



*egotism*

Ardent Press  
2013



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This book continues telling the story of egoism, a mostly neglected tendency in anarchist thought, one that challenges anarchism as merely a historical story of old men with beautiful ideas and beautiful, noble failures

Egoism and individualist anarchism is certainly not about losing. For those who pay attention, it tells stories about winning, defined in individual terms by those who lived life fully, and who were defined by their fight against the existing order—fights not against abstractions, or Big Ideas, but to claim their own authentic lives.

Inspired by Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, egoists assert that the goal is not to compose a single better world (for everyone) but to resist the machinations of society, to resist how everything that we know and believe has been structured into a conformed, denatured shadow of what we could be.

Individualist anarchists argue that anarchism is not about creating a utopia as commonly understood, but about allowing for many possibilities. This has meant that they see anarchism in the actions that people make in their lives rather than in participation in the political bodies and formations that shape society. Egoists have robbed banks, practiced free love, and in their own eyes have won everything except those things worth nothing: history, politics, and social acceptance.

*If Egoism were as narrow in meaning as egoistic, of course the question would have to be differently answered. But egotism bears the same relation to Egoism as the term selfishness, used with purpose in the derogatory syllable, bears to my newly coined*

*term, selfishness; hence we will set it down that some constructive use for the term altruistic is not of necessity excluded from Egoistic philosophy. But let it be observed that claims made for Altruism, based upon an ignorant or capricious limitation of the meaning of Egoism, and a glorification of the doctrine of devotion to others, intended to produce a habit of self-surrender, are held in our mode of thought to be pernicious, and attributed, in conclusions from our analysis, to defective observations and reasoning, and to the subtle workings of selfishness.*







**part one**



# Entries on Egoism

*from* The Anarchist Encyclopedia

*...Without being a catechism or a gospel, this work will be a unique and complete collection, a sure and impartial guide, as well as a valuable index, that those who wish to instruct themselves and gather exact information can fruitfully and loyally consult in all circumstances.*

S. Faure

## **EGOISM** by L. Wastiaux

*from ego, I;  
the suffix ism designates the tendency*

The tendency to consider everything in relation to oneself. Current opinion: vice of one who relates everything to himself, due to an imperfection of the “heart” and the intelligence. It is opposed to altruism, sacrifice, selflessness, all virtues “hearts” in the right place(see Altruism.)

Each of us only has one brain and uses it as best he can to discover a rule for his conduct. Whatever this rule may be, it is evident that it has its origin in the thinking subject: there is no man outside himself. The patriot defends the country he believes his own; the exploiter, the status quo from which he profits; the individualist intends to preserve his little self, quarrels among States not being “his affair”; the artist feels “something” that brings him to express himself ... they all act out of a need to act, to endure: out of egoism. However, the place publicly assigned to egoism shows a great imprudence, or an unpardonable cynicism. We want to be fooled, even consciously; on the village square, it is absolutely necessary for the charlatan to say that he has no other goal than to relieve poor humanity; no one is fooled, and yet, skipping over this formality of hypocrisy would come

at a great cost. The tremendous progress of modern science has barely touched the prostrate mobs; in the interested wait for their salvation, they allow themselves to be relieved of all right to exist. It is therefore not a question of partisans or adversaries of egoism; altruism is nothing but the disguise worn by the will to live, the instinct for self-preservation, to appear acceptable in a society held together by hypocrisy: man, who is a wolf for man, always finds it advantageous to play shepherd. So many people profit from the exploitation of their “noble feelings” and those of their fellows that it seems sacrilegious to cast them into doubt; and, since dupes generally prefer their innocent ignorance to the hassle of struggle, the rule of words seems far from its end. The worst of it is that heredity and adaptation to the environment seem to have embedded certain metaphysical notions so deeply into the human being that it is common to see educated and intelligent people making great efforts to rehabilitate morality, only because the alternative seems to them so horrible. And if those that profit from altruism have forged a conception of the world destined to reinforce their position, their victims have been equally conscientious, and, to avert their downfall, have manufactured moralities and theologies by the dozens, each rivaling the other in harassing measures and subtleties. This imbroglio, this Chinese box puzzle capable of making the job of being a “thinker” so disgusting, made Nietzsche say: “First of all we hang the moralists!”

Yet the reality is too clear for charlatanism to make it abdicate its rights. We have to retrace the history of philosophy to give an idea of these millenarian struggles. Ancient Greece had Aristippus as its protagonist of pleasure; his theories, enlarged and modified, were brilliantly expounded by Epicurus (432-270 BCE) (*La morale d'Epicure*, (Alcan), J.-M. Guyau.) The vigor of Epicurus' thought confounds us with admiration, and it is not without melancholy that we measure the twenty-three centuries that separate us from him, when we see how few, even in our days, are those who have profited from his comforting wisdom. His system was mainly attacked by the Stoics,

for virtue had no place in it; if he did what we by convention call “good”, it was because he wanted to; if he was sober, it was to conserve his health, and also to be more free, having fewer needs. Even his adversaries were compelled to admire him, and took him up many times as an example: we can see that not all egoists are of the caliber of La Bruyère’s—he makes his a boor to render him despicable: “... Juice and sauces drip from his chin and beard; he licks his teeth, and continues to eat!” (*Characters*)

Erasmus, Montaigne, and Pascal all considered the morality of happiness—egoism, epicureanism—as the only one that could be opposed to the Christian morality of “abnegation”. La Rochefoucauld (1613-1683) recognized (with some regret, however) that egoism is everything: “Virtues are lost in interest as rivers are lost in the sea” (*Maxims*). With great effort, Gassendi reconstructed the system of Epicurus; Spinoza tried to bring together the two opposed theories, but soon enough, thanks to Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Adam Smith, the egoist theory returned to a place of honor. This resurrection, thanks to Helvétius above all, was greatly influential in the French Revolution. Closer to us, it is once again egoism—personal interest—that, with Bentham, Stuart Mill, and Spencer, is considered by English philosophy to be the sole lever that moves the human. Even though socialism, syndicalism, and anarchism are far from expressing themselves with the logic and clarity one might wish for, too often taking on the nebulous terminology of Christian metaphysics, they have no other foundation than individual or collective egoism.

To live is the primary drive of the human being, the first and last motive of all its vital manifestations. To deny egoism is to deny life. There are no altruists; the word “altruism” is a synonym of egoism, and not its antonym.

John Henry Mackay

As an aside, let us note the line of demarcation—if there is a line—between anarcho-communists and individualist anarchists. The

latter do not have faith in the future (as the former do) to “inspire” each and everyone to an egoism in line with the general interest. J.-M. Guyau tries to reconcile individual and society: “Life can only be maintained on condition of spreading itself out,” he says. “There is a certain generosity which is inseparable from existence, and without which we die.” Need for generosity ... egoist altruism (*A Sketch of a Morality Without Obligation or Sanction*; Alcan).

Helped along by science, philosophy would have had an easy time opening eyes, if we did not prefer images to reality. We know that this unchangeability of stupidity provoked violent reactions, such as that of Max Stirner (1806-1856), and that of Nietzsche (1844-1900).

How was one able so to transform these instincts that man thought valuable that which was directed against his self? When he sacrificed his self to another self. Oh the psychological wretchedness and mendaciousness that has hitherto laid down the law in the church and in church-infected philosophy!

What task will I take up in this book? It will also be to “improve” humanity, but in another, opposed sense: I want to deliver it from morality, and above all moralists—from having had in its conscience the most dangerous ignorance ... Recovery of human egoism!

*The Will to Power*

A crusade to recover egoism? Yes, it is urgent; only Epicurean therapy will rid us of contemporary incoherence and hypocrisy. The most advanced milieus are infested with Christianity; self-sacrifice, that species of egoism accidentally useful to others, remains the virtue par excellence; we forget that “duty” is relative to the aim that one sets for oneself, and that, renouncing the aim, one frees oneself at once of all obligation. I make propaganda because the misery and stupidity around me weigh on, menace, disfigure my life; I do not drink alcohol... because it destroys intelligence! Material pleasures for some, “refinement” for others; to each his own pleasure...

To lead the troublemakers to share one's ambitions, to lead them to resolutions in line with one's designs: this is called "making propaganda". Does the crowd love the dependence that saves it from responsibility? The anarchist loves freedom, to the point where, despite the repugnancy of so doing, he often tries to incite others to a liberatory effort; he makes allies of his victims! Egoism? Altruism?—"First of all we hang the moralists!"

To destroy the hypocrisy that cements it,—to show the interested motives behind every action—maybe that is to irreparably dis-aggregate society. But so what? Whatever Le Dantec says, this global Malthusianism is better than "badly designed" societies. After having destroyed the logical value of metaphysical notions—God, Right, Law, etc.—simply by explaining them, this intellectual—Fear of the unknown? Unconscious vertigo?—this scholar justifies a "necessary hypocrisy" for the maintenance of society, with all its consequences. (*L'Egoïsme*, Flammarion). But why go on if the evil is without remedy?

Nothing is less certain than that cynicism—egoism without a mask—will destroy society. It can barely spread there, only by a slow process, and who knows if society will not adapt in the long run. Life has time; its forms are innumerable and unforeseeable: let it accomplish its destinies by itself... As for us, let us concern ourselves with our own; the "Future" will not thereby lose anything; the living enjoying their life—is that not a magnificent object lesson for future generations?

Translator: Alejandro de Acosta

## **EGOISM** by Marestan

Self-love. That is the etymological definition. Self-love is not a reproachable feeling, but a necessary one. It is expressed in caring for our survival, the search for what is likely to make us happy and help us avoid pain, without, however, jeopardizing the right and ability of others to behave in the same way, to seek the same advantages.



Without a minimum of care for our own person, the struggle for existence would lose its *raison d'être*, associations would be devoid of purpose, and life itself would become contemptible. Viewed in this way, self-love—the will to live and to be happy among the happy—is profitable both to the individual and society, without damaging the latter.

But it is no longer that way when the concern for preserving our life, and to provide sensual pleasures for ourselves, grows to such a point that it renders us indifferent to the sufferings and sorrows that it can cause around us. Far from promoting harmony between humans, such a deformation is highly destructive of mutual trust and solidarity. It often leads back to painful isolation or the death of the individual to whom all evils come.

This demonstrates once more that the exaggeration of a quality can result in a defect. Rendered excessive, self-love can engender vanity; thrift becomes avarice; goodness mutates into weakness; prudence into cowardice; calm into coldness. However, even though in each of these cases, language provides us with two clear words, one to designate the quality, the other to designate the corresponding defect, we should note that is not the case for what now concerns us.

Is this because the Christian religion, preaching self-sacrifice, rendered the I despicable even in its most legitimate aspirations? Let us set aside the rarely used egotism, meaning almost the same thing as egoism. There is no synthetic word to designate positively that which, in self-love, represents a set of useful qualities, unopposed to rational morality, to wit: pride, desire to please, exaltation of the personality, the taste for independence, the refined cultivation of one's own qualities, combativeness in defense of one's rights.

The word egoism, in contemporary usage, is only employed in a pejorative sense, that is to say, to designate the set of defects that result from the exaggeration of the preceding characteristics. It means: the search for personal satisfactions without concern for the consequences to another. And, if it ceases to be available to designate

this unpraiseworthy state of mind, we will have to invent another to replace it.

This insufficiency of language is the cause of dangerous confusions. When one praises egoism as opposed to Christian resignation, people are justifiably scandalized because of the particular significance that this term is accorded. Others, persuaded that a portion of considered egoism is a rational thing, have come to make of it an exclusive system; without becoming aware of the limited meaning of words, they pass through the boundary that separates noble self-love from its shadow, or its caricature (anti-social egoism), and pursue something which fosters the law of the jungle as the means of union among men.

If the word egoism is to remain the only one in our vocabulary to express at once something excellent and something less excellent, or even detestable, it will be necessary to distinguish between reasonable and inhuman egoism, between that which goes well with altruism—that search for personal happiness in the happiness of all—and that which wages war against it, at the very least so egoism does not use altruism as a seductive mask.

Translator: Alejandro de Acosta

## **EGOISM** by Odin

This word simply designates what relates to the I, the self. Egoism proceeds from the instinct for preservation. It is no more a vice than it is a virtue. It is a fact. Like gravity!

Egoism is necessary to the smooth functioning of the individual as well as his physical organs.

The exclusively pejorative sense that we give to this word is evidence enough of the degree of social hypocrisy. Conventions are based on such lies that this natural feeling is hypocritically repudiated as a

vice. And yet, egoism, in itself, is neither good nor bad. It. Simply. Is.

Egoism is qualified by atavism, temperament, the environment and education of individuals. It produces violence in one person, greed in another, and in yet another, love.

For example: In sight of Jean, Pierre, and Jacques, Paul is carried away by a wave! Immediately, Jean flees this dangerous place and seeks shelter; Pierre, whose clothing Paul had tried to hang on to, violently pushes him into the abyss so as not to be dragged in with him. At the same time, Jacques, unconcerned about the danger to himself, throws himself into the waves, fighting against their violence and brought Paul back to life.

All three have committed an egoist act.

These acts are different because each individual has a different sensibility. The sensibility of Jacques rendered his egoism healthy for Paul—that is undeniable; but just like Jean and Pierre, he was fleeing from suffering, his own suffering, reflexively echoing Paul's suffering!

Let us therefore cultivate our sensibility; let us educate it so that our egoism is more agreeable and beneficial to others. In this way we will mutually multiply the sum of our joys. But let us have the cynical honesty of confessing our egoism.

The antonym of egoism is altruism and this word does not mean anything at all.

Translator: Alejandro de Acosta

# The Philosophy of Egoism

James L. Walker

## I

We seek understanding of facts for guidance in action, for avoidance of mistake and suffering, and even for resignation to the inevitable. This statement may cover the chief aims of mankind in intellectual discussion, ignoring now that which is merely a scholastic exercise. I am not in favor of argument in the style of the debating tarnished by a practice of which easily generates an evil habit, and there are, at least as yet, too many occasion in real life on which every person who loves to tell the truth and expose falsehood must consider time and circumstance lest he impale himself upon implacable prejudices. Consequently if duplicity have its uses there need be no fear that it will not be cultivated without concerted efforts thereto among those who are seeking intellectual light.

I have placed resignation last, though it may be first in importance for some individuals. I take it that the life forces are strong enough in most of my readers to exude in promptings to action which shall move things, in the liberal sympathy which would communicate to others any discoverable means to reach conditions of greater harmony.

Is it not a fact that there is a considerable amount of well wishing and at the same time and intricate series of reciprocal injuries practiced by mankind, such as in not discoverable in any other species on earth? Then, may we ask, what are the causes of evils in society, can they be generalized, and what is the nature or principle of an efficient remedy? If now the words *laissez faire* occur to the reader he will easily remember that all animals except man practice according to that principle. Do we hear of fanaticism among them, of fighting within the species except in defense of their persons and property or on a matter of rivalry

between the males? But what do we read in the history of mankind except woes, wars, persecutions and catastrophes begging description, and all related in some way to the determination of mankind to interfere with each others' actions, thoughts and feelings for the purpose of making people thing better and behave better as conceived?

