goes it.

*

Did I say my life has been poor in external events?

Well, *one* event entered into this life, so fantastically improbable that I myself would have been tempted to doubt its reality, if it had not manifested itself and indeed in a beautiful way.

A rich, a very rich man [Michael Davidowsky], Russian, living in Paris, interested in his youth in Stirner and my work on Stirner, presented himself, and gave the means to found a publishing house: the Stirner Verlag in Berlin-Halensee.

New and high plans were formed and as first, in 1928, an edition of my principal writings—as *Werke in einem Band* [Works in One Volume]—was undertaken and carried out. Everything appeared well and hopeful.

But it turned out otherwise. The rich man lost his desire and further allowances ceased, so that the second plan, that of a great Stirner Complete Edition, likewise in one volume, had to be dropped, and the Stirner Verlag saw itself condemned to the inactivity that still lies over it like death today.

Werke in einem Band—I will constantly regard it as the crowning of my life’s work and—in a certain sense—as its conclusion.

It did indeed, thanks to the self-sacrificing devotion and endless care of my co-editor [Leo Kasarnowski], as well as the munificence of his Parisian friend [Michael Davidowsky] (may he comfort himself with the ancient wisdom, that good deeds are their own reward and that he could have spent his money for worse goals), become the edition that it is—a faultless masterpiece of German book-craft.

[This volume served the Verlag der Mackay-Gesellschaft (Freiburg/Breisgau) for its separate reprints of four of the five works contained in it; it also served the Foerster Verlag (Berlin) for its reprint of *Der Schwimmer*. It was reissued in 1933 under the imprint: Gilde freiheitlicher Bücherfreunde. Mackay is generous with Kasarnowski here; in 1928 he wrote to Tucker, “Kas[arnowski] is an infamous scoundrel” (*Dear Tucker*, no. 173).]

*

A new work, the “Story of a Revenge”: *Staatsanwalt Sierlin*—as contemporaneous [i.e., 1928] publication of the Stirner Verlag—fell upon the very

fate of being left on the shelf, although it had deserved something better. [In 1926 it had been serialized in the *Vossische Zeitung*, a prominent Berlin paper.]

This, too, among my books cries out for filming; its effect, as I have been told, with correct treatment, would have to be just as uncanny as that of the book itself.

[Mackay wrote above of *Der Swimmer*, "What an artistically beautiful film could be made of it!"]

The temporally last of my books is the "Story of a Transformation": *The Innocent* [for a discussion of this book, see Kennedy 1993], which appeared last year as the first printing of the Mackay-Gesellschaft.

So much about my books.

*

Yet one thing more:

Yet another, a quite personal reason prompted me to write down one or another of these marginal notes.

Whoever knows how much mischief has already arisen by the fact that testamentary stipulations have been falsely indicated and misunderstood, will understand my concern, which lets me here at the end name those among my books which alone I wish to be reprinted.

In that I thereby give expression to my wish: those not named here and rejected by me are to know, under no circumstances (at least not within the frame of the so-called legal copyright), a republication, I believe I have assured myself in all directions and taken away every possibility from violations against a so clearly and publicly expressed last will.

Alone to be republished after my death (if the possibility for that is offered) are the following of my books:

Besides those contained in my *Werke in einem Band* (that is, the *Ausgewählte Gedichte*; the two Books of Freedom; the short stories *Zwischen den Zielen*; and *Der Schwimmer*), besides these only the separate poems of *Sturm* (under the limitation made in another place); further *Die Menschen der Ehe*; and perhaps also *Die letzte Pflicht* with its conclusion.

Obviously my biography of Stirner and his, arranged by me, *Kleinere Schriften und Entgegnungen*.

Finally, my new works: *Staatsanwalt Sierlin*; *Der Unschuldige*; and above all also this *Abrechnung*.

No poems, except those included in the selection of my *Werke in einem Band*, are to be brought out of their oblivion again, whereas the “little stories” can be enlarged through newly resulting ones expressly intended by me for publication.

[These appeared in *Die gedachte Welt: Ein Roman und drei Geschichten aus dem Nachlaß*, edited by Edward Mornin (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989).]

“Quite unimportant, these long-winded stipulations,” grumbles here a long annoyed reader.

Yes indeed, but—pardon!—important for *me*, and for that reason set down here.

*

I have spoken in detail about my work.

I might do it, because it needed a defense, a defense against public malice on all sides. And because it is the first and only time that I have taken the word in my own cause.

Since it was granted me, in the last hour, to still speak, I have said what was to

be said.

For finally my books are my children, for which I am responsible and whose fate must lie on my heart.

I rejoice in my work.

I know what I have done (even if others do not know).

I would not have known, what I would still have been able to add to it, now, when I have also written in its margins.

It may stand as it is.

I can do nothing further than trust it to time.

Time, which ultimately establishes all value: uncovers the false as such, by giving to oblivion what deserves only oblivion; but sets the genuine on the place it deserves and from which it was suppressed—time, which alone is just and incorruptible.

III

The Freedomseeker

The last page to my work—

Drained the last drop of blood...

Where did I find the strength for it?

From where the courage to end it?

Nothing came from another. Nothing not from me.

I forged it: blow on blow on blow,

While in the insanity outside

The insolent day shoved past.

What it also promised: bread and games,

I laughed at both, for—I created.

Nothing turned me from my goal:

Not hate, nor the call of love.

The word I gave in trust

I always kept. As often as I tired of work

And stopped, I always began anew—

Thus year by year, thus page by page.

And today when it is ended

And the final battle fought,

I do not say: Accomplished!

Just quietly to myself: Fulfilled!

(1920)

Individualist anarchism: thus is called, pleonastically, the weltanschauung that I—the one and only [Stirner], of course, always excepted—first represented in the German language.

(Dare the falsifiers also deny that? Hardly.)

I sketched it in the first of my two Books of Freedom: *The Anarchists*; elaborated it in the second: *The Freedomseeker*.

What there was to say has been said there.

Nothing needs to be added to it here and nothing repeated.

(These here are only scraps.)

If nevertheless something already said is to be repeated, then that lies in the nature of the thing and is to be excused.

Pleonastically, I said, for every anarchism is individualist.

If it is nevertheless so named, that is to sharply distinguish and separate it from the weltanschauung of those communists, who still believe they may call themselves anarchists, although they have long since and conclusively been refuted.

“Communist anarchism”—what absurdity in itself!

*

I have neither spoken publicly nor written propaganda articles in the papers for anarchism. A stop would soon have been put to the first; and for the second I lacked all talent. Also the “periodicals” [in English in the original] naturally would have unanimously closed themselves to me.

I have written two books for freedom. That is all. Can one call that fighting—writing books?

Certainly my life has been a fight.

But in the first place this fight is just my concern.

No devotion therefore; no self-sacrifice; and no—merit.

*

In the years 1895–1922 I attempted to bring about a greater understanding for our cause through the publication of nine pamphlets of “Propaganda of individualist anarchism in the German language,” whose contents were selected to be the most diverse possible.

These were without exception translations from foreign languages, chiefly English. [Four of them were translated by Mackay.] They appeared in 43,000 copies altogether and are all out of print.

How widely and deeply their effect went is difficult to survey and say.

[According to a Political Police report of 16 September 1899, they “met no approval in the circles of anarchists here” (i.e., in Berlin; Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv Pr. Br. Rep. 30 Bln. C 16369 Bl. 53–54).]

*

Today I can look back on almost fifty years of the history of anarchism in this land, which I also experienced.

What has been attained in these fifty years?

Indolence.

There are errors that are simply ineradicable.

Thoughtlessly and without reflection they are taken over by one generation from the other, and they lazily roll through the centuries.

And there are falsifications that are committed on and on, although they have long since been revealed as such and their authors put in the pillory.