The theological Liberal is never tired of affirming that the greatest cruelties have been perpetrated by bigots action sincerely for religious right as they understood it; yet among the theological Liberals may be found prohibitionists and taxationists manifesting a holy horror of a man or woman who simply wants to be let alone while he or she lets others alone, and who refuses to join in any scheme or coercion. They insist that he cannot enjoy such liberty without detriment to society, and their ire rises on thinking that he is insensible to a moral principle, as they view the matter. They are bigots unknowing.

But are there such people as I have alluded to, who practice the rule *laissez faire*? Certainly there are. (These words are French and mean "Let them do," or "Let other people alone as far as you can.") Properly understood and carried out in political science, as by Proudhon, a rational system of Anarchy is evolved from the motto. Anarchy in its strict and proper philosophical sense means "no tyranny,"—the regulation of business altogether by voluntary and mutual contract.

With some readers the perception of these relations as regards religious belief and political institutions and this comparison of human intolerance with the better habit of other species, to mind their own business, will have suggested the fundamental thought to which I am coming. We are digging now for bottom facts; not trying to invent any artificial rule, but to find the wholesome reality in nature if there be any good there for us, and to find the mainspring of normal action at all events, leaving for after discussion if advisable whether or not any artificial substitute be possible or commendable.

Now it is not my purpose to suggest that men should pattern after any other species of animal. We find the other animals acting naturally, seeking their own good, going each his own way and letting

each other alone except under certain conditions which have caused a momentary conflict of individual interests. We find human life full of artificiality, perversion and misery, much of which can be directly traced to interference, the worst of this interference having no chance of perpetuation except through a certain belief in its social necessity, which belief arises from or is interlaced with beliefs as to details of conduct, such for example as that the propagation of the human species would not occur in good form unless officially supervised, and so forth. Drawing such comparisons the conclusion appears that man needs to become natural, not in the sense of abandoning the arts and material comforts of life, but in the treatment of individuals of the species by others and in their collective action.

I may here anticipate an objection. Someone will ask whether I pretend that Egoism means the same as *laissez faire*. To this I say no, but the prevalence of Egoism will reduce interference, even by the ignorant, to the dimensions of their more undeniable interest in others' affairs, eliminating every motive of a fanatical character. Invasive developments of Egoism, no longer reinforced by the strength of the multitude under a spell of personal magnetism, will probably not be very hard to deal with; then for want of success such developments will be attenuated or abandoned within the species. Thus Egoism is demonstrably the seed-bed of the policy and habit of general tolerance. And if vigilance be the price of liberty, who will deny that the tendency, within Egoistic limits, to vaporizing, non-Egoistic philosophers would place tolerance upon a cloud-bank foundation of sentiment and attempt to recompense with fine words of praise the men who can be persuaded to forgo any advantage which they might take of others. Like the preachers who picture the pleasure of sin and urge people to refrain from it, their attempts are inevitably futile.

## II

It is now time to meet the demand for definition of Egoism. The dictionaries must be resorted to for explanations of the meanings

of most words, but in any science, art or philosophy there are some leading terms understood in a more precise manner than that general notion or mass of nearly related significations given in the dictionary under one term. The dictionary is like a map of the world, which shows where a country is with relation to all other countries. The definition of the dictionary is simply objective, not closely analytical. Its language is popular, as in the speaking of black and white as colors. All this is well enough. People need information which will be true to appearances, for practical purposes, and need so wide an extent of this in a moderate compass, that they are glad to get brief explanations or even hints at meanings, prepared by men skilled in classifying linguistic growths. Hence, however, they sometimes find the popular definitions as good but not better than to define cheese as condensed milk. The so-called synonyms have different shades of meaning, but disputants easily yield to the temptation to assume an identical import in two terms, an evil connotation which adheres to the other; and conversely the hearer is usually able to understand immediately whether the speaker, if sincere, is friendly or hostile towards an object, merely by noting the terms chosen in alluding to its existence. We rarely find many sentences together without a moral judgment being conveyed. Such judgments, from an Egoistic point of view, could be illustrated by representing a beggar extolling charity.

The definition of the specialist, on the other hand, is like a map which shows the boundary between two countries, but does not attempt to show anything else. To the navigator land is that beneath his vessel which is not water. To the political economist a lake and a bed of coal are equally land. The two specialists are concerned with two different series of ideas, therefore with different aspects of the object.

The best that can be said of Webster's dictionary definition of Egoism, is that a reader who already understands the term as it has been used in practical philosophy for more than forty years, may barely recognize the idea as one espies a diamond in a dust heap. "The habit of . . . judging of everything by its relation to one's inter-

ests or importance," is Webster's nearest approach. In what sense can the individual and his interests be other than all-important to the individual? Only in the sense that, in order to reject Egoism, his interests are not to be understood as including his intellectual and sentimental interests in objects, including other persons. But the Egoist will take the liberty to inquire how anyone can be engaged in judging of anything without having taken an interest in it. Let us assume that a new dictionary maker inserts in his work a paragraph like this:

EGOISM, n. The principle of self; the doctrine of individuality; self-interest; selfishness.

Then I shall comment by saying that "the doctrine of individuality" is a happier expression than the single word individuality, for the latter is commonly used to convey the idea of distinctive, marked peculiarities of character. Self-interest is usually restricted to pecuniary interest and the like, ignoring what is reciprocal in the pleasures of companionship and what affords intellectual satisfaction. Selfishness is commonly used to indicate self-gratification in disregard of the feelings of others. All these words indicate Egoism, but they indicate it with special determinations. In the word selfish to termination arrests attention. It is generally disparaging; either connected with bad words or it gives them a contemptuous shade connected with bad words or it gives them a contemptuous shade of meaning, as knavish, thievish, foolish, mawkish, bookish, monkish, popish. Hence when a man acts in certain ways causing disgust in other people they declare his actions selfish,—not merely a manifestation of self, but one which they purpose castigating by adding the termination expressive of aversion and contempt. The linguistic instinct appears correct to this extent, however incorrect may be the popular judgment regarding certain actions which are thus stigmatized. For what of this thought some writers have laid the whole popular judgment, expressed in the reproach of selfishness, to the account of opposition to the principle of self. There is certainly a great deal of that. It is selfism, of course,



which protests, and selfishness which protests more against selfishness of others and against the principle of self in others. Selfishness argues that its pasture will be greener and richer in proportion as others yield in particular desires to the preaching of unselfishness and self-abnegation, however, in its fell sense, is evidently insanity, while unselfishness may be only selfism without any feature which can be calculated to arouse the antipathy of other individuals (that is, the unishness of the self). This a new analysis and I do not pretend that users of the word unselfish are generally conscious of any force in the termination, to which the private prefix may apply, but I refer to Webster's definitions of selfishness and self-love respectively for support as to the usage.

### III

Egoism is (1) the theory of will as reaction of the self to a motive; (2) every such reaction in fact. This double definition is in accord with the usual latitude due to the imperfection of language, in consequence of which an identical term covers theory, individual fact and mass of facts. I apprehend that in making this fundamental definition I shall have provoked the dissent of some readers well enough grounded in mental philosophy to perceive that on accepting the definition they must speedily consign any claim for an unegotistic philosophy to the realm of mental vagaries. They will accuse me of begging a question in the definition; but I cannot wish to lay down a definition less fundamental than that which will be found sufficiently comprehensive and exact in every relation of rational motive and resulting volition and action. When I shall have done justice to "Altruism" it will be seen that there is here no begging of any question. The alternatives which the "Altruists" propose may accord with such of their own conceptions as they wish to term "Egoism," with which, however, I have no complicity.

By "motive" I mean any influence—sight, sound, pressure, thought or other energy—operating upon the self, and thereby caus-

ing a change in self, under which process it reacts to seize what contributes to its satisfaction or to repel or escape from what produces or threatens its discomfort or undesired destruction.

If my definition be imperfect, the gap is in omitting to mention reflex action together with will. I regard reflex action as probably connected with a species of will in the nerve centers (and in other plastic matter in the lowest animals). However this may be, reflex actions are not subject to serious dispute in any speculative moral aspect. The omission, therefore, if any, would concern the exhaustiveness of the definition, not its quality. But the merit of a definition is not in its exhaustiveness; it is in drawing the line at the right place. As I do not propose further defining "will," I will just say that remains to be done in order to universalize, according to these views, the recognition of the Egoistic theory, is to establish all determinations to voluntary activity as reactions, plus consciousness in the brain, like reflex actions without it. Any controversy against the Egoist theory will range along the line of voluntary action; hence that part of the line of Egoism is all that is essential to be put into a definition. But if I have omitted reflex action in (1) the theory, I have not ignored it in (2) "such reactions in fact" for "such" refers to the self. Consulting convenience, I have written "the self" whether meaning apparently the whole co-ordinated energies of the self or the attracting and repelling of any organ or member thereof. Probably never were the whole energies of any animal exerted at once under the stimulus of any motive or combination of motives; hence the common expression is an exaggeration.

A course of reading in history, philosophy, and science, especially standard literature on evolution, together with personal observation of animal, including human life, will gradually convince any intelligent person that all voluntary acts, including a certain class of acts popular but erroneously called non-voluntary, are caused by motives acting upon the feeling and reason of the Ego, and that the reaction of the Ego to a motive occurs as surely according to the Ego's

composition and the motive as does any chemical reaction; that the only difficulty for our understanding is in the complexity of motive influence (motives) and composition of the subject acted upon. To avoid this conclusion the dogmatists have spoken of motive as if it were something self-originating in the thoughts. Plainly, motive is any influence which causes movement. There must be a cause for every thought as well as every sensation. That cause must affect the Ego, and the Ego cannot but react if affected,—therefore according to the character of the motive and the manner and degree in which the Ego is affected in any of its parts, otherwise there would be no nature, no continuity of phenomena. In short, man in everything is within the domain of nature; that, the regular succession of apparently self-correlating phenomena.

A motive planted in the Ego (that is to say in the self) may be compared to a seed planted in the ground. Assuming that it germinates, the commonly observed effect is an upward growth of stalk and fruit, analogous to voluntary action; but I have defined Egoism by reference to the spring of such action rather than by reference to the action as phenomenon, for a reason which will be understood by following out the analogy. Besides the upward growth there is a formation of root. The stalk of some plants may be repeatedly cut off, but while the root is alive there is the probability of another upward growth. This is most generally the case with young plants. Though mental analysis should reduce will to a mere abstract term of convenience for an imaginary link between motive and act, and whether or not volition becomes differentiated to bear a more precise and active sense, it is necessary to have a conception correlating renewed activities with former ones, as perceived in repetition of in series, without the planting of new seed. This is found not in the simple and familiar illustration of seed lying without germinating for some time, but in the invisible growth beneath the surface, supplying energy and determination to forms which repeatedly appear and then take various directions accordingly as they encounter obstacles.

#### IV

Besides individuals we encounter groups variously cemented together by controlling ideas; such groups are families, tribes, states and churches. The more nearly a group approaches the condition of being held together by the interest of its members without constraint of one exercised over other members, the more nearly does the group approximate to the character of an Ego, in itself. Observation and reflection show that the group, or collectivity, never yet composed wholly of enlightened individuals joining and adhering in the group through individual accord, has always fallen short of the approximation which is conceivable for the group to the independent Egoistic character. The family, tribe, state and church are all dominated physically or mentally by some individuals therein. These groups, such as they have been known in all history, never could have existed with the disproportionate powers and influence of their members but for prevailing beliefs reducible to ignorance, awe and submission in the mass of the members.

With this exploration and corresponding allowance, the group may be spoken of as approximately Egoistic in its character. Even when least swayed by individual members, the family, the nation and the church are thoroughly selfy. These composite individualities, as it is the fancy of some writers to consider them, are appealed to in vain to furnish an exception to the Egoistic principle. When Jack imposes upon the ignorance of Jill or upon habits acquired during mutual aid, and Jill is too trusting to trace the transaction back to fundamental elements and calculations of mutual benefit, the matter is readily laid to Jack's selfishness, which of course lauds its victim's welcome compliance; but when the family demands a heavy sacrifice of each member, attention is mostly drawn by Moralists to the advantage of the family and the need of such sacrifices, never to the phenomenon of a ruthless form of Egoism in the family, imposing upon its members who have felt some of the advantages and then yield to pretensions which

will not bear analysis, or tracing back in an actual account of loss and gain. Thus it is said to the man that he needs a wife, to the woman that she needs a husband, and to the children that they needed parents and will need obedience from their own children by and by. On the strength of these views various sacrifices of the happiness of man, woman and youth may be effected while they do not inquire precisely what they do need individually and how they can get it at least cost of unhappiness.

The family, attempting to become an Ego, treats its members as an Ego naturally treats available organic or inorganic matter. The supine become raw material. The person has the power to resign self-care and allow himself to be seized upon and work up as material by any of the other real or would-be Egos that are in quest of nutriment and of bases of operation. The greater would-be Ego, the “social organism,” reinforces the family demand with persuasion that hesitates at no fallacy, but first plies the individual with some general logic as to our need of each other then with flattery, how it will repay him for inconvenience by praise, external and internal, all the while exerting a moral terrorism over every mind weak enough to allow it, and all to subjugate the real Ego to the complex would-be but impossible Ego. For not the good of the family, but of itself, is the object of the state and of the “social organism.” The state prates of the sacredness of the family, but treats it with scant courtesy when its own interest conflicts with the family interest. The “social organism” reinforces the family against the individual and the state against the family, this already threatening the family, and obviously it will next threaten the state so far as this can be distinguished for the community; that is, the “social organism” will have no permanent use for separate nations.

But in speaking thus we should not forget that the group, or collectivity, reflects the will of some master minds, or at the widest the will of a large number under the influence of certain beliefs. Either one or two or three horses may draw a plow, and its motions will be different. The complexity of motion from three horses is certainly

a phenomenon to be studied, but the way is not to disregard the elementary motive forces which form the result by their combination; and so it is with society. Its phenomena will be according to conditions of information and to circumstances which determine the direction of personal desires. There certainty of desire and aversion as motives, founded in self-preservation, is found in the nature of organic as distinguished from inorganic existence. All desires and dislikes, acting and counteracting, make the so-called social will,—a more convenient than accurate abstraction. To make of it an entity is a metaphysical fancy. Unity of will is the sign of individuality. The semblance of a social self, apart from individuals, obviously arises from the general concurrence of wills. They could not do otherwise than run along parallel lines of least resistance, but the intellectual prism separates the blended social rays.

The church is an important group, under the theological belief. The primitive character of its dominant idea funds its complementary expression in the simple and transparent Egoism of its immediate motives. A personal ruler, judge, and rewarder existing in beliefs, commands and threatens. The person sacrifices part of his pleasure to propitiate this master because he fears his power. Habit supervenes and the investigative spirit is terrorized by both personal belief and the fear of other fear-stricken believers, watchful and intolerant. The hope of heaven and fear of punishment are of the simplest Egoism. Morality on the same plane includes the fear of man and hope of benefit from men, complicated with belief in reciprocal enforcement of ecclesiastical duties, and this as a duty. Becoming metaphysical it is doubtless more difficult of analysis, but this secondary or transitional stage of mind is already disposed of as a whole by philosophy, so that the evolutionist predicts the passage of its phenomena and their replacement by positive ideas of processes. The metaphysical stage will pass away though its formulas be entirely neglected by the advancing opposition. In fact, spell-bound and mystified man is freed by courage to break off from the chain of phantasies which has succeeded to

the chain of theological fear. In this progress example counts suggestively and even demonstratively, and new habits of positive, specific inquiry give the intellect mastery of itself and of the emotions which had enslaved it.

To sum up this part of the subject, let those who preach anti-Egoistic doctrines in the name of deity, society or collective humanity, tell us of a deity who is not an Egoist autocrat, or who has worshipers who do not bow down to him because they think it wisest to submit; of a family which sacrifices itself to the individuals and not the individuals' hopes and wishes to itself; of a community or political or social state which departs from the rule of self-defence and self-aggrandizement; of any aggregation, pretending to permanence, this is not for itself and against every individuality that would subtract from its power and influence; of a collective humanity that is not for itself, the collectivity, though it were necessary to discourage and suppress any individual freedom which the collectivity did not think to be well disposed toward the collectivity or at least certain to operate to its ultimate benefit. Self is the thought and aim in all. Selfness is their common characteristic. Without it they would be elemental matter, unresisting food for other growths.

V

Can the altruistic be included in the Egoistic? According to a standard definition, quoted and adopted in Webster's dictionary, from the *Eclectic Review*, the reply seems to be that it can. That definition reads as follows:

ALTRUISTIC, a. [from Lat. Alter, other]. Regardful of others; proud of or devoted to others; opposed to egoistical.

If Egoism were as narrow in meaning as egoistic, of course the question would have to be differently answered. But egotism bears the same relation to Egoism as the term selfishness, used with purpose in the derogatory syllable, bears to my newly coined term, self-

ness; hence we will set it down that some constructive use for the term altruistic is not of necessity excluded from Egoistic philosophy. But let it be observed that claims made for Altruism, based upon an ignorant or capricious limitation of the meaning of Egoism, and a glorification of the doctrine of devotion to others, intended to produce a habit of self-surrender, are held in our mode of thought to be pernicious, and attributed, in conclusions from our analysis, to defective observations and reasoning, and to the subtle workings of selfishness. To be regardful of others within reason, is intelligent Egoism in the first place, but before we go far in this we draw a distinction between such others are worth regarding and such others as present no title to regard unless a barren and superstitious form of respect obtrudes itself and makes a claim for “others” because they are “others,”—makes a virtue of sinking self before that which is external to the self. This is the principle of worship, mental slavery, superstition, anti- Egoistic thought. To proud of others, of the right sort for us, is one form of Egoistic rejoicing. When reflection has done its work efficiently the habit of care for others, of the right sort for us, continues until checked by some counter experience; but let the habit become strong, let the avenues to esteem be unguarded and the sentiment of worship usurp the place of good sense, then the Ego is undone. He is like the mariner who has set said and lashed his helm in a fixed position, fallen asleep and drifted into other current under changing winds.

Some Altruistic writers remind me of the orthodox theologians. In face of the facts of physical science the theologian admits that everything in this world proceeds according to an invariable order, but insists upon giving it a magical, ghostly origin. The Altruistic writers likewise admit that the immediate choice of action of each individual at each turn in his career is determined by causes with precision, but they plead for an Altruistic education, an Altruistic impulse now, so that hereafter the reaction of the individual to given causes may be this: that he will find his pleasure in the social welfare. I say that if he finds



his pleasure in it, he Egoistically promotes it; and if those writers find their pleasure in planning a greater social welfare, their initial efforts in the matter are Egoistic. The reflecting person may perceive that there is room for mistakes as to what is the social welfare. The doctrine which demands that a person shall forego some pleasure without having a deliberate conviction that by so doing he makes a wise individual choice, is responsible for a certain immediate lessening of welfare at one point. Beyond that it may be an illusion of ignorance.

The belief which prevail at one time regarding what is for the social welfare are widely different from those which succeed them. Once it was deemed injurious to society to teach a slave to read, and consequently injurious to tolerate in a slaveholding commonwealth the presence of a free person who ventured to follow his liberal inclination in this respect toward an intelligent slave of deserving character and conduct. Those who yielded to this social belief which they shared, rather than make an exception by following personal inclination, yielded to what has since been generally pronounced to be a malefic error. At the present day the beliefs prevail that conjugal rights of person over person are contributory to the social welfare; that children owe allegiance to their parents, and blood relations peculiar obligations to each other; that citizens need to feel other bonds than their own interested calculations and spontaneous benevolence; and so I might proceed with an array of phantom claimants exacting duties of the individual believer, prescribing what he shall and shall not do to be a worthy promoter of the social welfare; whereas on the whole there never has been any social welfare understood or realized, but meanwhile trumpety beliefs prevailing in the past and present have filled the world with individual miseries.

Some of the Altruists contend that their ideal man is wiser than to serve the beliefs of society. He works for his own ideal with his own reason for his guide. They fear that if he were to lose the urging sense of duty to the ideal he would cease to labor for a better condition of things. Now this is on their part, when stated, an insidious even un-

conscious challenge to us Egoists to show them that Egoism is a better Altruism than Altruism itself. The matter presents itself thus, that the Altruist want to inquire or discuss whether Egoism is “right,” best for society, and so forth. Perhaps it will break up all the societies that now exist, and constitute new moral worlds, making new ideals possible; perhaps liberality of mind will prompt to all and more than the most intelligent and enlightened Altruist expects from the sentiment of duty; but however this may be, we Egoists are not arguing for the right of Egoism to be tried. We are trying to explain that Egoism is the chief fact or organic existence—its universal characteristics.

Let us analyze Altruism with reference to pursuits instead of confining all our attention to persons. A new acquaintance and a new thing are alike objects to the Ego. His aim is to make use of them. The Ego's mental caliber and his predilections, heredity, or habits with regard to association, distinguishing him as an individual, are exhibited in the appreciation which he shows for some objects which can be made use of as means to gain, or reduce to use, further objects. The less reflecting man finds grain and consumes it all, finds wood and uses all kinds alike for fuel. The more reasoning man saves some grain for seed, cultivates it and gets more, saves hard wood for some durable uses, makes tools of metal, and studies his future welfare by planning means to ends instead of living from hand to mouth. In so far as he, in dealing with either persons or things, keeps postponement or surrender of immediate pleasure, he is clearly acting with Egoistic judgment. Even when, having tested a series of phenomena, he establishes a rule and allows habits to supervene, saving himself the trouble of constant repetition of verifications, he is still the same Egoist; but if he loses the normal control of his exertion with reference to objects and ends which at first were to him means to other ends, he becomes an idealistic Altruist in the sense in which Altruism is distinguished from Egoism. In other words he becomes irrational, or insane. As some individuals have mind enough to be habitually careful of others according to their merits, some artisans are habitually careful of their tools

and more systematic and steady in their methods of work than others. Does this argue that they are less selfy or does it simply argue that they are more theoretical and, with excellent reason at the foundation, exemplify the law of character by which a process of reasoning having been settled, the intermediate links in some chains of reasoning, become familiar, are passed over without self-consciousness? The selfness of a farmer who goes out in the cold to save his stock, at the cost to him of some discomfort only, is not less in quantity, but is connected with more intelligence, than that of one who avoids the cold and lets his stock suffer. But a farmer may have become so avaricious that he will get his limbs frozen in his craze to save a yearling for the sake of the few dollars it is worth to him. The love of money within reason is conspicuously an Egoistic manifestation, but when the passion gets the man, when money becomes his ideal, his god, we must class him as an Altruist. There is the characteristic of "devotion to another," no matter that that other is neither a person nor the social welfare, nothing but the fascinating golden calf or a row of figures. We Egoists draw the line of distinction between the Egoist and the devotee. It is the same logically when a person becomes bewitched with another of the opposite sex so as to lose judgment and self-control, though this species of fascination is usually curable by experience, while the miser's insanity cannot be reached. The love-sick man or woman has the illusion dispelled by contact with the particular person that caused it; but in certain cases absence or death prevent the remedy from being applied, and in some of these instances the mental malady is lifelong. "Devotion to others," it will be observed, can be made from a text for other sermons than those emanating from the amiable Moralists who pride themselves upon the alleged superiority of an unreservedly Altruistic habit of thought.

## VI

The man who has fifty or a hundred suits of cloths made for his imagined use, the woman who keeps a colony of cats, the man who

fills a private storehouse with all sorts of tools which he can never use, are equally illustrations of the subversions of reason and are to be classed as Altruists in the degree in which Altruism supplants a rational Egoism. Let us take up these cases and consider them in detail. To have more than one suit of cloths is mostly a wise provision for the future, hence the aim is Egoistic, but from the point at which the accumulator loses sight of the end for which his care and trouble are taken, and becomes a slave to the idea of cloths, he ceases to be intellectually his own master; he falls under the domination of a fixed idea and is in that respect like a fanatic. The difference between him and the fanatic is that his crotchet is merely a waste of time and means, whereas the fanatic's fixed idea is one impelling its slave to some sort of senseless interference with other people's conduct. The fanatic, too, is an idealistic Altruist. If his oppression of others were carried on in pursuance of a selfish calculation, he would not be a fanatic.

The woman who keeps an absurd number of cats embodies the exaggeration of the originally rational idea that this is a useful course to have one or two cats about a house to keep the mice down. Care for the useful domestic cat, without reasoning this matter over continually, is just as altruistic and no more so than fair treatment of good neighbors or of neighbors who would probably be dangerous if unfairly treated. The craze for cats is the same kind of Altruism as that which dictates entire self-sacrifice for the imagined food of other people.

One may need many appliances, but there is a rational limit to the accumulations of tools. It is quite clean that some men pass this limit and make collections of such things a hobby, not for exhibition and instruction, because they will eagerly accumulate a dozen or fifty articles of a kind, and nor for commerce. This mild form of insanity cannot well be classed otherwise than as a degeneration from rational Egoism, through the altruistic process, to supernal Altruism.

I have dwelt upon these examples partly because it is sometimes assumed that professed Egoists should use neither foresight nor prudential self-denial. Critics who presume to argue in this way refer

man to the improvident species of animals and forget even the squirrel. It is quite consistent with Egoistic philosophy and practice that foresight should be used and specific pleasures relinquished, and that habits of prudential self-denial should be formed, subject to searching review and ready self-control, especially as we are admonished on any change of surroundings.

And now, having traced the degeneration of the limited altruistic phase of Egoism (the rational postponement of immediate ends to means of no value in themselves but only to reach Egoistic ends), in others words having viewed Egoism as partly a pursuit of means, and so a rational course, and Egoistically altruistic habits as a further rational economy of time, in place of endless minute examination and calculations of consequences, —having explained from the Egoistic point of view how, when the Ego has in some instance purposely dismissed the immediate gratification of self, he may and does sometimes fail to return to it for want of landmarks, memory and reflection, I would inquire whether there be any better explanation of the origin of the insanity of self-abnegation; I mean in the real, extreme unegoistic sense of the word; a sacrifice without expectation of Compensation to the individual. The limited altruistic phase of Egoism is inevitable for a complex being. It involves the peril described. He runs the risk of going into supernal Altruism, much as the sailor, deliberately going out of sight of land to reach other land, runs whatever risk there may be of forgetting the object with which he undertook the voyage or of losing his compass and never getting back; or as an orator, entering upon the Flowery path of illustrations, may become captivated with the images of his fancy and utterly forget the logical conclusion which he intended only momentarily to postpone in order to reach it with greater effect. As hobbies, miserly habits, and so forth, do not seem to admit of any other explanation than the one presented, and as fanaticism with its cruel deeds admittedly springs from concern for others, coupled with a belief that certain of their doctrines are errors, and is thus identified despite

its deplorable characteristics, as being pronounced Altruism, and yet in consequence of these characteristics it will not be defended by professed Altruists, but will be admitted by them to originate in unreason, I should not expect them to object in this way of accounting for all obviously evil forms of Altruism. But the obviously evil and the silly phases of Altruism are apparently as intense as those phases which are so much praised and expatiated upon by professed Altruists, and therefore presumably require an equal formative energy. Consequently until the contrary is shown, we shall be as thoroughly warranted in reason in assuming that if the one set have been accounted for by our theory of the development of the dominating power of ideas and sentiments, the other can be accounted for in the same way; precisely as we may say that if the physical development theory be admitted to account for the snake and the hawk, it will be taken to account for the sheep and the deer. And moreover, when a process of development is shown to hold good, the mute challenge of facts is not merely as to whether or not another and radically different sort of explanation can be supposed for correlative facts, but the presumption of a general unity of process is very strong. Let any considerable part of the foregoing reasoning be admitted and it is granted to us that the concrete good or seemingly good in Altruism is based in Egoism. Then it can safely be inferred that it must be subject to test by reference to the Egoistic reason for its existence; in each case of a development of altruistic motive the question will be: is it serviceable projection, an indirect means of Egoistic attainment, or is it an irrational movement, an aberration, to which we have seen there is a constant tendency? Now, the reason why we need to speak with caution of the seeming good in Altruism is not founded in any doubt that rationally limited altruism is wise and a necessary part of human Egoism, but in the circumstance that Altruism appears to have been set up by some writers as a principle separate from and independent of Egoism, as if the latter were a preliminary ladder, passing from which they profess to reach their supernal structure, whereupon they

would kick the ladder from beneath them. At this point we Egoists decide that such Altruism, considered as a principle, is not a thing of parts more or less good, but is posited as a rival of antagonistic claim, and therefore from the Egoistic point of view, is wholly bad. Here for illustration we may take the analogy of what is called government. If we say that each individual needs protection from violence and combinations of violence, that therefore the honest people should combine to secure such protection, this is well; but if upon this basis a governmental power is built which proves to be oppressive, we deny that such government is good, whatever good acts it may perform.

## VII

All the appetites and passions afford subjects for observation and study of the process traced in several of the preceding paragraphs, but it is not my purpose to give an exhaustive review of the various fixed ideas and fascinations, or forms of mental slavery. I would suggest, as a useful exercise to the student of this philosophy of the actual, that other forms of subserviency to fixed ideas be analyzed as instances present themselves.

Sometimes it will be necessary to look beyond the individual experience of the subject. Indeed it is certain that heredity plays an important part in predisposing the individual to one or other craze, so that he falls into it when the inciting cause arises, or else in organizing him with well-balanced powers so that he happens to be happily proof against their influence. For example it may be interesting to the reader to take up for himself the passion of revenge, study its origin in the facts of warring species, families and individuals, self-defense and precaution, habits of thought becoming fixed, the destructive propensity developed perhaps beyond the need of the individual in actual circumstances, while the sense of relation between means and ends is blunted or lost; consequently when some hurt is experienced or apprehended,—or it may be an insult to his “honor” or a bundle of Altruistic beliefs,—the person seeking self-protection or vindication

will act as if what has been destroyed were still to be preserved by annihilating the destroyer, or on a menace he will act with the energy of concentrated race experiences, and in sympathy with his family, nation or race will generalize an injury to someone as being precisely the same as an injury to another or himself, though in the case it may be really otherwise, as a cool judgment might determine. Thus what is primarily self-defence leads, under the influence of this passion, and perhaps quite as often or oftener than philanthropy, to the sacrifice of his own life by the subject. Such action has the mark of that supernal Altruism already abundantly illustrated and clearly distinguished from a rational altruism consonant with the reign of self-interest.