The teaching of anarchism has been exposed to one such falsification from the very beginning up to today—a falsification that in its stubbornness and its purposefulness has no equal in history.

*

The sense of the word “anarchy” means a condition of lack of authority.

The condition of lack of authority means freedom.

A condition of freedom, however, means order.

In direct contrast to this sense, the meaning of the word anarchy has been falsified into: disorder, chaos.

Why? Because the defenders of the state, which asserts that it is the only condition of order and which does not admit an order in freedom, would otherwise have to admit to advocating disorder, chaos (which their state in reality is).

To be allowed to have something to say in a matter, one should—it seems—know at least something about it.

You cannot talk about the fine arts and thereby speak of Casanova, when you mean Canova, without arousing indulgent amusement [Giacomo Casanova (1725–1798), adventurer; Antonio Canova (1757–1822), sculptor].

But there is *one* field in which you need to know *nothing*, where you can be sure of never and nowhere making a fool of yourself with the most shocking nonsense that you give out.

It is anarchism and its teaching.

So it was then.

So it is still today.

When you speak with someone about the question of anarchism, you can notice with his first word whether he has thought about it or not.

Almost as a rule, even before he has listened, he will hurl in opposition, gaily and impudently, one of those commonplaces, which you so well enough know, and, driven into a corner, hide himself in the course of the discussion behind it or some other, since he himself is unable to produce any counter-argument.

They lie along the way, those commonplaces against anarchism. He needs only to pick them up so as to operate with them.

Every discussion is naturally completely aimless. He always brings new ones.

*

At that time, a half century ago, if there was talk of anarchism, it mostly happened when an attempt on a crowned head was exercised.

Then there was a stormy to-do in the newspaper forest, and the “anarchists,” who, as was well known, wanted the forceful overthrow of everything existing, without knowing how to put anything else in its place, were once again the Beelzebubs, who must be eradicated root and branch.

[Mackay makes a pun here by hyphenating Beelze-Buben (Buben = rascals). N.B., there is a misprint in the original text: “Stil” (style) should be “Stiel” (branch).]

If freedom could be conquered by clearing out of the way by force those who oppose it and suppress it—I would be the last person not to join in the cry here: “Away with them!”

For the aggressor takes every responsibility for his person on himself and bears all the consequences.

He who himself murders, only with the difference that he does not stain his own hands with blood, but rather allows the murder—in a legal way and continually—how may he wonder and complain if the weapons are once directed against him?

In addition, this clearing-out-of-the-way of individual personalities usually misses its goal. Even the intentional “to shake up the masses.”

The masses remain as stupid and as indifferent as they were; and in the empty place immediately enters another from the inexhaustible arsenal of those ready at any time for every suppression.

Thus the matter is not so simple, unfortunately.

*

In reality no anarchist has ever committed a murderous attack.

For the simple reason that he holds a tactic of force to be useless and harmful, as long as the paths of enlightenment through word and writing are still available.

Besides, a tactic is never a component of a weltanschauung, but rather is quite variously selected and exercised by the followers of such—this way or that, according to the circumstances.

No anarchists therefore.

They only called themselves so, who earlier committed those attempts, falsely called themselves so.

It was communists, revolutionary communists, who regrettably defended again and again a tactic that from their standpoint of those aggressed against was explainable, to be sure, but who brought the cause of freedom not a step further, but rather, on the contrary, have always thrown it backward anew and infinitely harmed it.

Proof: those attempts were greeted as not unwelcome precisely by those who howled the loudest, because they gave them the opportunity for always new persecutions and sharper measures against every liberally focused movement and direction.

Doubtless there have also been attempts that, if not precisely ordered from above, were not seen as unwelcome there.

And still today attempts of individuals on the lives of individuals are committed, but there are no longer attempts “with anarchist backgrounds,” but rather purely political ones (which leave us cold, since they do not concern us).

*

How fateful this confusion of anarchism with communism, in its teaching as well as in its tactics, for our work of enlightenment was, and how very much it again and again made this work difficult—is not to be spoken about here.

The fact that it is here not a question of a tactic of force, of dynamite and dagger, but rather of a scientifically grounded and analyzed weltanschauung—to this, in the long run, they could no longer shut their eyes completely and stubbornly.

There were arguments for and against. The knowledge of the essence of egoism, transmitted by the rediscovery and dissemination of a fundamental work [Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*], broke ground and one had to reluctantly admit that one saw himself placed here before questions of tremendous significance, which demanded an answer, questions that up to then one had gone out of the way of as far as possible—above all the one question of the true relationship between the individual and the state.

How far my book *The Anarchists* has contributed here to a clarification may remain undecided.

That other naturally had a far deeper effect, which at the beginning of all social perception—and with it in truth at the beginning of a new epoch of humanity—stands in its proud solitude.

Gradually and unwillingly enough, it had to be admitted, therefore, that there were indeed anarchists who throw bombs, but also anarchists who throw no bombs.

With that one calmed himself for the present. Of a testing and critique of the viewpoint of the latter, the peaceful, the scientific, the philosophical anarchists, there was no talk.

*

I know in fact from all those years only one among our opponents who honestly and intelligently occupied himself with the question of anarchism, individualist anarchism. He was a member of the S.J. [Sozialistische Jugend (Socialist Youth)].

A simpleton [Moritz von Egidy (1847–1898); see *Schriften* 1894, 95] threw with booming voice the catch-phrase “noble anarchists” into the debate, and the whole conscienceless yellow press enthusiastically pounced upon the downright idiotic phrase, blissful henceforth to be relieved from every thought and every occupation with the disreputable subject through its application and at the same time to have satisfied justice.

[Magnus Hirschfeld (1986, 46) also used this term for Mackay in 1922.]

Recently they speak of an “individual anarchism.” I do not know what that is supposed to mean.

*

What, therefore, has been attained in these fifty years?

What has changed in these fifty years in the judgment of the public regarding anarchism?

The truth here too.

I earlier believed it in the interest of our cause to give every questioner an account and took honest pains to reply to objections.

Only when I had to see that for the vast majority there was no concern to be freed of their doubts, but rather only of retaining a small very private view of anarchism (gratis, without having to share the cost of their own thinking), only then did I give up teaching the unteachable.

All the more gladly, since it is quite far from me, to want to be an educator.

I am no teacher; I am no itinerant speaker.

I can recall hardly more than six cases in which rational questions were posed to me, which showed that the questioners had reflected on what they were asking about.

And I do not believe that today in Germany there are more than a dozen people who have made their own the teaching of anarchism in its last consequences.

In America, too, the movement of anarchism—if one may still talk about such—has died away since its leading representative had to lay down the weapon of his periodical from his hand.

[Benjamin R. Tucker ceased publishing *Liberty* after his bookshop and publication offices were destroyed by fire on 10 January 1908.]

(Of other countries I am unable to report.)

Numerically, therefore, our cause appears today more hopeless than ever.

*

There is hardly any talk more of anarchism today.

The state theory of social democracy has forfeited its advantage.

Communism has begun its triumphal march and unceasingly seeks to penetrate here from the East, while in frightful alarm and dreadful fear the Western powers seek to defend themselves from it.

With what success and for how long yet—who can say?

The appreciation of the teaching of anarchism goes hand in hand with the appreciation of personal freedom of each and every one.

The worst is that today every feeling for this freedom seems to have been lost.

Read the newspapers, those representatives of public opinion: at the most shameless invasion of the government into private life no word of outrage and opposition!—at the most impudent infringement of power, not a single one of revolt!

It has become so self-evident no longer to speak of personal freedom—it just no longer exists...

And yet!

*

How does it come about, I ask another time, that the number of anarchists—not those who so name themselves, there are many of them, but rather of those who are such—is still numerically so distressfully small?