We have now dealt with Altruism as fact, but we have yet to consider it as a preachment of duty. Before entering upon a consideration of the claims of the preachers of "moral duty" and showing what their alleged obligatory Altruism is, putting it to the test, whereupon I apprehend that it will be found to be easier for a man to pass through a needle's eye than to enter into the moral kingdom of heaven, I wish to anticipate an objection or criticism which some reader may have raised in his own mind while we were discussing the illustrations of fixed ideas. The miser took pleasure in hoarding gold, but because he was under a fixed idea I classified him as in the bad sense Altruistic; yet for an individual to act under the rule of pleasure is Egoistic. This is the seemingly difficult. It is resolved, of course, by disregarding verbal quibbles. The mesmerized subject seems to act as an individual but he is under foreign control. The miser seems likewise to act as an individual but he is intoxicated or mesmerized by the force of the idea which has obtained an ascendancy incompatible with the reign of individual reason.

A further remark seems appropriate here, and I have brought this case up partly to explain how far the philosophy of Egoism differs from the logomachy of the Moralists, who, not content with dividing men into sheep and goats, would be glad to divide ideas of facts in the same way and on the lines of their own prejudices. With them the facts



must be opposites, absolute opposites all the way through, if there be opposition in them in some relation. They have right and wrong, good and evil, Altruism and Egoism in their brains as opposites. Though nothing in fact is simpler to sound reason than the conformity of the crazy man's conduct to the order of the sane man's conduct, barring the substitution of an abnormal motive which practically supplants individual reason, the genuine Moralistic theorist does not want an analysis of the facts. He is on the lookout for some peg whereon to hang a charge of inconsistency in argument. Verbiage is his stronghold for such occasions. He may be painfully Surprised to learn that we Egoists profess to find the Altruistic subject manifesting Egoistic modes of operation as nearly as the nature of the craze will allow, and that we find in this an expected corroboration of the central fact of organized, sensitive existence. A little shock or whirl of this kind will prepare the less fossilized among my Moralistic readers for the greater astonishment which they must undergo when they for the first time read of right and wrong as they will be treated in these pages, as conceptions having each a separate and independent origin and not logically requiring the usual forced moralistic treatment as if they were necessary and invariable opposites. Just at this point, however, I need only say that modest altruism confesses its foundation and haughty Altruism is self-betrayed, as surely as there is method in madness. Altruism is conspicuously selfish to make gains for Altruism. Method is a prime characteristic of sanity. There may be such madness as shows no method, but it is rare. The Altruism that contains no Egoistic alloy is still more rare if it exists at all. We have yet to look about and see whether it can be found and to examine whether or not it will appear to be a vain profession of self-deluded men who have never contemplated the sacrifices which it would involve if consistently and diligently carried into action.

## VIII

To plead before a tribunal is generally understood to be an acknowledgment of its jurisdiction. The intelligent Egoist does not seek to

justify his views or conduct according to rules or principles of Moralism which works by awe, aping theology and religion, of which this Moralism is the ghost. Such words as morals, morality, right and wrong, duty and obligation have not lost their limited Egoistic meanings. The theoretical Egoist may be termed a moralist in so far as he thinks out a course of conduct in conformity with his observation and reason. If in a genial way he soars above business calculations then he "sings as the birds sing." To him duties imply persons who have wants and make the non-satisfaction of those wants a source of discomfort to him. But supernal Moralism with its absolute Duty he apprehends as a claim of an essentially religious character fettering with ghostly terror or enthrallment all who yield to the mystic spell.

Persons who have been reared in a religious belief find themselves years after they have become disbelievers in the doctrines taught them in childhood still so far under the influence of religious sentiment that light remarks on the subject give them a shock, and apparently in the same way a generation that does not know God or ecclesiastical authority, a generation that does not know the sacred political State and the sacred authoritative family of its fathers, still retains some portion of the conscience that would fain subjugate Egoistic reason. For thousands of years preachers in the service of rulers have been preaching Duty, humility, submission, piety to the people, and Egoism has been their unspeakable horror. In our day the results of criticism applied to religious belief are apparent in general scepticism regarding the foundation of their authority, of their dogmas. Still the heredity of preaching, exhorting and warning must find its outlet, to say nothing of calculations made by men whose wealth is insured by the system of belief and submission preached, and to say nothing of calculations by ex-preachers of theology whose prospect of an income seems limited to finding something on which to preach and by which to obtain contributions, and thus the relations of man with man, philanthropy for equity, sentiment for science, serve to continue the comedy-tragedy of preaching and servility.

If Shylock does not go to church he takes a magazine and enables the publisher to pay a few dollars a page for essays on ethics, the purport of which is that Morality, Conscience, Duty reign where God formerly reigned and with much the same restraining effect; that all honorable men will agree that these forces are indispensable, ineradicable and necessary for the conservation of property, the family, government and social order, hence a proof of Moral Being in man, while self-interest as a principle would be subversive of Moral sentiment and ruinous to society; wherein it is assumed that society is about as it is desirable to keep it. By such process Shylock makes 5000 per cent on his investment in Moralistic literature simply in the economic sphere, as he is protected by the State. He accepts any incidental assistance toward keeping women in a receptive and docile condition of mind as being so much clear profit, though really if the enterprise had to be sustained for this purpose alone he must be a miser only or else a free lover and not a "proper family man," if he did not see the advisability of paying out the few dollars even with this sole end in view.

All reformers who are not intelligent Egoists or endowed with the genius of Egoism continually render themselves ridiculous by complaining of monopolists and tyrants. Thereby they proclaim their Moralistic superstition. Their method is abortive. It can at the best lead people from one form of trustful dependence to another. At the worst and often it causes people to commit acts of ill considered hostility and to indulge in sentimental declarations which enable cool and intelligent masters to incite stronger forces against the reformers. Reform, indeed, is a word for conservative mediocrity. Egoism when understood by the many means nothing less than a complete revolution in the relations of mankind, for it is the exercise of the powers of individuals at their pleasure, and not a plea for their "rights."

The Moralists, or Altruists, come with a tale of Duty, or moral obligation. They say that I ought to love my neighbor as myself and to put aside my selfy pleasure. It is horrifying to them that I act on

consciousness of satisfaction, on genial impulse, on calculation of gain, and not in submission to the Moralistic judgment of “conscience.” I understand very well that it is their ignorant fear of an independent person that is at the bottom of their pleading. They are accustomed to think of a man as a dangerous animal unless controlled by “conscience.” Few of them have met one who does not profess to defer to such a “spiritual guide.” I however regard their “conscience” as identical with the superstition which impels Hindoos to throw themselves beneath the wheels of the sacred car and to allow sacred animals and sacred men to devour their substance.

Are the Altruists, the Moralists, willing to examine the logic of their principle and carry it out to its consequence? Will they follow where it leads? Then we need not insist Upon the prominence of the oppressive idea of Duty and its degradation of the individual, but we may take their own favorite idea of pure, disinterested love expelling self-interest wherever the two conflict. Of course the intelligent Egoist will perceive that I am trying to accommodate the Altruists, to get as near their position as possible, but that nevertheless there is something of falsehood, of contradiction, in the idea that love can be other than a personal interest in the object when love overcomes other interests without a sentiment of sacrifice arising; and that if the consciousness of sacrifice be present the motive is Duty, not love. However, I am discussing an alleged possibility, a life of Altruistic devotion,—and I do not expect in the statement of the question to succeed better than the Moralists themselves in making the fanciful scheme appear wholly real. Apart from theology with its gross dogmatism about “souls” in men and the animals as “soulless” machines of flesh and blood, the dogma of Moralism, the duty of Jove to others, obviously bears a direct and essential relation to the capacity of others to enjoy and to suffer, and no radical distinction can be made between a human subject and any other animal. The anti-vivisection Moralists stand up to the logic of their principle in one particular when they insist that pain ought to be inflicted upon the inferior

animals for the advancement of science intended for the benefit of mankind and not for the species or individual animals operated upon.

The consistent Moralist will now see what his principle requires of him. Though the animal, by reason of its inferior intelligence and want of speech and hands, cannot fully express its complaints, assert its "rights," and maintain its liberty, he will neither use his superior ability to enslave it nor permit others to do such wrong if it be within his power to prevent them. The animal's inability to participate as an equal in social affairs is ground for certain exclusions, but not for usurpation, detention, subjugation, castration, enforced labor, shearing off the natural coat, robbery of the mother's milk and driving to the slaughter house. By what right does the Moralist shoot deer or crows, cut off the heads of chickens and turkeys, and cast his line or his net for fish? If by the authority of God, I reply that God is the archetype of personal despotism, Egoism without the balancing force of approximately equal powers in different individuals; and that there is no such authority. The philosophical Altruist has left that ground. I refuse to recognize the plea. I look to the Altruistic Moralist for a less barbarian answer. And let him remember the incapable of his species, the idiot, the maniac. Does he exploit them with a good conscience, as he tames and rides a horse? Does he refrain from fattening and killing them only because he thinks they are not good eating? Where and what is his conscience, then, as to other animals?

Permit me to suggest that a man is safe in reflecting that he will never be a buffalo or a rat, unless he believes in transmigration, whereupon his unconfessed Egoism crops out, keenly self-regardful. Hence buffaloes and rats have no rights that a man even though a professed Moralist need respect, except the right of exemption from torture. (Torture is a bad example. It can be inflicted upon men as well as upon other animals and it does not minister to any demand of enlightened self-interest.) But what man may not be accused of feeble-mindedness or suffer some accident which will impair his mental powers? How then can self-concern be silent when one of

his species is ill treated? The other animals—indeed he is never to be one of them: what does it matter to him how you use them so that you do not cultivate cruelty in yourself? (The cruel man is dangerous to us and ours.)

I call upon the Moralist to vindicate his doctrine by applying it consistently to the treatment of all animals. Confining it to our own species is too Egoistic to be deemed pure Moralism. I shall be very much surprised if any such practical response comes as to disprove my new version of scripture, which says that the Moral kingdom of heaven is inaccessible to men of ordinary sanity. Who will rejoice to see the grasshopper getting his fill, and keep sacrilegious hands out of the hen's nest? Who will feed the lambs and neither feed upon ~lamb nor wrap in woolen blankets, for conscience sake? One Moralist has one hobby and another has another hobby, but if there be one who proposes to live a life of self-denial for the happiness of all other sentient beings as far as they are capable of experiencing pleasure, to respect their liberty and embryonic offspring as conscientiously as any Moralist does those of his own species, I shall regard his appearance upon this scene as the exception which will very strikingly illustrate the rule in individual conduct, and I shall be glad to have an opportunity of learning how he manages to live.

## IX

If self-renunciation be a virtue, certainly it is the purer when the sacrifice is made for individuals of another and widely different species. In caring for our own species we may obtain a return, and we can cherish the imagination thereof if it seems improbable; and so it is in caring for one of any other species between which and ourselves there is some communication of mutual intelligence and mutual sympathy; but if a man wants to show pure disinterestedness let him sacrifice his pleasure, his comfort and his life for other species that wilt neither understand nor return the manifestations of benevolence. Such a supernal Altruist will reject cleanliness as a sin, if convinced,

as he must be by ordinary observation, that parasites thrive best on the human body when there is an entire avoidance of soap and water. Such a self-denying Moralist will not dress a wound or purify his blood, for these practices mean death to animalcules. Here I am reminded of a story of the devout Hindoo who was horrified on looking at a drop of water through a powerful microscope. He found to his consternation that he could not drink without destroying life.

Supernal Moralism should be viewed sometimes from the point of view of universal animal motives and conduct, excluding the idea of selflessness. If the survival of the fittest be not an empty phrase, supernal Moralism is an excessively silly insanity. The "sacredness" of the germs of human life is impressed upon the mind of the devotee of Moralism, and in some cases the result is that a child is born as the offspring of rape. The simple, pious people may wonder that "God" can assist in giving effect to crime. The supernal Moralist who prides himself on scientific acquirements may well feel confused when a hybrid form appears as a practical commentary upon the alleged "sacredness."

Spiritual terror, the strangest, most melancholy phenomenon in human motive, is essentially the same influence, while it lasts, in the man or woman claiming to be emancipated from theological dogmas, as in the believer in those dogmas. It usually remains after its generally supposed root is destroyed, in the Agnostic, like an air-plant. This indicates that its foundation is not precisely where some antitheological writers suppose. Mere disbelief in Jehovah may leave the agnostic mind subject to fixed ideas of a most irrational character. The belief in Jehovah in the first place occupied an ignorant mind and when that belief is expelled neither ignorance nor fear is altogether banished. There is some improvement in the prospect for positive Egoistic thought and sentiment to occupy its own. There remain, however, numerous fixed ideas of Duty to Society, Duty to the State, Duty to Humanity, and such rubbish, which are fertile of intoxicating and paralyzing influences, and our talking Freethinkers in general still

shudder to contemplate a person uncontrolled by such “restraining influences.” They imagine, after all, that he will go to the devil or run amuck without moral “restraint.” The triumph of sanity, then, lies not in the expulsion of anyone form of insanity, but in the acquisition of an Egoistic consciousness and self-control.

## X

Under the head of Religion Webster's dictionary says: “As distinguished from morality, religion denotes the influences and motives to human duty which are found in the character and will of God, while morality describes the duties to man, to which true religion always influences.” Granted belief in a personal ruler, submission to his will is prudence and prudence is Egoistic. With this conception the duty spoken of is not mysterious: it is service by a subject,—the slave's submission to the power which he fears. He believes that the sovereign ruler has laid upon him special commands favoring his species and therefore he must treat men better than other animals. If this belief be an error, still there is no line to be drawn between the alleged duty and his interest. There is no disinterestedness or generosity in religious duty or moral duty, or say rather in duty to God or man, for both are ultimately duty to the supposed heavenly master.

But Moralists, having gained some rational ideas of mutual relation, while unhappily ignoring the fact that these ideas are the proper foundation of willingly assumed mutual duties, fancy that they have discovered the justice of the alleged divine command or will, which is nothing but a reflection of their own thoughts, and thenceforth they fall under the hallucination of mystic Duty, independent of either calculation or pleasure. It is one task of Egoistic philosophy to analyze this notion of theirs as a confusion of ideas. They go so far in some instances as to dismiss belief in a moral lawgiver of the universe and yet remain under the same fascination to Duty as if they had him, and his will were equitable, and their servility were swallowed up in admiration of his justice. What they lack is the insight to perceive that



conduct which makes for the good of the species is naturally agreeable to the feeling of each well developed individual, hence that the conception of Duty is scepticism as to spontaneity. The fixed idea of Duty unrelated to interest and not reducible to calculation, arises by abstraction and fascination like other aberrations reviewed in preceding pages. It reaches clear insanity in self-sacrifice if this occur in unreasoning ecstasy.