How does it come about that views that should really be those of every halfway reasonable person (and in truth also are) still count so few expressed adherents?

Why do people not openly acknowledge a teaching that must indeed appear to them the only natural and reasonable one?

Why do they not speak, not act?

For a life in quiet, in peace, in the full possession of the product of one's work, in the unhindered exchange of that product, in the harmony of interests, and thus in peace with one's neighbors—in a word, to live in freedom must indeed be the wish of every person.

Why do they remain rejecting or mute?

Because a chain clasps them, which they believe they cannot break—the chain of delusion.

Because a hand presses on their mouth, which they do not dare shake off—the hand of the state.

Because the ones may not.

And the others will not.

*

Those who may not—they are those who in some way, direct or indirect, are dependent on the state.

A huge group, if one considers that the state at once has a monopoly on a number of occupational branches (among them the most important, such as railway and post office); and that it places the entire remainder more or less under its control.

It controls education; science (and scientists); art; literature; the press (censorship); commerce, at least that with other countries; banks—in short, about the whole of public life—and persecutes in jealous hate the few private enterprises that still seek to hold out against it.

Thus it creates for itself a monstrous army of (civil) servants, who down to their last thoughts have become its property and whose slightest criticism is already punished as insubordination by dismissal. (“Disciplinary procedure” it calls this. Without discipline—how could it exist!)

“Science and its teaching are free.” Yes, but naturally only in so far as they are not directed against the state.

The very occupation with anarchism as a scientific doctrine is seen “from above” as unwelcome and makes the one concerned suspect.

But what value can the teaching of scholars have, however important, however clever they are, if those men do not tell the last truth, yes, are not allowed to touch on it, without placing in jeopardy their existence and that of their families?

Many of them know or at least suspect this last truth, but must keep it within themselves with clenched teeth and in helpless rage, a rage that then only too often, instead of against the common enemy, is turned against those who say what they themselves are not allowed to say.

So far, those who are not allowed.

*

Now to the others. Those who will not.

Here it is first the downright insane fear of words.

Since the word “anarchy” has fallen into such discredit, one does not venture to approach it, omits every examination, every criticism, shoves it aside and believes to be done with it, while continuing to falsify its meaning into its opposite.

Where are the people whose ability to think enables them to think a thought logically to its end? For that’s what the matter is here.

The state counts on the monstrous cowardice of most people not to irritate it, not to incur its displeasure. It knows that its subordinates do not dare the least words against it.

Cowardice, nothing but cowardice is it, which hinders those who could, if they would, from drawing the last consequences and representing their results.

Thus it is then that today hardly a word is dared against it—against the state as such, I mean.

Deeply ensnared in the prejudices of the past; cramped into what was taken over from their fathers; embedded into that oh so soft cushion of habit, they tug at their chains, but do not break them.

If we take all this into consideration, it is no longer to be wondered at that the number of anarchists, who may rightly call themselves so, until today has still remained so extraordinarily and deplorably small.

Who and what remains?

A few people; a few books.

A few people, courageous enough and willing to live their own lives; who have no fear of a word (and all that falsely goes under this word): take it; inspect it; interpret it correctly.

And then are in its spell—the spell of understanding.

A few books that are tolerated in sneering pity as harmless and laid aside with the invective “utopian” as the wild fancies of eccentric brains.

Books that nevertheless are the only thing that makes a time like ours excusable.

Besides, I am not attached to words.

I am even now prepared to let this one fall.

But first give me another, a better.

And please see to it that the same thing does not happen to it!

If the state has, therefore, nothing to fear from us for the present, then it should be afraid of itself all the more: of the mutilating sickness within itself, which is undermining its existence, which will fell it one day and which can and will only end with its death.

*

A few marginal notes to the questions that move humanity the deepest today
(the deepest? the loudest!).

To this today—the residue of a mad time.

(Scraps...)

This today:

A generation without hope; a youth without longing.

Poor youth, saturated with politics as if with a loathsome disease.

The first of all questions today?

The war, of course, which in truth never ended.

For it is still the first topic of the day—sport naturally excepted—it: the war.

We have experienced that it was possible with a single word—I do not need to say with which [no doubt he means “Vaterland”]—to drive whole peoples to madness and death.

We shall experience it again.

It may be that in place of the one, somewhat worn-out (and seen through by many today) word we need some others.

Go on. There are enough there.

The net is woven out of words, out of lying and hypocritical ones, in which the double-tongued advocates of the state lure and capture the stupid peoples.

There is today, it seems, a whole number of people, of men and even more of women, who are against the war and they call themselves by all kinds of beautiful names. “But—bet?—if it ‘starts up’ again, they will all be for it,” a friend recently proposed to me.

The Social Democrats, without whom the last one would perhaps not have broken out at all, naturally again as the first.

Then the childlike pacifists, who imagine that there will be no more war because they want no more war.

And finally—all the others.

People have remained the same as they were.

Only a few circumstances have changed, and the milieu in which we live today has become different.

Basically the two have not changed, neither the one nor the other.

But if *that* experience has not changed people—what is there left that would be able to shake them up?

One or another may have foreseen the war, that became a world war, no one even suspected its course, its end, and its consequences.

That has not made them more cautious.

Without consideration and thoughtless, they who have the power behind them are going into each new one as soon as it is a matter of defending their prerogatives.

It is true—today there are infinitely many *speeches* against the war—in such as the League of Nations, in courts of arbitration, in commissions... and everywhere...

All claptrap!

All mischievous claptrap!

But there really are people who believe in the effect of this claptrap—people of a sheerly incomprehensible naiveté.

If they would instead calculate what this claptrap costs them, what monstrous sums must be earned and offered by them, if they once saw the matter from this side—perhaps one or another of them would gain insight.

As if they who are now in power and want a new war would reflect even for an instant before shoving aside with a kick *everything* that is being discussed ‘down there’ [i.e., in Geneva, in the League of Nations] as entirely unimportant!

It will perhaps be no longer *quite* so easy to incite the people to a new war, but impossible—why should it be impossible?

If certain interest groups within the state think the time has come and want to lead into a jolly new war (and—by the way—if they know or at least feel that they have the power behind them), they are never embarrassed for grounds for such. What are diplomats for?

‘Right’ is of course always on their side.

Let them talk on, they think. We—act!

Afterwards they quarrel over who ‘started’ it.

There they are actively talking. But here they are just as actively arming.

They will continue arming until it is time to ‘strike.’

Then the cannons will thunder again, the grenades will howl again, those torn to shreds will scream again. And the gentlemen of the long tables will be speechless and dispersed.

The state stands in intimate contact with the church, which recognizes and defends it as a ‘divinely chosen’ institution, so that it is in turn recognized and protected; which also does not attack and reject it as such when the two live in enmity with one another.

Preachers always have for me something of the comical when they bless the believers and curse the unbelievers. But something horrible when they—the proclaimers of a Christian religion—defend wars and even summon to them.

I will without another thought defend myself against everyone who attacks me and fight for my life.

But to run into the body of a person, who has done not the least thing to me, a bayonet which has been pressed into my hand against my will—for that I would be incapable.

If that is cowardice, then I am a coward.

Apropos, cowardice!

Let us be honest: most people go to war precisely from cowardice.

Because they do not have the courage to say: we do not want to take part in this horror.

Hand on your heart: Is it not so?

So long as there are states, there will be war.

But since states will long exist, there will long be wars, wars, which, according to experience, will exceed themselves in atrocity, cruelty, barbarity, and cunning in the means used, if probably no longer in duration.

The fight, therefore, should not be against the consequence: the war, but rather against the cause: the state.

Not ‘war to war!’ but ‘war to the state!’ must be the cry.

*

Slogans of our days: Uniforms and weapons prohibited.

Whoever enjoys dressing in colorful fabrics, let him do so, so long as he does not require of the others that they costume themselves likewise.

And whoever is pleased to run around with pistols and hand grenades in his belt, yes, to haul a small machine gun behind him through the street, let him thus be permitted this childlike joy, so long as he does not direct his weapons on those who think otherwise.

But for what other reason is the game played, than to become bloody earnest tomorrow!

For always standing behind are:

Greed for power and consciousness of power.

I quite certainly have no weakness for the military. On the contrary! But—unmusical as I am—for military music.

The ballot: the favor of the majority has probably never been courted with means that were dirtier and more mendacious.

Majority: while I write this, outside in the streets the people are howling and raging, and beating one another's head in, because each wants power alone to use force against the others.

The so-called majority, for in truth it is always only a small minority who have the power in their hands and use it ('govern').

Just as an individual with a revolver in the hand can hold in check a number of unarmed people, with a machine gun a whole row, and with gas bombs today already large cities, so can a relatively small minority seize the government of a country, if it is in possession of 'armed force.'

By far the most people are only courageous if they feel the majority behind them. But how courageous they are then all at once!

To be able to count on a minority strengthens the backbone considerably.

But to stand alone and to remain standing without any covering for one's back—hm!...

*

Between 'right' and 'left' swing the scales, the war-cry changes.

Forces whose names sound so diverse, which so furiously show such enmity toward one another and yet stand together so brotherly when it comes to making laws to suppress freedom further and further.

We, the anarchists, stand to the side and also see this phase of history pass by us—carried by the wish alone that it may as soon as possible play itself out to an end.

We can wish no party the victory: to whichever it may fall for the time being, freedom will be assassinated by the one as by the other party.

No day without always new murders!... an always new mutual laceration—
everywhere!

Is it the prelude to a new general massacre, this time in one's own land?

Is 'civil war' already whispering through the stirred-up alley?

*

Seldom more passionately and—more blindly has power been fought for than
in these days in this land

Seldom has the state so employed its last reserves as today.

A reaction is brewing that threatens with prison and death everyone who still
has an opinion opposite to it and dares to express it.

God preserve us! Death and prison! Why not directly breaking on the wheel
and quartering!

Can and will its force last? Will it succeed in carrying out its insane threats?

Why should it not succeed? For a while.

Then it is the turn of another force, and what it carries on its shield, we poor folk do not know!

*

The question poses itself, the so justified question, of ‘when?’
When will our desperate wishes be granted a hearing?
When will we enter into the promised land of freedom?

When? Yes, when! Whoever is condemned to live in this time may despair whether ever such a time of freedom will come.

It appears further away than ever.

Only, that its victory one day is certain, may still always be said.

For there is only one of two things: either this victory or complete downfall.

One will object: if in fifty years the understanding of the social condition has made such small progress—why then fight further?

If the state proves itself as invincible and instead of being weakened, becomes only stronger and always stronger—why then still hope for an improvement?

If in fifty years no front has yet been built against it, to resist the enemy—then when will it be built?

Is not every resistance to such an almighty opponent hopeless?

By degrees here too.

*

For first yet a little discussion with my so tenderly loved old friend.

Do you still live, beast?

The enemy was recognized and branded as such: the state.

But the declaration of war against it has not yet been made.

The state is still sovereign in its overpowering majority; freedom is still powerless with its handful of people who defend it.

If there is indeed the fight between the individual and the state, this last great fight of history is only in its very beginning.

We must despair, if we do not see at the same time with what rushing speed events are happening today: how one force overthrows another overnight, to be itself overthrown tomorrow; and how, whoever thinks himself at the helm, is already replaced tomorrow and forever forgotten.

The state, that is those who are in power.

Today these, tomorrow those—whoever just has the force in his hands.

(But—damn it all!—what is that to me?)

In insane fear everyone today is seeking, more than before, his refuge and salvation in the state, which no longer knows how to help itself; which thinks it preserves itself if it piles up laws upon laws—laws given today, repealed tomorrow; laws that no halfway reasonable person concerns himself with following; laws in whose sanctity even the dumbest of the dumb no longer believes.

Yet they press to the manger of the state, in the fear of only getting enough if they are fed from above.

Naturally not a single person is satisfied with it.

But that obviously does not matter. They want it anyway, if only in another form more comfortable to them, such a one as more strictly and, as they believe, better represents their interests.

The hate against the state is monstrous today.

But unfortunately it is only hate against *the* state, which they do not want—the state of the others; not hate against that which they want—*their* state.

Although no time seems so suitable to open the eyes of people to the true nature of the state as precisely ours, they remain struck with blindness regarding it.

“We live today in the purest anarchy!” is the complaint from all sides.

Oh no, unfortunately we do not live in anarchy (but rather under archy).

Reformers: those who do not address themselves to the state as such, but only against certain conditions in it.

Revolutionaries: those who do not wish to change it, but to set it aside.

Why am I an opponent of the state?

—Because I want to live in freedom;

because I wish no longer to let the fruit of my labor be stolen from me;

because I want to do and not do as I please, so long as I disturb no other in his doing and not doing;

because I want to unite myself without hindrance with those whose interests stand with mine in some kind of relationship;

in a word: because I want to be free!

The intellectually independent, who has made himself free from words, does not let himself be intimidated, but rather asks himself: Am I aggressive or are the others?

And arrives at perceptions such as these:

It is no crime to refuse military service. It is a crime, on the other hand, to force me to murder other people who have done not the least thing to me.

It is no crime to refuse to pay taxes. It is a crime, on the other hand, to demand and collect taxes from me forcefully.

And so forth—ad infinitum.

*

When?

Basically a quite unanswerable question.

In a time such as ours, when no one knows what the next day will bring—who can stand up and prophesy the future?

If the condition of equal freedom, anarchy, means the height of civilization, then we are still in children's shoes.

Certain is only—the truth here, too, as bitter as it may be—not suddenly, not tomorrow, not the day after tomorrow will the enemy be pressed back and subdued, but only in the hard work of centuries.

Leaps such as that from servitude into freedom are not made by history.

The dissolution of the state into society cannot and will not be from today to tomorrow, but rather only gradually carried out: through the tearing down of the former and the building up of the latter, quietly, almost unnoticed and bloodlessly.

We are experiencing a forceful overthrow of one system by another every day and everywhere.

A forceful overthrow of the state itself is hopeless and should therefore not be undertaken at all.

When people are far enough along and no longer wish it, they will know how to find other, more considered and more efficient means to rid themselves of it, by which they do not place themselves in danger.

Not on the path of forceful overthrow, therefore, but rather only on that of the gradual dissolution of the state into the social organism of society may freedom be attained.

If all those whom I have met in my earlier life, when I still went among people, and from whose lips trickled the eternal phrases: “It is still too early...”; “The people are not yet mature...”; “People must first change themselves...”; “The state is an evil, but a necessary one...”; and again and again the most stupid: “I belong to no direction...; I am against every ism”; as well as the infamous: “There have always been rich and poor”—if all those, who assured me at the same time that they otherwise entirely agreed with me in their final goal, “but for the present...”—if all of them had resolved, tomorrow, no, that very day, to make a beginning in their own life and their position as concerns force and authority, then today there would already be a number of decided persons there, whom the state would, to be sure, still not have to fear, but with which it would have to seriously reckon one day, above all because the life and example of those decided persons would have found an echo and imitation everywhere.

For this reason the declaration of war against the state has still not taken place.

But the fight against it, the secret, underground one has begun—the fight nourished daily by most terrible embitterment.

It will be infinitely long and infinitely difficult, this fight, if it once breaks out into the open, and no one can say when, how, and where it will end.