Of course one self-inflicted pain of some particular kind or even death is sometimes chosen in order to terminate anguish which none but the subject can appreciate. In such cases the action is Egoistic, though it may be of a terribly ignorant sort, as for example, when the cause of the pain is an imaginary object or such a real relation as is humiliating to the person's feeling only because of irrational notions about it.

If morality be regarded from the point of view of the social utilitarian, as that course of conduct which promotes the welfare of the species, it is only necessary to repeat that the species acts as Egoistically as it can. It cheerfully sacrifices individuals to its own welfare. It has a subtle economy of means in planting Altruistic conceits in those that are willing to entertain them. When intelligence comes to recognize mutual interests this instinctive trickery of social influence will vanish, no longer seeming to be needed.

As for the virtues, such as benevolence, every observing person knows that we seek to get rid of painful impressions. Such, usually, are those of suffering in others. Many writers have pointed out how pity is stirred by the sight of wasted bodies and hearing the cry of pain, and how much weaker it is when only an ordinary description is given of the occasion; also how much more ready the poor are to help other poor people than the rich are. What has perhaps not been so generally observed is the reason for this, viz., that the rich do not feel that they are likely to need alms, while the poor are on the edge of such need. There is quite enough in the difference of circumstances to make it instructive, although at the same time, personal

character varying in susceptibility, it is doubtless true also that those most inclined to benevolence are most likely to be poor in a society like ours, where money is supposed to grow by lending and profits are consolidated from the results of unpaid labor.

## XI

The suggestion has been heard that if all acts are Egoistic this term has no distinctive meaning. The same thing has often been said as to “matter” when the Materialist has affirmed that there is no “spirit,”—no opposite of matter. Matter then becomes synonymous simply with existence. The Materialist replies that he is content with the conclusion that there is no alleged existence unrelated to other and known existence; none exempt from manifestation according to a regular order or subject to the inherent law of its being, to speak according to appearances. There is a regular order of succession of phenomena. The Spiritual theory asserts a break in what is popularly called “the reign of natural law;” Materialism denies such assertion and exists as a distinctive ism to deny and disprove it. This statement will indicate in part what is the proper reply when it is charged that Egoism is almost meaningless if it embraces all acts. It was believed that a man acted disinterestedly. Closer examination finds the motive and the form of their interest. Thus a parallel to the progress made from the time when men believed in miracles to the time when they have learned enough of natural law to expel the former belief.

By referring to the definition already given of Egoism it will be seen that it covers a theory as well as facts. If every act of every animal were perfectly Egoistic, nevertheless the demands of intelligence would not be satisfied without understanding the phenomena, which are explained according to natural law as reactions of individual will to motives presented in circumstances. To act Egoistically is universal, but to be in part ignorant of the fact seems to be also nearly universal. The theory of Egoism has its opposite in the theory of Altruism, evidently joined to Spiritualism by ignoring and denying the necessary

sequence in phenomena. (I make no allusion to modern Spiritualism, which professes to be Materialistic.)

But beyond this it can be firmly said that until the Egoistic theory is understood and has had its full influence upon character, those irrational actions will continue which are the fruit of error, illusion, fascination, fixed ideas, rendering the individual practically not an Ego, not in the possession of his faculties, hence there will be, as there are, actions not properly Egoistic, but insane, though not generally so understood. Thus the Egoistic theory has a practical purpose. The half insane, that is to say all worshipers, religious, political or personal,—are to come to consciousness of their individuality and become wholly sane. As to submissive actions performed simply under fear or hope, their Egoistic character is quite clear.

## XII

The word right has the same fundamental meaning as straight. When no obstacle stands or lies between an animal and the object of its desire, the shortest way, which is a straight line, is the way the animal takes to reach the object; but when approach by a right line is impracticable the nearest known path is chosen, all considerations such as safety being weighed according to intelligence. This is then the line of least resistance,—the one most approximating in convenience to a right line. The right hand is so named because usually the stronger and more serviceable. A man's right is his straight way to the satisfaction of his desires, and he takes no other way except under adverse circumstances or hallucination.

It will be objected by Moralists that such an exposition of right reduces it to nothing but might. In this inference they are correct, but their objection does not disturb Egoistic philosophy, which regards their alleged supernal, sacred Right as a superstition. I have a right to do what I can take and openly keep, and another has a right to take it from me if he can. Those, however, who believe that a superior authority has laid down a rule to which they must conform, will take

up that rule or law as they understand it, and their idea of right will be that of conformity to the command of the authority. The Moralist is under an impression that instead of pursuing his own pleasure he has to fulfill a purpose which may be at variance with his pleasure. His conception of Right is not an Egoistic conception. He has surrendered himself, and with himself his Own right, and has begun to serve an abstraction. He is in the way to commit great folly and wrong to himself. To the Moralist Right and Wrong are two fixed ideas, forever in opposition in all senses. To the intelligent Egoist they are two words generally perverted from their meaning and used as scarecrows. There is a frequent clash between the right of one and the right of another, and they fight it out. It is settled by the triumph of one and the defeat of the other. Max Stirner in his matchless book, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (The Individual and his Property), says: *Ist es mir recht, so ist es recht* (If it suits me, it is right.) The Moralist would say: if it be right for me; thus implying that he is under some mysterious authority. The Egoist would not Use the the latter preposition except when recognizing some law or definite arrangement which prescribes certain rights. When I say: "if it be right for me-," I admit an authority. Now in fact I must often admit one-, that is a power, but I admit it simply as a power, not at all as the Moralist admits it. I do not bow down to it in my thought or regard it as anything but an enemy to my freedom, and if it cease to assert its power and to compel me by penalty or the prospect of penalty, I assert my full power to do my own pleasure and nothing but my own pleasure. The Moralist consents to serve as his own jailer; not so the Egoist. Assert your right, your power, your pleasure. I claim none of that, I assert my own. I appeal to no Moral law of the world. I recognize none. We shall find our interests coincide or we shall give each other battle or we shall steer clear of each other, according to circumstances.

In words you can assert my right, but when you attempt to do so in deeds you succeed only in asserting your own right. I alone can prove my right by deeds.

The Moralist pretends to be under an obligation to respect the rights of others and never do them any wrong; but he defines their rights and does not allow them all their rights. He abdicates his own and cripples theirs and then flatters himself that the mutilation and effacement constitute superior Right. He protests against Egoism because it wrongs his system. At times he imagines that the Egoist must talk in the language of Moralism and must mean that in acting with Egoistic right the Egoist would pretend not to do wrong to another; wherein the Moralist becomes absurd, for the Egoist does not pretend that he can always exercise his right without wrong to another. It is a matter of expediency with the Egoist what wrong to another he shall do.

“Right wrongs no man,” exclaims the landlord, and drives the tenant out of a house. The inclement weather beats upon the unsheltered, and their nerves are wrung. The landlord exercises his right, but lies moralistically.

The word wrong is a variation upon the past participle of the verb to wring, to twist. Victor and vanquished are two, and the Moralist simply looks away from the facts of life when he preaches a universal natural Right and ignores individuals with their various wants and powers and the probability that what is good to one may entail some ill upon another.

But the species? The Moralist, driven from the former position of a divinity ordering all things in harmony in the world, or at least the conceit that his own species is favored at the expense of all below it, and this not by its intelligence but by a divine decree arbitrarily making the spoliation of the world and rule over inferior animals Right, takes refuge in a belief that the welfare of the species may give Moral law to the individual. Hence the dogma that the individual exists for the species. Were it so, the individual might insist upon existing at any cost, assuming that he is what he knows best of the species, and that his stubborn will might probably be a provision for the species. That is Right, says the Moralist, which best serves the species. And

what best serves the species? The Moralist will generally reply; “that which is Right,” thus completing a little circle in dogmatism. Nature, however, seems to say that species survive by the survival of their individuals. The Egoist will find in himself certain loves and aversions, and he may think that the species is taking care of itself just in proportion as he is following those paths which give him satisfaction.

The Moralist, becoming more philosophical, suggests that the war of interests will cease as men understand their similar needs and the possibility of mutual benefit, hence wrongs in the species may become fewer or cease. With all our heart, say the Egoists, only you are not to begin by sacrificing us. If the later Moralism be merely a prophetic dream of a harmony of interests through wisdom, we are not without hope that at last the dreamers will recognize individuality as the condition precedent to the fulfillment of their hopes. The fellow feeling in the species is a certain fact. Let us take it for what we find it to be and not attempt to place it in antagonism to our individualities. As these are developed the necessity will appear for each one to recognize somewhat the individuals of his species, and thus the “claims of the species” will be recognized.

### XIII

Self-interest masks itself and says suavely “we seek the good of the species,” instead of saying bluntly, “we gladly pick up all that other individuals let slip from their grasp.” Are not we the species as contradistinguished from any individual? When we go so far as to urge sacrifices for the good of the species what are we but beggars and hypocrites? Persuasion is mingled freely with flattery administered to the vanity of the individual, and it is not to be ignored that the Moral philosopher flatters himself as he proceeds to render what he vainly imagines to be a service to his species. Assuming the point of view that he is spokesman for the species, the dictum that that is good conduct which promotes the interests of the species, is a subtle mendicancy or a veiled terror in the supposed interest of the crowd.

But assuming an individual point of view the question is differently shaped. It then becomes; what use can I make of the species, of the crowd?

A summary of ethical teachings of Herbert Spencer says that postulating the desirability of the preservation and prosperity of the given species, there emerges the general conclusion that “in order of obligation the preservation of the species takes precedence of the preservation of the individual.” The species he admits, “has no existence save as an aggregate of individuals,” and hence, “the welfare of the species is an end to be subserved only as subserving the welfare of individuals,” but, continues the summary, “since disappearance of the species involves absolute failure in achieving the end, whereas disappearance of individuals makes fulfillment simply somewhat more difficult, 'the preservation of the individual must be subordinated to the preservation of the species where the two conflict.'”

There are several features of sophistry in this. Let us, however, note first the admission that “the species” is simply a convenient term. Now, where confusion is possible the safe way is to lay aside the term. When this is done it will be found that in restating the foregoing propositions it becomes necessary to speak, instead, either of all the individuals concerned except one or of all the individuals concerned, without exception. But he has seemingly used the term species in both senses or else, with his “order of obligation,” he has affirmed an obligation to subordinate the preservation of one individual to that of another. As this is intelligible for the purpose of the crowd dealing with individuals but not for the individual acting for himself with himself as the victim, the immediate inference at this point is that Spencer is expounding the Egoistic logic of the crowd.

If the welfare of others is subserved only as subserving my welfare, it can never be true that I must subordinate my preservation to that of others, for this is to divert the general rule, which applies while I am one of the crowd, to the exceptional case wherein I am set apart from the crowd. All conditions of benefit imply at least preservation.

When I am counted out for non-preservation, for the good of others, it must be the others, not I, who do the counting out. In the first premise Spencer speaks for the individual treating the crowd from his proper motive; but in the conclusion he speaks for the crowd or some of its preserved part contemplating the sacrifice of an individual, yet these shifting points of view are included in a syllogism. The welfare of the crowd a mediate end: that is reasonable to the individual. The preservation of the individual a mediate end to the crowd; that is reasonable from the crowd's point of view; but analysis of the diverse points of view is needed, not an attempt to link the two in a syllogism the conclusion of which is merely the crowd's conclusion.

Now examine the second premise of the syllogism: "the disappearance of the species involves absolute failure in achieving the end." Why, in fact? Because the disappearance of all others of the species but myself involves it? Not at all; but because the term species includes myself. But as far as my existence is concerned it would be the same if I alone disappeared. Do you say: the preservation of the alphabet is of no use to A except as A combines with other letters; but the disappearance of the alphabet would involve the disappearance of A; hence the preservation of one letter (A) is less important than the preservation of all the other letters? The letter A answers: "Bosh!"

Speaking for the individual, how does the doctrine of subordination of the preservation of the individual accord with evolutionary theory regarding the origin of species? Do species originate by individuals taking care of themselves under whatever circumstances, if possible, or by the contrary rule of their benevolence toward the pre-existing species? The reader can pursue this inquiry for himself; but I should like to suggest that what has been considered regarding the individual and the species can be paraphrased with reference to the species and the genus under which it is classified, thus: The welfare of the genus is to be sub served only as subserving the welfare of the species, but since the disappearance of the genus involves absolute failure, whereas disappearance of particular species makes fulfillment



simply somewhat more difficult, therefore the preservation of the species must be subordinated to the preservation of the genus where the two conflict.. The fallacy of this sort of reasoning may appear without comment, inasmuch as the individual will easily maintain the point of view of the interested species, and will not practically allow himself to slide over to the position of the presuming genus. A supplementary remark may be indulged. The genus never licenses or encourages the origination of new species; but then the verbal sophistry of the genus would not prove to be a preventive.

I pass by the small occasion of confusion in the use of the word “end,” the second time, in the foregoing statement. Total failure may be assumed to refer to failure of the ultimate aim.

#### XIV

Duty is that which is due. I ought is I owe or lowed. Some duties I assume for duties assumed by others toward me. This is reciprocity. Some alleged duties the Moralists tells me that I ought to acknowledge and perform from a sense of Duty. If I then say that it is a superstition he perhaps severs himself for the moment from the superstitious crowd and claims that it is only a generalization, meaning fitness, saving tiresome repetition of analysis; it is my interest after all. He is somewhat disingenuous here, for if it be only my interest embodied in a thought-saving generalization, it will bear analysis and always come out as my interest. But he has the “social organism” in mind, to the preservation of which my individual welfare is to be subordinated, according to his idea. The “social organism” idea has captured him and he is using decoy argument to obtain from me a sacrifice of myself to his idol, his spiritual monster.

A man is hired to do certain work, and that is then called his duty; or exchange of services grows into a mutual understanding; the debt is first on one side and then on the other, and what at any time is expected, to balance the account or turn the scale as usual and create another claim so as to continue the mutually advantageous ar-

rangement or understanding, is also called one's duty. Where service is compulsory it is likewise called duty.

Moralism, when it has gained enlightenment enough to reject slavery to a person, under the subjection of mind overawed by physical force, denies that the slave's duty is Duty. But if the slave has yielded his mind to his master the phenomenon is clearly that of Duty. When the Egoist is conscripted he does not argue that his assigned duty is not Duty. It is servitude contrary to his interest, and this consideration is enough. The fact that some slaves are governed by a sense of Duty furnishes the plainest evidence that Duty is mental slavery.

But the Moralist will claim for Duty that it is not always mental slavery. It is true that he can confuse the issue by using the word Duty to describe all those habitual actions in the doing of which no immediate benefit to self is thought of; but let us keep to the plain sense. Duty is what is due. The domination of a fixed idea begins when one admits something due and yet not due to any person or something due without benefit coming to one in return; and of course when a return benefit is calculated upon the idea is interest.