The declaration of war will one day take place in the form of refusal of obedience, but then it can be like an avalanche, which drags the state with it.

It may be that it will begin in the days when the state has run through its last (and most horrible) form in communism.

It may be that it first returns to the old one of absolutism before it feels the force under its feet disappear and falls apart in final battles and spasms.

In the Muscovite East communism has already gained domination and is digging its own grave by trying to drag the horrified West in with it.

“Private life has ceased among us in Russia,” someone tells me, who comes from there.

Horrible, but—consequent.
And long since no novelty.

*

Everything should be private, and hardly anything is anymore.

A lesson for me:

At the entrance to the Reading Room of the British Museum in London lay a book. In the belief that it was a catalog, I opened it and immediately heard a voice near me: “It’s private, Sir!” [In English in the original.]

I still hear it—after decades.

A small example of how little respect prevails today for private life at home.

Can there be a greater impudence than to visit a stranger unannounced? To demand that he should be at home ready for you precisely then, when it suits **you**? It does not matter if he is at work or is sick or otherwise hindered—he has to be there for you.

That’s all the same to you. You surprise him and are moreover outraged if you are refused.

Respect for freedom, of the person, of one’s neighbors’ own lives; of their work and their property (not what they have taken from others) [Mackay puns here: “vor ihrer Arbeit und ihrem Eigentum (nicht ihrem Fremdtum)”—the anarchist alone has it.

*

The whole short-sightedness of the adversaries of freedom shows itself so clearly in their judgment of passive resistance.

Instead of noticing what is happening around us and recognizing how more and more, how always more successfully passive resistance is applied today, they continue to ridicule it as harmless.

Yet capitalism fears nothing more for its privileges than it and its children: its two strong sons, strike and boycott; and its clever daughter, sabotage.

We who are striving for a peaceful solution of the social question will oppose force—however it calls itself—with nothing other than an unshakable will to respect our freedom as well as the freedom of our fellow human beings, and we will not give up from our hand the invincible weapon of passivity, so long as force has not also strangled the last word from our lips.

The louder it rattles its weapons, the more helpless it feels; the more vehemently it threatens with words, the poorer it is in spirit; and the more it puffs itself up, the sooner it bursts.

Unfortunately, the state does not become better by the fact that so many good people serve it in their complete, blind devotion, like believers their god.

Earlier people believed they could not do without princes. Now that they have begun to chase them out, they see that they have lost nothing in them, but have only gained.

Today people still believe that they cannot do without the state. One day they will see that they can also do without it.

There are beginnings everywhere that people are setting to work to emancipate themselves consciously and thoughtfully from the state, its guardianship, and its 'social welfare.'

Sparks in our deep night: the first strivings of desperate people, who are coming together and setting to work to help themselves in one way or another,

and who thereby consciously and expressly refuse any intrusion of the state, even in the form of help, because it knows that everything is lost again as soon as the bureaucracy is allowed to have a say in its attempts.

Self-help: a small example of self-help occurs to me. In earlier years the Berlin streetcar conductors wore numbers on their caps. On one and the same day all tore those numbers off. There was no more talk of this matter.

One sees that it works.

If one only will.

The state is tottering and will fall.

The individual, however, lives and will continue to live.

For the individual alone is immortal and finds himself again and again anew under the necessity of society.

*

A few incidental remarks, at random just as they are written.

“To understand everything means to forgive everything.” Go on! Understand what you will; you have nothing to forgive.

You should leave me in peace. Do you understand *that*?

One of the greatest and thereby rarest gifts of history for people is impartiality of judgment.

We have all lost our impartiality and we must all win it back again, if we wish to gain an unbiased judgment about us and our surroundings.

The individual may never ever be made responsible for actions that he himself has not committed, but only for his own and their consequences.

It is up to those who are caught in errors and prejudices to lay aside their prejudices and free themselves from their errors.

Certainly: everything must be as it is. But everything also stands under the eternal law of change.

It is all too optimistic to suppose that the time of the inquisition is past.
Think of the third degree! Of the extorted confessions of secret interrogations!
Of the tortures in underground rooms!
Of everything that from there never becomes known, not even today.
Of the chain of horror that stretches around the whole earth—from Sing Sing over Guiana to the Russian Cheka and to us!

[Mackay refers to a prison in New York State, Devil's Island in French Guiana, and the political police in the USSR (1917–22).]

The days of slavery are past?
Today it is called wage slavery.
Language finds at times damned appropriate designations!

It has often been said that all misery comes about because one part of humanity does not know how the other lives.

Stupid claptrap!
The ones know now quite precisely how the others live, and just as precisely that they live at the cost of those others.

The whole misery does not come because the ones steal from the others, but rather because the others let themselves be stolen from.

“Enlightenment of the masses?”
There is no enlightenment of the masses.
The masses never let themselves be enlightened.

There are only individuals who enlighten themselves.

Work: people have gone completely mad.

Work fever has seized them. They would most prefer to work twenty-five hours a day.

Live? There is no time left to live.

It has been said that two hours of work in freedom is sufficient to maintain oneself. Now, even if it becomes three or four...

Many simply cannot leave it (for example, me).

Workers: the most important question for them appears to be, to have to work only eight hours.

Then the social question is resolved for them and they are satisfied.

(But not their exploiters. They want more, always more.)

For me, I praise freedom instead, which allows me to lead in it an industrious or a lazy existence.

Freedom allows both (even if the latter only in a nevertheless somewhat limited measure).

*

Back to the 'when':

Not before all questions of daily life have been tested and judged from the standpoint of personal freedom;

not before the teaching of the equal freedom of all has become the basis of our doing and acting;

not before the understanding of our true interests has been comprehended as a firm possession of the finally awakened brain;

and not before this change in the brain is expressed everywhere in public as in private life—

can it hardly become different.

But then in the final analysis it is not only a question of how it is governed “up there,” but also of what in the meantime is happening “down here.”

*

The most hopeless and dumbest thing is, of course, to believe and to hope that those who are in possession of their privileges, which make themselves masters and the others their slaves, will one fine day give up this monopoly of their own accord.

Give it up voluntarily? Say from Christian love of one’s neighbors? They do not think about it. Why indeed should they?

They are egoists.

You be egoists too! Learn from them!

If they were able to do what they wished, the great autocrats of the world: the last trace of beauty would be poisoned; the last breath of freedom would be smothered; and the last hope of better times would have to be buried.

The goal:

Material independence, gained through the full earnings of one’s work—
guarantee for every independence from people and things, and therefore the basis of the freedom of every individual.

Similarly also expressed thus:

The individual, awakened to his full independence on the basis of material independence through work that has become free.

A currency free of interest as the first and most important thing (“money question”).

Then: free access to unsettled and unused land (“land question”).

*

When?

When we have got rid of it:

the whole accursed drivel of ethics and morals;

the whole impudent pack of new saviors, of new redeemers, of utopians of all kinds...

When we are finally rid of:

all those repulsive people who are ceaselessly occupied with forcing their views onto others, acting as their schoolmasters, their guardians, to improve, to protect, to govern...

When the individual no longer recognizes and tolerates in the things of his own life any kind of authority.

When—but all this is for the present only pious wishes.

When it finally begins to totter, the life-inimical creation of the state, and the peoples save themselves from the sinking wreck on the firm land of freedom—perhaps then the question of “when” has found its answer.

*

The point in time, the exact point, they want to know.

I do not know it.

Perhaps tomorrow.

Perhaps in a hundred years.

Perhaps in ten thousand years.

Perhaps never—I do not know!

Why do you ask me?

Ask no more. Give yourself the answer by beginning with yourself.

Ask yourself. For it depends on *you*.

*

After the question of “when” could certainly be answered only unsatisfactorily for many, there arises the other and last:

“And in the meantime—what to do?”

The time of action has not yet come.

All right, what is therefore to happen in the meanwhile?

We do not need to act at all.

We need simply no longer to take part and the state will see itself condemned to helplessness.

(But we take part.

Naturally we take part.

If only because we must be a party to it everywhere.)

*

In the meantime?

A few general principles first (repetitions, long since and often said, but still not grasped and therefore excusable), a few only of the most irrefutable, of the incontestable.

To consider.

To make an impression. Best, to learn by heart.

If they are then really unforgettably hammered in, building up on them is easier.

The first and ironclad principle of all true knowledge, the first and supreme:
There is only *one* right—the right of *force*!

Second, and hardly less important:

The social question is a *social* question and not a political one.

Force is in the right so long as it is in possession of power.

It is not a matter of changing people (who in their basic drives always remain the same), but rather the circumstances that influence, educate, model, shape, and form the people.

All people, all the unequal people, have the same rights (nota bene: if they take them for themselves!)

There is no crime against the aggressor. The state is always the aggressor.
There is no crime against the state.

Only whoever condemns the application of aggressive force in each and every case has the right to complain about it in single cases.

The social question cannot be solved by the state, which has created it and creates it, that is, by means of force from above.

It can only be solved in freedom, the free action and counteraction of economic forces, that is, from below.

Important is only one thing, it depends on only this one thing: that work be in a position to assure its full compensation—that it become free!

The social question is in its deepest basis a question of money—a question of interest.

Abolish interest and it solves itself.

Do not always oppose, attack, rule, order...

Let things go their own way!

These few principles, and as last one more yet, this, which cannot be repeated often enough nor urgently enough:

The social question is not a political question.

*

So—now it is my turn to pose questions.

I direct them to those who pretend to be the intellectual representatives of their nation; who constantly and everywhere put in a word if there is talk of the progress of mankind; and who therefore cannot evade them here.

I ask.

My questions are simple, clear, and brief.

There are questions that each one has already asked himself, that each has already had to answer for himself, if he is not vegetating, blind, and deaf

Answer! I ask you all:

—you, who say such clever things about wanting to “lever forward” the world, and do not dare to storm the barriers that keep it in its course...

—you, who constantly whimper of love of mankind, while people all around are lacerating themselves in raw hatred...

—you, who eternally speak fine-sounding phrases about the divine in mankind, which “will one day raise us up to a higher existence” and who give the poor hope for heaven, because the earth, which bears them has long since already become unbearable to them...

—you, who down there on the bank of the blue lake [i.e., League of Nations in Geneva] are so sweetly blowing the peace horn, while here the skies are darkening under the dense smoke of factories, in which by day and night always new instruments of murder are being manufactured...

—all of you, who want to work together on the progress of mankind and believe that you are working together...

I ask you all! Answer!

Answer! I insist on it.

If you do not do it, I will accuse you of lukewarmness, of evasion, of cowardice.

Answer: how do you stand regarding the principles just proposed? And how to the following questions?

Is there another right than that of force? And which?

What does the state depend on, if not on force?

Does not the “common good” consist of the good of single individuals, and is the good of the individual not therefore the basic condition for the good of the whole?

From where does the so-called “unemployment compensation” come?

How does it come about that the ones can live without working, whereas the others cannot live although they work?

Is interest justified? And why?

To whom does unused land belong? Are taxes robbery or not?

What do you understand by freedom?

Answer!

From your answers will be shown who you truly are and where you stand.

You will have to admit that these are questions of daily life (“life questions”), which I have posed, questions therefore that each of you must have confronted already.

Answer therefore. But do not answer evasively in “philosophical” treatises, but briefly, clearly, and honestly, and, if possible, with a simple yes or no.

Answer!

Just have for once—the courage for truth!

Oh, I know you will keep silent this time too.

I know, none of you will answer, freely and honestly answer.

You will continue to splash in the shallow paddling-pool of your childish phrases and what hinders you from answering my question, I will tell you three times in your face—it is your cowardice alone!—your cowardice!—your cowardice!

“He writes as if he were thirty,” a reader says here, shaking his head, “and is already about sixty...”

Correct! I am younger than many, than downright many of you.

*

It is not easy to live among people whose whole life is a unique proof that they do not have the least idea of what freedom means and is.

And yet, you too must do it: live among them and come to terms with them.

The people of our day, amply made stupid through politics and sport, are not particularly intelligent when it is a question of the recognition of their own interests.

If their prattle in and of itself is already bad enough, how completely unbearable does it not become through the self-satisfaction with which they everywhere bring forth their platitudes and thus carry out the role that they have loaded on themselves and which, in their absurd life, they feel themselves obliged to play!

I admit that today hours come in which nausea threatens to choke me, nausea over the people around me, hours in which I believe I can no longer breathe because I am too close to them.

That sounds exaggerated, and yet it is not.

To whom has it not likewise happened, who sought to make himself free and everywhere ran up against their resistance?

Your life has fallen in this time and you must live among them.

How can you do it?

Uniquely, by applying the results of your understanding in daily intercourse with them for ever and ever—by living *as if you were living in freedom!*

They will accuse you of being unsocial.

Smile and reply:

Who is more social?

He who bewails and bemoans the social misery, but does not dare touch on its true reasons, so as not to come too close to the “sacred” privileges?

Or he who uncovers the roots from which this misery springs and demands their extermination so as to make room for a condition of equal freedom and with it the common well-being?

Who thinks and acts more socially?

*

Every man must know for himself how he would like and wants to live, and himself seek and find what is necessary for his happiness.

With advice one cannot be sparing and cautious enough.

I give none.

But if someone asks me and insists on an answer, I would answer somewhat like this:

Talk less and think more.

Do not go in for politics of any kind.

Go out of the state's way, as many miles wide as only possible, and wherever possible.

Seek to withdraw yourself according to possibility from the impudent attacks of force.

Go in for less sport and seek rather the record in conquering prejudices.

View the life around you as if you were sitting in a theater (actors play there just as here, only who the better ones are is still in question).

Prefer free love relationships to marriage.

Educate your children yourself (with the help of private teachers, rejecting those of the state).

Concern yourself for your own affairs and less for those of your neighbors.

No, concern yourself not at all for the affairs of strangers uninvited and, in case of necessity, only with all necessary caution.

Give the example of an owned and—happier life.

Read and distribute rational books (for example, mine).

Read less and think more!

*

What are they to do? (In the meantime...)

They constantly ask what they are to do.

And only need to do one thing: nothing!

They should no longer obey.

(But precisely that seems to them above all to be troublesome.)

What are they to do? (Again and again the question.)

They only need to be egoists, like their oppressors!

Fear the word egoism just as little as the other: anarchism.

They believe they are able to humble you with it, in the sublimity of their neighborly love, their welfare and the protection which they want to stretch over you, the hypocrites, a protection which you could procure so much cheaper and surely if you protected yourselves, and which is unnecessary if the presumed protector creates no more criminals.

To those who so much resist being egoists:

All people are egoists, and the so-called altruists are the greatest, even if not the most honest and most sensible.

The true egoist does not build his happiness on the unhappiness of others.

He knows that the happiness of his fellow men is his happiness, their misfortune his misfortune, their freedom his freedom, and that the one without the other is unthinkable.

*

And now only a few words more (the last) on the inexhaustible chapter of freedom.

So much and repeatedly have I spoken of it in my books.

A couple therefore (so long as there is still room in the margin).

I have said what freedom is.

If I look around me to see who besides me has done the like in our language, I find myself alone.

Freedom—why is this word still always the greatest, the strongest, the most unavoidable and—the sweetest of our language [German]?

Our language? All languages!