When interest is sublimated so as to lose sight of self it assumes the form of love in the absence of oppression. Evidently the presence of fear in the causative circumstances corrupts the sublimating process and results in the oppressive sense of Duty. It is possible for the Moralist, finding a series of admirable actions which are well-nigh perfect love or gratitude, to call these Duty, on an examination which will show that were the doer to study his conduct he could find in it the elements which would serve to construct a wise scheme of reciprocal duties. If the Moralist talks of Duty when the fact is spontaneity,- whether gratitude, love, overflowing pride or generosity advancing to aid all that is seen to make for our good, he talks at random. His system of thought has predicated that men need to be controlled by a sense of Duty. Let him stick to that or leave it. We duty it. The doctrine of hell-fire was long upheld under the same idea that it was needed to control men. Moralistic Duty is the hardened

dregs of fear. Generosity is the overflowing fullness of a successful, satisfied and hopeful individuality.

“I ought” is no stumbling block to the intelligent Egoist. Two persons are playing at draughts and a bystander says of one: “He ought to have captured the man to the left, not the one to the right.” There is no sense of moral obligation conveyed in the remark. It is assumed that each player is trying to win, and the words “he ought” introduce a suggestion of what was wanting to produce the result. A pirate endeavoring to capture a merchantman and taking the wrong course would say: “I ought to have sailed on the other tack.” To whom was the obligation? To himself. So men speak of their duty to themselves, meaning the attending to supplying what is lacking to their welfare.

These words duty and ought are not words to be rejected. They are in constant correct use in everyday life, and it is not the use of the Moralist, but it can be observed that every humbug politician harps on the “sacred duty” of the citizens to do this or that, something that he and his party are interested in and that he cannot readily prove to be to the interest of the citizens addressed, or he would do so instead of trying to get them with him on an appeal to “sacred duty.”

## XV

The supposed inward monitor which warns the Moralist against breaking the sacred law of Right, as it admonishes the believer against offending God, is that which “doth make cowards of us all,” in the language of the dramatist. That is conscience. One thinks he knows his Duty and with this thought come vague fear and selfreproach for not having obeyed the Moral law; not simple fear in the Moralist, rather a confused feeling, but a feeling as clearly distinguishable from the simple fear of consequences as Moralism is distinguishable from a calculation of interest. The dread is as undefined as the Authority or the reach of consequences, or both, are indefinite and dimly apprehended.

The fact that the dictates of conscience are the result of so-called “education” (really indoctrination) is established by the strongest

proof on every hand. Every religion has its commandments and however absurd they may appear to others than the believers, conscience enforces their observance. Moralism continues in a general way the religious terror, making humanity or it may be more broadly animal life the sacred object.

Egoism, on the contrary, regards conscience as superstition. It is true that by a simple analysis of the word, which yields con, with, and science, knowledge, we can have the definition: the sensation, sentiment or reflection regarding ourselves which accompanies knowledge of our voluntary action. But as an Egoist has simply either satisfaction or regret and does not judge himself by reference to any standard of Duty, he cannot have a guilty conscience.

It is most to the purpose, therefore, of Egoistic philosophy to look into the means of destroying the superstition habit, for it is a notorious fact that self condemnation continues somewhat after reason has assured the subject of the error of the doctrine which claimed his allegiance.

A silly conscience is to be extinguished, like other inconvenient habits, by resolute action. I have known a compositor who seemingly could not place a letter in line without first making an unnecessary motion with it against the side of his composing stick; a statesman who could not or dared not go to bed without first placing his boots as he Wore them; a youth whose reason rejected the orthodox Christian doctrines in which he had been reared but who had qualms, which surprised him, about studying on Sunday; an infidel who had killed a man but had nothing to fear from the law, who nevertheless had the horrors in his dreams, and several persons with freeloze ideas but inconsistent in practice in a way that showed the rule of their old conscience. Some of these things will strike everyone as being ridiculous. Of the instances cited only one did not admit of correction by Emerson's rule of doing the thing you fear to do. I firmly believe that if the man who had a life on his conscience had taken the rational method of doing all else which he knew to be sensible, his

mind would have been much strengthened to overcome his trouble of blood-guiltiness. The Sunday school young man realized that his conscience was awry, or the habit of a superstitious belief, and in a moderate time he overcame it. Others have had similar experiences as to books and conversation of a “blasphemous” character and breaches of the so-called law of morality in the sexual relation. Reasoning is well in its place, but action is necessary to make a free man or woman when one has been trained to have a conscience in any particular. I mean only action which combines pleasure with safety. It is no part of philosophic Egoism to pay more for advancement than it is worth.

## XVI

The origin of the guilty conscience may be in mishaps, such as defeat, capture and slavery. When men from exercising mastery and even cruelty, are subjected to the rule of the stronger and more warlike, their energies are turned inward in bitterness against themselves. Upon this gnawing of ill humor comes the suggestion from religious belief, that these uncomfortable feelings are sent by the tribal god as a warning. This is readily believed by people who already believe that defeat and misfortune are punishments for some lapse of duty to their deity. The checking of an active career and humbling of the vanquished produces a bilious temper and morbid spirit, ready for ascetic rites on misdirection, because ever ready to attribute misfortunes to something other than their simple natural causes.

The guilty conscience precedes the good conscience. The latter is nothing but the consciousness of the guilty conscience removed-by expiation, atonement or however beliefs run.

Before the guilty conscience there was the spontaneity of the free savage. After the guilty and the good conscience there is the serenity of the self-conscious, sovereign, intelligent Ego. For convenience I will hereafter speak of him simply as the Egoist. While all men are Egoists in so far as they are not visionaries or madmen, nearly all men are in fact partly blinded, ashamed of themselves, not fully possessed

of themselves. They do things for conscience sake—Egoistic method in madness;—they reject religious doctrine, but have a “sense of sin;” they have a horror of certain acts because condemned by a “moral standard,” and so forth. They do not even understand that they cannot be “sinners” except by admitting a religious standard of “righteousness;” that they cannot be “immoral,” wicked, without thinking as saints and Moralists think of “guilt,” “disobedience” in natural acts. They cannot even call themselves Egoists to their satisfaction because the religious world has branded every natural impulse as vile and “unsanctified;” consequently Egoism—self-direction—as the sum of all villainy, and they are hampered by accepting their language from the religious world.

The real Egoist is not even he who has merely seen through the cheat of Moralism, but he who has outgrown its habitual sway, broken its scepter, desecrated every shrine of superstition in his heart or else been more happily born and reared than one in ten thousand of those who live today or ever lived.

## XVII

The Egoist hears voices saying: “Forgive us Our sins.” His thoughts take a humorous turn and he asks: Why do not the idiots think of forgiving themselves each one his own sins? Why cannot they be like the father? If “I and my father are one,” I can do the acts of the father and forgive my own sin. He who dares not say: “I do most cheerfully forgive myself all sins and misdeeds I have ever committed or shall ever care to commit,” is certainly not an Egoist.

Moralists propound the question: “Does the end justify the means?” He who argues on either side of it, shows not the quality of Egoism. It is a question for Moralists, to be answered by reference to their standards of duty. The Egoist will ask whether the game is worth the powder and in this sense he could use the very words quoted in the question; meaning, however, only a particular application of means to a particular end—a question of expenditure or risk

and probability of gain. Every case being decided on the principle of economy or of strategy, the general moral question disappears. The Moralist is left to answer his own question as to whether or not he will venture to break a "moral law" in order to accomplish what he considers a moral good.

Another way of putting our criticism is that the question can be parodied: "Does the evidence warrant the verdict?" But then, you say, we must know what verdict and what evidence are referred to. Quite so; and the question: "Does the end justify the means?" is equally void of meaning unless we learn what end is sought and what means are proposed.

But suppose we become more specific and ask: "Is the killing of a heretic justified by the probability of saving one thousand souls from perdition?" To this I say it concerns the Moralist, not the Egoist. In order to kill, no justification before the tribunal of conscience is necessary to, say, the Egoistic statesman; for that is a piece of superstition. In this respect "all things are lawful" for him, "but all things are not expedient." The heretic has to thank the thousand other heretics for his immunity from being killed for heresy. A common interest unites them in some measures for self-protection. Their danger is but the greater because fanatics exist who in addition to the brutal instincts of mankind are possessed with the idea of a moral pardoning power encouraging men to do violence as a service, not to themselves but to a creed of church or society. The Egoist wastes no breath to persuade the fanatic that the end would not justify the means. He knows that the wish was father to the thought. The doctrine of exceptional justification was the inevitable excuse, like the wolf's brief remarks to the lamb at the stream. That wolf was not a natural wolf, but a moralizing wolf; still, altogether a wolf in fact. The moralizing man is less frank and more cunning than the wolf. He would paralyze his enemies by teaching that not all courses are "justifiable;" then when they spare him and he gets them in his power he does not spare them. The end never justifies the means when a Moralist is being hurt; always when

a Moralist is getting the best of the fight by unusual artifice and usurpation. The idea of injustice

### XVIII

The idea of justice precedes that of justice. Dr. Maurice de Fleury in his book, *L' Ame du Criminel*, says: Assuming the legend of Cain and Abel to be true, the brothers had a quarrel and when Cain struck Abel, the latter struck back. The fight continued for some time. Just when Abel was directing a blow, his arm was struck and fell helplessly by his side. The impulse to deliver the blow returned to the brain as consciousness of purpose frustrated and this was the first sense of that want of correspondence which is called injustice.

If at such a juncture a tree or rock should happen to fall upon the victor or a lion make him his prey, and the vanquished escape, the latter would thank a supposed providential interference, build an altar and found a worship.

Out of a great number of cases of hurts-injustice-the sufferers build such theory of justice as corresponds with their idea of the satisfaction of their demands.

“Just right” is what fits a place or case. Adjustment and even justification are words used in a mechanical sense. Justice, however, cannot be predicated till we come to relations between persons. It is evident that in the notion or sentiment of justice there are present two elements: first, fitness in general, as in common with accuracy; secondly a recognition of something more, which may be the sentient nature of the object. We do not speak of injustice save where there is a possibility of suffering.

There are a great many applications of the term justice, but in all of them it has some relation to sentient beings and to fitness. The differences apparently spring from different standards of authority, rules of privilege, right, immunity, etc. Every uproar among men is a proof of injustice, in the same way as the creaking or screeching of a machine is an evidence of parts ill adjusted.



The loudest advocates of justice complacently overlook the fact that nobody extends justice to the inferior animals.

The adjustment of relations between man and man will probably be best where each one is alive to his own interests and convenience. In the absence of this condition justice is the warcry in quixotic campaigns, the success of which in any instance serves to destroy some privilege and emancipate some ignorant, helpless folk to become tools of fanatics and victims of speculators. The free are those who free themselves. These and these only can or will do themselves justice and they are prevented from doing themselves and each other justice most of all by the prevailing belief in justice as a "ruling principle." The motto: "Let justice be done though the heavens fall," is a perfect example of fanaticism, equal to insisting on some one performance, though any amount of loss and suffering results. But the very men who harp on justice are the ones who delegate the trial and execution to functionaries chosen haphazard, and make a religious duty of submitting to injustice whenever these functionaries are ignorant, corrupt, prejudiced or mistaken in their judgment. The idea that any person might do himself justice, though no doubt existed that the act were justice, is horrifying to the good socialists, because the executioner was not appointed by society. Justice, then, is a prerogative of society, a favor rather than a right, in their view. They become involved in perplexities. The heavens may fall, but not the dignity of the state. They deny justice to save respect for its mechanism. An unjust law is enforced by the same authority which enforces a just law. It is enforced all knowing that it is unjust, and because it is unjust, to the end that it may be repealed. Somebody is made a victim of injustice in order that by forcible wrong, thus done by authority, another branch of authority may be induced to alter a decree and issue another decree (which will be certain to accomplish another wrong to somebody).

Revenge is not justice, but simply the impulse to do hurt for hurt. It lacks measure, balance. It is at most a propensity which makes for the extermination or humbling of aggressors.

The Egoist does not worship justice. He recognizes the impossibility of its existing as a donation. The ruler or the society which decrees justice is the shepherd who manages his flock, not for the sake of the flock, but for his interest in it. The Egoist aims at the accommodation of interests according to the capacity of the contracting parties. Egoist with Egoist must recognize, and on reflection will rejoice at the prospect of a rule of not trespassing where—he had better not. From this he can arrive at a position of comfort in having allies of great value to him, through their not being afflicted with any superstition. They multiply his power and he adds to theirs.

As to justice in the sense of meting out punishment to persons according to their alleged moral delinquencies, the idea gives place to that of protecting ourselves and serving our convenience. We may suppress a dangerous madman and a dangerous sane man as a measure of prevention, not having the old Moralistic horror of responsibility in the case of ourselves dealing with the madman, and not having the Moralistic furor against the sane offender. We need not therefore resort to casuistry in case of slight doubt if we are determined that it is unsafe to risk permitting either to live. Thus Egoists will not let an offender off on technicalities or scruples if they deem it necessary to expel him or kill him, and thus, too, if one has killed another the inquiry will be as to whether or not the slayer merely anticipated an intelligent verdict by a jury.

Let us beware of the craze for justice. It is the mask of social tyranny. It demands a delegated authority and a prerogative in this authority. Thus it builds a citadel of injustice; so that the man who does himself justice is declared by the law to be guilty of a crime against it, the monopoly of administration of justice.

## XIX

What of equal liberty! Egoism is interior liberty, which of course makes for equal liberty of Egoists. But this is on the basis of their common ability, whereas democracy and aristocracy have a common

principle in the affirmation of birthright: In democracy liberty is the sacred birthright of every man. In aristocracy liberty and privilege are the right of those born or admitted to aristocratic rank. The spirit of democracy is, to fashion each individual on its model, and endow him with political equality in contradistinction to class privileges, but as a member of the democracy into which his passport is his humanity, not his personal assertion and demonstration of his power and will to command equal liberty. Aristocracy commands its members to maintain their rank. Democracy commands its members to maintain an equal status for all. Egoism awaits the coming of the free, who will recognize each other, but not by virtue of any birthright.

Contrasts between men as lions and lambs, eagles and doves, are fanciful and overdrawn. Nature has not endowed them with such extreme and transmissible differences of organism. When they shake off old beliefs and indoctrination and realize their powers as individuals, equal liberty follows from the practically equal assertion of similar physical powers in self-conscious Egoism. When each of us has determined to be as free as he can, to yield only to effective force in restraint of the liberty he wills to exercise, there will be more liberty and substantially equal liberty for us if we be numerous, even while far from a majority.

The idea of liberty for man as Man, as something to be respected for its own sake, though the man be a slavish animal, the sacredness of Man, is a different notion altogether. While I am, indeed, an example of man in general, I base my claim to consideration at the hands of Egoists on the fact of my being this man who can be known to be neither tyrant whom they must combat nor slave incapable of requiting their aid. I will be a useful ally for certain purposes. I will not spend my strength in contending for equal guardianship, miscalled equal liberty, but I will seek allies like-minded. Not knowing whether I shall find one yonder in a born aristocrat or there in a toiling plebeian, I will put out the sign of equal liberty to exist among allies and of a readiness to take allies for equal liberty as a working rule, not as a religion.

Republicans think they abolished the community of plebeians when they abolished aristocratic rank. Far from it. They reduced the aristocrats to the plebeian level before the law and set up an aristocracy of office-holders and of wealth, which traffics in the making and administration of the laws. Equal liberty remains entirely unknown, because liberty is unknown as an objective reality. There can be no liberty of action till it is understood that each of us finds his law in his will and pleasure and that wherein our wills and pleasures agree we make our law, which we enforce on others who come into our domain, because we must or it is our convenience so to do, Thus only, liberty and law are synonymous, Be not unequally yoked together with non-Egoists. They cannot maintain your liberty. Your right and liberty, apart from what you can do for yourself, is that part of your will and pleasure which receives the support of allies lending you the aid of their power, as their right and liberty has the same extension by recognition and aid from you and others. The Egoist does not commit the mistake of battling for emancipation and endowment with power, misnamed equal liberty, of a herd of human cattle. More precious to me than ten thousand of these is one person capable of asserting all attainable liberty, Still, I came from the herd and by this and like signs I know that the herd contains my precious allies in the making, I send, among those who can hear, the word of awakening. Come to me and I will recognize in you equal liberty; I will give myself, if you will, a duty toward you, to be performed on pain of losing your esteem and support. I have already the pleasure of seeking and the hope of finding you. Life is worth less without you than it will be with you, Your precious force is my strength from the moment that you understand that I have no greater hope than in your fullest assertion of your liberty. We will not allow the world to wait for the overman. We are the overmen.

Aristocracy has not that fascination for me that it has for F. Nietzsche. Whatever pleasure a man may feel in wielding power in association with bold and strong companions, a reflecting man must

despise an hereditary system which is subject to the following defects: that in order to transmit power to one of his sons he must consent to place his other sons in an inferior position; that he must aid in maintaining a special prerogative for the degenerate sons of his original colleagues; that he must give his daughters to such inferior scions to be their marital slaves; that to support the system he must aid in employing those vermin, the priests; that to keep down the plebeians he must slay many a brave and intelligent fellow of plebeian birth.

## XX

One can feign a selfish motive to obtain opportunity to do an act of personal kindness; that is, one feigns other self-interested purpose in order to accomplish another self-interested purpose—to overcome the pride of independence in another person. A number of the most delightful stories have this point. The generosity which thus disguises itself differs fundamentally from abstract philanthropy or theoretical Altruism. The reader perceives in every such story how thoroughly the generous heart enjoys its success in aiding particular persons of merit who have attracted its good will. But one never feigns a selfish interest in order to do a disinterested act. On the other hand, how well mankind know that hypocrites profess disinterestedness while their aims are selfish.

In the generous act there is spontaneous, personal motive; no dread duty; no bending before a master power. Do you say the master power is there? Well, it comes through the doer's organism as a genial impulse, interesting him, and so is Egoistic. Do you complain that thus we make of Egoism what you call selfishness and what you call unselfishness? We show you that there is a common element of genuine personality, even of pleasurable action, in both. Opposite are the acts in which the person yields his will, subjugated by an ideal, the powers of which arc awe, dread and lashing duty. I do not care to quarrel about a word with those whose idea is beckoning-duty. If it comes through my sense of what is worthy of me, due to fulfill my

honor and dignity, that too is distilled in 'my consciousness or sub-consciousness and is of my aliment and flowering and of the fruitage of my sentiment, intellect and will-is Egoistic.

## XXI

Since the publication of these chapters began, I have seen in libertarian papers several flippant remarks and attempted refutations. We hear that Egoism is a very old thing, which is true; but that is one cause why the sour critics have missed understanding it, for they have gone to old books in which they found the idea of Egoism as viewed in the light of the science, philosophy and politics of past ages; or they have gathered opinions from superficial writings. Many show absolutely no understanding of Egoism. It is an affair of objective classification of acts, they suppose. Thus if I have an apple and eat it, that is Egoism, they suppose. If I give the apple to my friend, that is Altruism, they suppose. How simple! Then I, being an Egoist and liking to see some of my friends eat my apples, must not indulge in this pleasure unless I can stand certain persons' charges of inconsistency. Let me give them a point: I select my friends. My apples are not for everybody to help himself. Let me give them another point. The man who eats his own apple, not because he likes it, but because he thinks it is Egoistic to eat it, not to talk of duty, is only a deluded Egoist, by which I mean that he has missed being an Egoist in the definite sense in which I am using the word in these closing chapters.

One correspondent demolishes Egoism thus: that Egoism is Hedonism or Eudemonism, the pursuit of pleasure; that it is absurd to say that the pleasure of professing Christianity outweighed the pain of being burned at the stake; that hence it is not true that the pursuit of pleasure is the greatest motive.

"The pursuit of pleasure," is an expression which has conveyed to many persons the idea that Egoism consists for all men in satiating certain appetites; but the truth is that philosophically "pleasure" stands for sovereignty-is used in contradistinction to servitude.

Egoists do not accept the state of mind of a Christian martyr as being normal. He believed that a crown of glory awaited those faithful to death; that exclusion from the presence of the Lord awaited the "apostate." Qualified by these beliefs undoubtingly held, how can we deny the martyr's (deluded) Egoism? The apostolic "fishers for men" baited their hooks with promises and threats addressed to self-interest and repeated: "Fear not them that kill the body," etc. Are only those who secure good bargains to be credited with the intention to secure them?

The critic makes a ludicrously false comparison when he sets the physical pain of burning against the mental pain of apostasy. At the moment when the Christian martyr made a choice of constancy to his religion and a crown of glory, he had not felt the physical agony of having his flesh consumed by fire. As much as possible he fixed his thought on the promised heaven and thus lessened the anticipation of pain. Whatever pain there was in the expectation of burning it was not the pain of actual burning. We do not know what the final suffering was nor what the final thoughts were. We read of one on the cross, when too late, exclaiming: "My God, my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" and we read that the servant shall not be above his lord. Moreover if the Christian martyr could be supposed to fully appreciate the pain of death that awaited him, he must also be supposed to appreciate as fully the hell which awaited the apostate and endless death in the lake of fire. How then must such a terrified believer decide on the Egoistic principle as distorted by his faith? To us there is no more difficulty in his case than there is in the principle of gravitation illustrated by a ball rolling down an inclined plane when that is the nearest approach it can make to perpendicular descent.

But while we may suppose a martyr possibly logical in his course, given his absurd belief, we feel warranted in thinking that the majority of those who sought martyrdom were excited beyond the control of reason, as in the case with men acting under the dominion of passion in the commission of certain offences. Crazy is essentially an

inability to weigh conditions and apprehend consequences.

Another thinks that Egoism kills sympathy and thus, he thinks, hinders the care of children.

The prevailing opinion that general betterment depends upon increased sympathy is one which I am more and more decided to pronounce a stupendous error. Sympathy diverts energy from one channel to turn it into another. An illustration showing the ruin caused by an irrational excess of grief may cause some to re-examine their opinion. B was married three years ago. Lately his wife died, leaving a child a year old. B was so much affected by the death of his wife that he went to the cemetery day after day and lay down on the ground crying. There he contracted an infectious disease and he also died, thus leaving the child an orphan.

Another is shocked at Egoism, as it has no reverence for anything sacred, not even for Feuerbach's jugglery that "love is divine" and "man is godlike" or can be by thinking himself so. Also that Egoism puts no premium on "courage", but rather on cowardice.

It is well to be shocked in default of any other way of getting intelligence awakened. Be sure that Egoism has nothing sacred, and therefore accepts no imposture or hallucination and remember that it requires courage to be a coward and appear a coward. Where "courage" is folly, it is Egoistic to be a "coward." Certainly it is only Egoism that can ridicule sacred things of man as well as of God: I mean ridicule in action as well as in word. Pecksniff, even if an Atheist in woman's clothes, should be snubbed, and the Egoist will snub him, without regard to his or her sex.

## XXII

What is good? What is evil? These words express only appreciations. A good fighter is a "good man," or a "bad man," both words expressing the same idea of ability, but from different points of view. To the beggar a generous giver is a good man. To the master a servant is good when he cheerfully slaves for the master. A good subject is one



obedient to his prince. A good citizen is one who gives no trouble to the state, but contributes to its revenues and stability. Evil is only what we do not find to our good, but what we have to combat. A horse is not good because strong and swift if he be “vicious;” that is, if we find him hard to tame. A breed of dogs is good if readily susceptible of training to hunt all day or watch all night for the benefit of the owner. A wife is “good” if she will not be good to any man but her husband.

Why do the lion and the eagle enjoy such a reputation? The eagle attacks nobody except babes. The lion is a large animal, deliberate in his movements and reputed to give a man a chance to get away. There are “worse” animals.

In all varieties of Moralism obedience is the cardinal virtue, which is wholly on the principle of procuring “good” subjects for those who have the effrontery to set up as rulers over fools and simpletons. “Be good and you will be happy.” “Virtue is its own reward.” These proverbs are an appeal to self-interest beguiled to accept some current teaching as to what is “good” conduct, “virtue.” What if one be happy and healthy and the same believers in these maxims tell him that his happiness is not good? They show that their idea of goodness is obedience to certain commands or rules. But the Egoist will prove most things and hold fast to that which he finds to be good for him. That which he finds to be “its own reward” he holds to be virtue enough. The positions are opposites. The Moralist says: “This course is virtue; believe it and follow instructions, and you will find happiness in the thought of doing right.” The Egoist perceives that such instruction is a trap for credulity. The experience of mankind is all very well, but most of the time your Moralist deprecates experiment. It is remarkable that in “the most important relation in life” two persons must have a legal contract for permanent union before they have any knowledge of each other in the relation; then bear it if they dislike it, and this is regarded as virtue. I do not say that all Moralists teach such doctrine, but all Moralists have some doctrine which they enforce by sentiment demanding individual

sacrifice, absolutely and not merely as individually expedient.

### XXIII

Truth, the agreement between thinking and thing,-between thought and that,-is as desirable as seeing and hearing without illusion or confusion. Truth, the agreement between thinking and expression, is made a duty by Moralists, yet generally with reservations. Maya man lie to assassins to save his life, or to robbers to save treasure committed to his care, or to a sick person to conceal news which would be a serious shock? The gravity with which such questions are argued points to something further,- that Truth, like Right and Justice, is erected into a deity and men go crazy or pretend to go crazy over the worship thereof. This is the hypocrite's opportunity. So people bind themselves with an oath and lend a spurious importance to words spoken by men who care only for immunity, but who are shrewd enough not to profess what they think and how independent they feel.

How curious that men generally feel it "right" to cut and hack natural forms, but not to take any liberty with "truth" even in the verbal representation of such forms!

But on the other hand they say: "All's fair in love and war." Now everything that is not love can be viewed as war (and the "love" here spoken of is war too). This maxim is more often used to excuse lying than for any other purpose. Lying is a very common practice and I perceive no reason to expect its abatement unless individuals in large numbers (1) cease to pretend to exact from others action which is inconvenient, when they cannot or do not really exact it; (2) make it to the interest of others to tell them the truth or leave others alone as to telling anything about matters on which they now tell lies. So there might be less "war."

To the Egoist truth is an economy, where practicable. The chief condition is mutual intelligence.

Honesty,-truth in action,-is commonly said to be "the best policy," and perhaps as commonly disbelieved to be unconditionally so.

Where honesty is reciprocal, it brings that mutual advantage which attaches to truthfulness, but honest conduct in an individual in dealing with dishonest persons, is too simple. Honesty is a pleasure, often a luxury.

#### XXIV

Moralism reaches its acme in the craze for a supposed perfection the opposite way from individuality. Even when philosophy has pronounced that its aim is to lead man to find himself, the spirit of perversion is such that it takes Man, the general idea of the species, as an ideal for the individual and teaches individuals to torture their personal mind in order to conform to the idea formed about the species. Thus it is said our “mission” is to be true men, more perfect men, more perfect women. This notion prompts to imitation of what has been exemplified in others, not to development of that which is most genuinely myself or yourself. If I am to be a conforming man, striving to be something set before me, I cannot be I. As Stirner remarks, “every man who is not deformed is a true or perfect man, but each one is more than this. He is this unique man.” What he is that another is not, we cannot say in advance of knowing him. Egoism is this: that this man acts out himself. Every woman may be assumed to be a true or perfect woman, and she is cheated if taught to assume otherwise. That is not the aim; that is the starting point with us Egoists. Be easy about perfection of Man. The individual needs first to be free from any yoke or assigned task, in order to normally possess, enjoy, develop and exhibit himself or herself. I shall develop the species, if I have nothing more distinctive to develop. A woman will be merely a “true and perfect woman” if she has nothing of her own, only the species. The very moment, however, that she knows herself to be already a “true and perfect woman,” as the zero or horizon of individuality, that moment is the individual energy set free to work out whatever it takes pleasure in,—or as free as conscious reflection can make us while old habits and affections persist in some degree.

To come to ourselves, to find ourselves, is to know that what we have of the species is ours, so far as it suits us to keep it and that we have neither obligation nor mission but what each one may give himself.

## XXV

A woman is possibly an Egoist. Apart from this possibility she is simply a female. If an Egoist, she will determine her actions with precisely that interior freedom possessed by the male Egoist.

Marriage, whether as polygamy or monogamy, is an agreement among men in a given state to respect each other's property in one or more women, according to the law of the tribe or state. It depends upon deluded Egoism. The supposed happiness of exclusive possession as a right to be enforced is resolvable into several factors such as (1) The certain immediate desire for possession; (2) The notion that the person possessed is passive and a constant quantity; (3) The seeming accumulation of happiness by monopolizing that which others would use if permitted, the defeating of their desire being supposed to be the securing of one's own. Some men, however, marry because they see that the desired woman will be married by another and hence lost to them unless they take her on the customary contract.

Men flatter themselves that they can perpetuate themselves and not merely the race; a simple error, for if we allow half the effect to each parent, the result is that A's offspring is half A; his grandchild is one-fourth A; his great-grandchild is one-eighth A; the next generation one-sixteenth A, and thus his descendents will have nothing more in common with him than any of the individuals of his race.

Some learned men argue that while men are naturally polygamous, women are naturally monogamous; but their discourse soon turns into censure of any woman who does not come up to the mark, as being a perverted creature. Are they blind to the vast amount of fear, reserve and duplicity in women? Can the subjugation of woman through all past time have failed to make her seem and act as though her nature were different from man's? Is not the watch kept upon

her a proof that the preachers have no deep faith in her nature being different from their own? But what would be the fate of an author who should terrify society by assimilating the nature of the two sexes, while affirming man's polygamous instinct? He would be accused of a tendency to corrupt virtuous womanhood.

All agree that jealousy is a cruel and tormenting passion. Is it not, then, self- evidently a sign of perverted Egoism? The temper which is not jealous, which can love and let love, and enjoy the love that is spontaneously given because attracted, is undoubtedly happier than the jealous disposition. Such a temper will be willing to let the nature of woman display itself in freedom, and not until more of such a temper is shown is it to be expected that men will be privileged to know from women what women really are.