The greater your love for your freedom is—not to a distant ideal, but to a necessity of life—all the more difficult will it naturally be for you to live in a time such as ours in which even the last threatens to disappear.

But your love of it will again and again help you to get over all difficulties.

He does not love freedom, who does not hate its suppresser.

The rulers forget only too easily that the greater the suppression of freedom is on the one side, all the stronger on the other becomes the wish and will for that freedom.

Hope for nothing from them, your worst enemies, whatever they may promise you.

If they could, they would reintroduce slavery, and there is no cruelty in which they will not surpass the darkest times of history, if it is a matter of protecting and maintaining their privileges.

Hope for everything only from yourselves.
Await nothing from those who govern you.

The state is unproductive.
It can only give what it has previously taken.

Nothing is more splendid than the person who breaks his chains and strikes his oppressor in the face with them.

Thoughts of freedom—more dangerous than whole explosive charges of dynamite.

I have known people who would not admit for anything in the world that they are anarchists and who, according to their whole way of life, were: in their respect for the freedom of others.

And I know people who have made the scientific theory of anarchism their own in a remarkable way and who nevertheless tread under foot the simplest principles of freedom in their pure aggressiveness; for whom there is only their own freedom, and who are individualists, but not anarchists.

Proletarian consciousness;
Bourgeois pride;
Nobility's arrogance—one as foolish as the other!

What do you all know of it, of freedom?
As good as nothing.
You must first learn its simplest principles.

There is no absolute freedom.

There is only one equal freedom of all.

The equal freedom of all cuts into your freedom as soon as you come into contact with others—it is no longer absolute (as it is if you are alone).

You cannot be alone.

You need others.

Take care therefore that they also need you. Or you are done for.

What do we await, still hope for, after we have rejected that which alone can still rescue us?

Thoughtless and lazy, you who let yourself be taken in tow and pulled through your life—one day freedom will teach and force you to stand on your own feet.

“What, freedom forces?”

Yes indeed, it will put you in the necessity of representing your affairs yourself, instead of entrusting them to others.

Only in one single question, the sexual, has in the last decades a change for the better taken place. One thinks more freely and with less prejudice about the relationship of the sexes to one another.

The condition of freedom: anarchy—the age of maturity of a humanity awakened from musty dreams.

Do not forget: what is being played out here outside before our eyes is nothing but the sad reflection of dark days—scurrying ghosts, who—as wild and threatening as they are behaving are nothing but incorporeal shadows.

They are unable to press in to you, nor to confuse and stupefy you, if you do not wish it—if you guard your clear sense and your courageous heart and stand by yourself, if you do not bend nor despair, not even in days like these...

There is still no light anywhere.

But it is dawning.

It is dawning.

*

Now—I fear—I have nevertheless repeated myself in many things.

But all the same: can truths like these be said often enough—to a time that has no ears to hear, or will not hear?

Will it continue further?

Have we not reached the edge of the abyss, which already in the next hours can and will swallow us?

Can the misery become still more monstrous, the helplessness yet more general, the confusion in the brains even greater?

What are we expecting? What are we still hoping for?

If this is only the beginning of the end:

Only the beginning to ever new wars, which will then no longer be wars, but rather only a beastly slaughter of hecatombs of human bodies, a suffocating of everything living on the earth under poisonous gases...

If you shrink back from the only path that still signals escape...

If even this twilight is only a will-o'-the-wisp, so as to ruin us further and further...

If the small troop more and more falls to pieces and finally no one is any longer here...

If the hardly lit light is again and again put out under the impure breath of the persecutors and in the storms of the time...

If nothing is any longer able to rouse you from the superficiality of your days...

And if nothing, but nothing, can bring you, even for only two minutes, to reflect on the true causes of your misery...

If all this is only the beginning of the end:
Good—then live on thus: in your misery, your dirt, your—state!
Your state: its “order,” its “peace,” its “protection”—your state, which you place above everything, so high above your own happiness!

But do not complain.
For you yourself are to blame!

Now, while I write this here, there suddenly falls over me a fatigue as strong as I have only seldom felt it, and I lay my pen down.

Enough! Enough!

All this for what?
They do not want all this.
Not these final investigations; not these inexorable consequences; not these incorruptible truths.

Nothing of all this!
I said it then, and they did not want to hear it.
I say it again today, and they will again laugh at it.
Enough! Enough!

One day everything will cease.
One day all will be at an end.
Even murder.

Then: when our disgraced earth is only a stinking morass of blood and tears.

Of human blood and human tears.

*

IV

Whoever the truth spake did not his happiness make...

...and now to the bitter end and with it once more briefly back to myself.
For I may and should indeed speak of myself here.

I have with difficulty decided to speak at all of this last decade.
But the last that must be said has not yet been said.
Where shall I say it, if not here?

The same state that views the creation of currency, of money, as its privilege alone, this same state one day devalues that money and thereby cheats a part of the people out of everything that they had worked for and saved—a way of acting whose filthiness has not been surpassed even by itself and which was at the same time a smooth trick, which cannot be concocted more impudently and shamelessly.

My independence, too, was over.

[In 1911 Mackay invested 30,000 marks in a life annuity from Nordstern (see *Dear Tucker*, nos. 66 and 99). Its value was wiped out by the inflation of 1922–23; this ended with the introduction of the Rentenmark in November 1923, which was replaced by the Reichsmark in 1924.]

*

From then on every day was a struggle for the next.

In the beginning of this last decade there was still the hope to overcome by one thing or another that was undertaken—and what was *not* undertaken!

Then however followed one disappointment on the heel of the other, one failure the other.

I was too old to build a new existence on new ground.

For a while the self-publishing of my books kept me above water.

If until then it had often seemed risky to have put the remainder of my funds into it, it was now my temporary rescue.

But new publishers for my books, in the meanwhile for the great part out of print, would and could not be found, whatever was tried.

The attempt to bring about the great three-part Stirner Edition, which was to include Stirner's masterpiece, his lesser writings and replies, and my biography, and which, as a consequence of the closing of the Stirner Verlag, even after trying to make it possible through subscriptions, did not come about, also had to finally be given up after extensive and expensive preparations—the prelude to what was to come.

A third of the absolutely necessary subscriptions came together. The remaining two thirds fell short.

An experience already made many times was confirmed anew: Interested persons were there, but they were too few.

Again it was this lacking two thirds on which this so hopeful attempt also failed.

I began to write anew, but only to convince myself how impossible it was for me to bend my work to other laws than those I gave it and so to suit a stranger's taste.

Among all the difficulty of this last decade these attempts, which naturally brought me again into touch with "journalism" (and showed me that nothing had changed for the better, not even in their manners), were probably the most difficult. My new works "did not fit into the frame" of today's newspapers and periodicals. I had to give up navigating in this way of naked necessity.

[On 30 June 1930, Mackay wrote to Tucker: "I wrote a novel but the papers refuse it" (*Dear Tucker*, no. 182), and again on 12 February 1931: "I have written three novels and a lot of other stuff, to gain my living, and have sold as good as nothing" (*Dear Tucker*, no. 183). By "novels" he probably meant novellas.]

Besides, what can one in fairness still expect from an old man, who has said what he had to say?

*

I certainly do not belong to those people who immediately give up. On the contrary: I only give up a matter if I am convinced of its complete hopelessness.

If, however, everything, but everything, that is planned, tried, hoped for, fails?!

I already had to decide to sell whatever I still possessed.

First the whole of my work on Max Stirner: the extensive archive with its files, documents, letters (and the few, because so extremely rare, signatures of Stirner); and my, inseparable from this archive, library of individualist anarchism, a collection of uniquely unrivaled completeness in this special area—all brought together in the loving work of decades.

Years long I sought in vain to find interested buyers for it. As incredible as it sounds—nowhere, but nowhere, not in Europe and not in America, not in Japan and not in Jerusalem was there an institute or a private person who knew how to value the worth of what was offered. After the last efforts to secure the whole for Berlin, where Stirner lived, had fallen through, I had finally to decide to give it there, where in my opinion it belonged the least: to the Marx Engels Institute in Moscow (and, what does not need to be kept secret here, at a quite disproportionately low price). [On 13 May 1925, Mackay agreed to sell his collection to the Marx Engels Institute for \$4000 (Weber 1976, 25).]

The proceeds of the most beautiful and the only part of my private library coming into question later went for the printing of another work. [On 4 January 1921 Mackay wrote to Benjamin Tucker: “But I gave a part of my library to an auction. Perhaps I can make it possible to fulfill my wish to see printed your work once more in a definite German form, by what I get out of the auction” (*Dear Tucker*, no. 118). This was Tucker’s pamphlet “*State Socialism and Anarchism*.”]

PROPAGANDA DES INDIVIDUALISTISCHEN
ANARCHISMUS IN DEUTSCHER SPRACHE
BEGRÜNDET UND GELEITET VON JOHN HENRY MACKAY

STAATSSOZIALISMUS UND ANARCHISMUS

INWIEWEIT SIE ÜBEREINSTIMMEN UND
WORIN SIE SICH UNTERSCHIEDEN

VON

BENJ. R. TUCKER

DEUTSCH VON GEORGE SCHUMM

NEUE AUSGABE
MIT EINEM NACHWORT

7.—16. TAUSEND

PREIS 2 MARK

TREPTOW BEI BERLIN
BERNHARD ZACK'S VERLAG

1922

Thus it went, until nothing more was left that appeared worth selling.

There appeared to be no possibility more for existence.

But finally: one does need a little bit to live on.

A carefree old age? A lie in this time!

An undignified struggle for every next day without the prospect for improvement—sounds truer.

*

There was only one way left, and there could be no more hesitation to walk it.

There were still friends of my work. There had to be—here and there.

Why should there not be people for whom it would be a pleasure to give where they had been given (and who could do it)?

But where were they, these my unknown friends? And how to reach them?

Last year, 1931, the Mackay Society was founded on purely anarchist principles.

[Mackay wrote to Benjamin Tucker on 26 March 1931: "I founded a Mackay Society with the purpose to distribute my books (as far, as they can still be had). Member becomes, who gives one Mark (that is 25 American cents) monthly. The members get the books at cheaper rates. It has begun to work and it works very, very slowly. But it works. Steady labour may lead to the result, that I have monthly a little, a small income, instead, as now, nothing" (*Dear Tucker*, no. 184).]

But not about that here.

[Nor does Mackay mention the Hundert Sagittas, which he founded in 1924, also to gain money (Dobe 1987, 86).]

Whoever wants information on its means and goals can easily find it.

At another time all this would probably not have been possible and also not been necessary.

Is that a comfort in the present?

It showed that a last hope was not quite deceptive.

Friends were found, above all such as I was not aware of.

Not exactly many. But some. Several.

[Among the members of the Mackay Society was Hermann Hesse, who also became an honor member on 1 May 1932 when the Ehrenmitgliedschaft [honor membership] of the Mackay Society was instituted; members made a one-time payment of 100 marks. See Harry Preetz to Hermann Hesse, 20 August 1931 and 14 May 1932 (Deutsche Literaturarchiv/Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach am Neckar).]

As resolved, I name no names here, also not now when it falls the heaviest to me to leave them unnamed—and especially one.

[Mackay probably means the American who financed this book, his *Summing Up*. See Mackay to Tucker, September 1932 (*Der Tucker*, no. 192). His identity remains unknown.]

But there is none among the bearers of those names whom I have not thanked again and again in my heart, that it was still granted me to live this last year and to give my work the conclusion of a summing up in these pages.

How small the person who does not admire; how unfree the person who cannot return thanks.

*

In me there is also not a trace of bitterness.

I do not grumble. I do not complain.

I only assert: how this and that truly was, which has been presented so entirely differently and therefore appears so twisted and false.

Nothing is more ridiculous than to want to accuse one's fate.

To master it—that is what matters.

We all do what we must.

We all leave what we can.

Each strives constantly, uniquely, and alone for his *own* happiness (and then all the more if he believes to find it “in others”).

Each is as happy as he can be. I, too, have striven for my happiness and have found it in my work.

For in the end there is only one true happiness for a man: to tell the truth. And only one true satisfaction: to have told it.

*

I am old and sick, I do not know what I am to live on tomorrow. But even if I were young again and could foresee how everything was to come—I would again and again do what I have done. For I *had* to do it. And to be at peace and at one with myself, I had to do it. Once again: there is nothing meritorious in it.

Certainly: it is not much that I have done.

But it is indeed something all the same.

I have been the first intermediary between the astonishing intellect [Stirner], who toppled a world of delusion, and many, who have him to thank for their inner liberation.

I have convinced this and that person of the senselessness of forceful action through assassination attempts and thus kept him from making the useless sacrifice of his person.

If the words of their letters do not lie, I have become something like a friend to one and another (and not just a few) through the views represented in my books.

*

“Whoever the truth spake did not his happiness make.”

What people commonly call their happiness: honor and respect; recognition and success; prosperity and a peaceful old age—all that was not granted me.

If you want to have success, you must begin quite differently.

Somewhat thus—according to the following recipe:

Cook together a broth of great and “noble” words, by which your readers and listeners need to think as little as possible.

Complain of misery (which “unfortunately is just there and unfortunately will always be there”) and thereby squeeze a tear in a guileless eye.

Emphasize your sincerity and your love of peace (which, on the outbreak of a new war, does not need to hinder you from glorifying the war and insulting the other side).

Make your kowtow before the crowd (who will be very sensitive to it).

Address yourself above all to the youth—they are always to be enticed with words (even the ones of today who are cheeky and yet at the same time believers in authority).

And above all, above all: do not forget the one word [“Vaterland”]! Under its protection you can do what you will and with it attain pretty much everything.

If you have thus mixed together your broth, you may be convinced that they will fall over it and greedily swallow it down, and that it will go well for you—sometime in heaven and now on earth.

If, on the contrary, you tell the truth, then you will fare—well, like me!

*

It was never loud around me.

But I always stood in life anyway.

Now I stand aside and there is silence around me.

I want to go in this silence.

The loud day belongs to them. For people like me there is no longer a place in it.

But do they want it then, this place?

Just as in the course of life so many things that one attached importance and value to become more and more indifferent, at its end they become so entirely.

What other wish may old age still have, than the one: to be allowed to go to sleep without having to wake up?

I stretch out my arms to the great night, which so soon now will draw me to itself.

I have lived my life and done my work—I can go.

*

Why do I still hesitate?

Because one thing still worries me and holds me back: the fate of my books!

It seems to me that I may not leave them without knowing that they are in good and true hands.

They are lost if no one takes them in.

In a position like mine, one places no conditions.

No millionaire is needful this time.

A relatively small sum would suffice to acquire all rights to almost all the writings named in these pages by their titles.

And they cannot just suddenly become so worthless that even from a purely business viewpoint the question of their acquisition for a small amount would not be considered.

It may seem curious to many that I say all this in conclusion here.

But once again: where else *can* I say it?

The fates of books are unfathomable.

How, if this here, this “summing up,” played into hands that wanted to reverse the fate of mine and could do it, and opened up to take them in?

How would I be allowed to oppose him?

In times like these where everything is unusual and therefore so many things inexplicable and excusable?

From the series of my unknown friends must he come—the helper in the last hour.

Let him not hesitate. Let him contact the secretariat of my Society, through which he will get every information.

Where is he?

END

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