The wife enjoys a status. To forfeit it is to forfeit reputation. The husband is judged differently. It looks as if the modern woman, for the present, were mostly contenting herself with keeping her reputation and using the status in which man has placed her, for what there is in it. Liberty is not hers, but some power she can wield. Such power cannot fail to be a curtailing of the husband's resources, liberty or convenience, honesty, growth; and if he is fool enough to presume too far on his prerogative, he is sure in many instances to be deceived, for woman's wit has been forced in the direction of deception as much as to submission. The latter implies the former.

With the discovery by men that the perpetuation of their individuality is an illusion, that the expectation of happiness by the exercise of authority over woman is a gross mistake, that the person possessed is not a constant quantity but a variable one, a good to be elicited by wise treatment and not by rule of thumb, Egoism comes into the relation of the sexes, without delusion. The woman will have her way in the matter of procreation and will have the control of her children till they are wise enough to assert the control of themselves.<sup>1</sup> What have we onlookers to do with the relations of mother and infant? Nothing.

Those who are in the married state sometimes pretend that if

they were single they would remain single. They are not to be believed because they say so. Marriage to very many is a sacred thing in some aspect or the demon of deluded selfishness is stronger than they confess. What if we say to them: Please for a moment regard your marriage as the marriage of a pair of doves or canaries. When so regarded what is there to talk about in the question whether you are married or not, apart from bare legal powers?<sup>2</sup>

Related to this is the idea that crimes of jealousy, even outside of marital relations, can be traced to the idea of marital rights. The man and woman who have cohabited have talked or thought of marriage and come to regard their connection as a marriage without the ceremony. Marriage and the possibility of marriage are in this way responsible for those crimes which simulate marital vengeance.

Some people contrast love with selfishness. They surely cannot mean sexual love. *Te quiero* is translated either "I love thee" or "I want thee." By common understanding love that is not selfish enough to break some law in order to satisfy a personal want, is not strong enough to hold a spirited mate.

Others find in sex an argument against Egoism. They say you cannot be an independent individual, because you are incomplete without one of the opposite sex, We may reply that a man is very much sooner done for if deprived of food or water than if unable to meet with an agreeable woman; consequently if there were anything in the above argument it would lead to the conclusion that the having any physical requirements militates against Egoism. But, on the contrary, we find they all afford scope for Egoism. We are likely to find in our surroundings the objects essential to our existence, and this comes out with regard to companionship just as with regard to materials for food, clothing and shelter. Egoism lies entirely in our attitude toward objects, not in our being constituted to have no need of them. We cannot fly, and we are subject to hunger and other appetites. Our needs serve to awaken our powers to activity and gives various occasions for converting threatened suffering into enjoyment,

if we meet everything in a thoroughly intrepid, Egoistic spirit. Even our need of social conversation is no derogation from Egoism. The man who uses and appropriates to himself the benefits of intercourse with others—of his choosing—is an intelligent Egoist, whereas the shrinking, solitary man is weaker: he attaches too much importance to something and he permits it to drive him from the field of activity and enjoyment.

Theoretically and practically the position of a married woman is in all essential respects the opposite of that which an Egoist would choose. Still, there is no position in which one may accidentally find oneself (short of actual imprisonment) that can make any difference to the individual comparable in effect to the difference between Egoism (mental liberty) and non-Egoism (mental slavery).

If a woman had sold herself into chattel slavery which the law forbids, she would feel no hesitation in repudiating the bargain. What is the difference in marriage? The difference lies in the social sanction. The victims await emancipation by social opinion. This is not Egoism, but its opposite.

## XXVI

Reared in Evangelical Christianity I [assed, between the ages of 15 and 18, through the stages of Biblical criticism and disbelief in Providence, on the ground of the supremacy of natural law, to Athesim.

As my religion had been an undoubting faith in and obedience to an ideal Ego—God—when I unbound myself from the web of theology, I fell heir to the sovereign attributes,—the liberty and the benevolence,—of the God who then became a myth. I did not cheat myself a day with Moral commandments without a Moral Lawgiver. Yet I felt and foresaw that what was gained by the intellect would not be easily translated into feeling and action for many years to come, such was the Moral susceptibility and force of habits, from early indoctrination. I said to myself as a youth: “I feel that not until I am 40 years of age shall I be able to act in all things as my judgment decides

for my own interest.” It was even so.

Thus in the first half of the sixties I was an Atheist and self-conscious Egoist. I associated with Atheists and took part in their propaganda before I was 20 and for years after. But I found a false note among the Atheists, that theirs was the religion of Humanity with a Morality not less impressive upon the conscience than that connected with theology, purer because freed from superstition. They challenged comparison as to the Morality of their leaders and members with Christians,—the Christian standard being usually implied as to what constituted Morality. There were among them men impressed with the philosophy of Epicurus, of Hobbes, of D’Holbach and Spinoza, self-love as the foundation and sum of morals, but the drift of their discourses was that good morals would grow out of self-love, and still the morals were Christian morals. When an Atheist ceased to take an interest in the iconoclastic propaganda, he usually settled down into a selfish individual, a nonentity of ordinary morals, His Egoism was after the current ideas of rudimentary Egoism which orthodox Moralists propagate and his former associates simply regretted that he was no longer militant or contributory to the Atheistic church.

From the first of my mental independence, or Atheism, I repudiated conscience and a Moral standard; and I was equally dissatisfied with the attempted limitation of self-love, to grubbing for advantages over other people; certain that it was purely my pleasure or prudence which impelled me to any act, I declared in print, prior to 1870, that when an Atheist acts honestly toward another person it is because it is his pleasure to do so. This aroused a critic who affirmed the “sense of justice” governing Atheists. A pretty term, but when we have arrived at a “sense of justice” why do we inconvenience ourselves for it? I affirm a pleasure, a sentiment of good will and of art. There is no “must” about it with the Egoist. But with my Atheistic critic there was a spice of dictation, as who should say “you must yield to a sense of Duty to Humanity.” Hard by lurks bigotry.

Feuerbach's inversion of theology, turning “God is love,” into



“love is divine,” did not fascinate me. I saw in it a play on words, In my infancy God was a stern fact and when he became a myth, why, love was—love, not divine; goodness was what we find to make for our good; that is to say there was nothing divine; no such thing as goodness or badness except as relative to our welfare and no better reason why I should not be a cruel man than that I took no pleasure in cruelty, found no sense in it.

I have always rather pitied those who run passionately after the so-called good things which Christians and Moralists generally suppose must be the sole aim of Egoists. What fools are the fretful lusters after power, men covetous of others' goods, toilsome accumulators of what they cannot enjoy! Deluded Egoists!<sup>3</sup>

During the period I have mentioned and until the spring of 1872 I had no knowledge of Max Stirner's work, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (The Individual and his Property). But believe me that I devoured it so soon as I got hold of it. There for the first time I saw most plainly stated, my own thought, borne out by illustrations that will test the nerve of every professed Egoist. Who but Stirner has dared to suggest that the tie of blood is a superstition? Were it not that we have assurance of the speedy appearance of an English translation of his great work, I would here give something of a summary of its contents; but now, under the pleasing expectation, I may confine myself to a mention of one feature of that wonderful book. The author shows us the world divided into three epochs: first, Antiquity, in which men were terrorized by the forces of nature. Second, Christendom. Christ introduces the rule of the spirit, which destroys the fear of material things, but establishes the tyranny of the Idea. There is now a spook in every object. Third, the Unit, by the might of his own understanding and will, dismisses the spirits, the spooks; the rule of Ideas is broken. The Unit,—the Ego,—is not an abstract I. He is you, yourself, just as you are in flesh and blood, become simply sovereign, disdainful of all rule of Ideas, as Christ was of all rule of material powers.

Of the author's character as shown by his actions I will emphasize

only one feature. He recognized in the woman the individual, as free as she cares to be, precisely as he did in the man. When we read of another German author as Stirner's disciple, who differs from him so radically in this, we may think that author somewhat of a plagiarist, perhaps, but certainly not a disciple, as alleged.

Others again are springing up to classify the Ego and Egoism in philosophy. The Unit of Stirner is—yourself, if you like. You, as a person of flesh and blood, will not be successfully classified in “philosophy,” I think, if you grasp the idea and act on it. The old so-called philosophic Egoism was a disquisition on the common characteristics of men, a sort of generality. The real living Egoism is the fact of untrammelled mind in this or that person and the actions resulting, the end of the tyranny of general ideas.

## NOTES

1 Will the Union of Egoist legislate on the “debt” of grown children to their mother? Our Union will be based simply on our common interests. The interest must be clear to each Unit in order to command support for any rule. Only a minority can have a pecuniary interest in the above suggested claim. We may first eliminate all the men, as the children belong only to the mothers. We can also leave out all the women who have no children that are under our jurisdiction or likely to come under it, and those mothers who are content with the unrestricted control of their infant children to train and impress them as they will; content to blame themselves if a child proves ungrateful after ten or fifteen years of such opportunity to form its disposition. To my thinking the policy of awarding compensation in after years, would imply the policy of interfering with the mother's absolute control over the child during infancy, for in this control lies the making or spoiling of the child's character. I prefer to trust her entirely and leave her to face the results of her training of her child.

2 You say certain birds are monogamous and that this argues that man may be so. Accept the assurance that Egoists will be content to see the question resolved by the free play of instinct in the species, as you suggest. But the action of mankind, by legislation and social censure on the matter, looks very like a confession that they regard themselves as naturally constituted with an inclination to variety in love and needing a deal of

dragooning to make them good monogamists or passable counterfeits thereof.

3 A dwarfed, stunted conception of Egoism finds expression in the remark: "I do not believe in self-interest. I would not take another man's job." Indeed, sir, if you have a determination not to take it I am sure you will not take it-unless some stronger interest of yours comes into play. We will wait and see what you do. Professions are cheap.

# Anarchist Individualism in the Social Revolution

Renzo Novatore

1

Anarchist individualism as we understand it—and I say *we* because a substantial handful of friends think this like me—is hostile to every school and every party, every churchly and dogmatic moral, as well as every more or less academic imbecility. Every form of discipline, rule, and pedantry is repulsive to the sincere nobility of our vagabond and rebellious restlessness!

Individualism is, for us, creative force, immortal youth, exalting beauty, redemptive and fruitful war. It is the marvelous apotheosis of the flesh and the tragic epic of the spirit. Our logic is that of not having any. Our ideal is the categorical negation of all other ideals for the greatest and supreme triumph of the actual, real, instinctive, reckless, and merry life! For us perfection is not a dream, an ideal, a riddle, a mystery, a sphinx, but a vigorous and powerful, luminous and throbbing reality. All human beings are perfect in themselves. All they lack is the heroic courage of their perfection. Since the time that human beings first believed that life was a duty, a calling, a mission, it has meant shame for their power of being, and in following phantoms, they have denied themselves and distanced themselves from the real. When Christ said to human beings: “be yourselves, perfection is in you!” he launched a superb phrase that is the supreme synthesis of life.

It is useless that the bigots, theologians, and philosophers do their utmost with deceitful and dialectical sophisms to give a false interpretation to Christ’s words. But when Christ speaks this way to human beings, he disavows his entire calling to renunciation, to a mission, and to faith, and all the rest of his doctrine collapses miserably in the mud, knocked down by he himself. And here, and here alone, is Christ’s great tragedy. Let human beings open their misty eyes in the blinding sun of this truth, and they will find themselves face to face with their true and laughing redemption.

This is the ethical part of individualism, neither romantically

mystical nor idealistically monastic, neither moral nor immoral, but amoral, wild, furious, and warlike, that keeps its luminous roots voluptuously rooted in the phosphorescent perianth of pagan nature, and its verdant foliage resting on the purple mouth of virgin life.

2

To every form of human Society that would try to impose renunciations and artificial sorrow on our anarchic and rebellious I, thirsting for free and exulting expansion, we will respond with a roaring and sacrilegious howl of dynamite.

To all those demagogues of politics and of philosophy that carry in their pockets a beautiful system made by mortgaging a corner of the future, we respond with Bakunin: *Oafs and weaklings!* Every duty that they would like to impose on us we will furiously trample under our sacrilegious feet. Every shady phantom that they would place before our eyes, greedy for light, we will angrily rip up with our daringly profaning hands. Christ was ashamed of his own doctrine and he broke it first. Friedrich Nietzsche was afraid of his overhuman and made it die in the midst of his agonizing animals, asking pity of the higher man. But we are neither afraid nor ashamed of the liberated Human Being.

We exalt Prometheus, the sacrilegious thief who stole the eternal spark from Jove's heaven to animate the man of clay, and we glorify Hercules, the powerful, liberating hero.

3

Pagan nature has placed a Prometheus in the mind of every mortal human being, and a Hercules in the brain of every thinker. But morality, that disgusting enchantress of philosophers, peoples, and humanity, has glorified and sanctified the vulture exalting it as divine justice, and divine justice, which Comte humanized, has condemned the Hero.

The Plowman and the thinker have trembled before this baleful phantom and courage has remained defeated under the enormous

weight of fear.

But anarchist individualism is a brilliant and fatal torch that casts light into the darkness in the realm of fear and puts to flight the phantoms of divine justice that Comte humanized.

Individualism is the free and unconstrained song that reconnects the individual to the eternal and universal pan-dynamism, that is neither moral nor immoral, but that is everything: Nature and Life! What is Life? Depths and peaks, instinct and reason, light and darkness, mud and beauty, joy and sorrow. Disavowal of the past, domination of the present, longing and yearning for the future.

Life is all this. And all this is also individualism. Who seeks to escape Life? Who dares to deny it?

4

The Social Revolution is the sudden awakening of Prometheus after a fall into a faint of sorrow caused by the foul vulture that rips his heart to shreds. It is an attempt at self-liberation. But the chains with which the sinister god Jove had him chained on the Caucasus by the repugnant servant Vulcan cannot be broken except by the Titanic rebel Hero, son of Jove himself.

We rebel children of this putrid humanity that has chained human beings in the dogmatic mud of social superstitions will never miss bringing our tremendous axe blow down on the rusty links of this hateful chain.

Yes, we anarchist individualists are for Social Revolution, but in our way, it's understood!

5

The revolt of the individual against society is not given by that of the masses against governments. Even when the masses submit to governments, living in the sacred and shameful peace of their resignation, the anarchist individual lives against society because he is in a never-ending and irreconcilable war with it, but when, at a historical turning

point, he comes together with the masses in revolt, he raises his black flag with them and throws his dynamite with them.

The anarchist individualist is in the Social Revolution, not as a demagogue, but as a inciting element, not as an apostle, but as a living, effective, destructive force...

All past revolutions were, in the end, bourgeois and conservative. That which flashes on the red horizon of our magnificently tragic time will have for its aim the fierce socialist humanism. We, anarchist individualists, will enter into the revolution for an exclusive need of our own to set fire to and incite spirits. To make sure that, as Stirner says, it is not a new revolution that approaches, but rather an immense, proud, reckless, shameless, conscienceless crime that rumbles with the lightning on the horizon, and beneath which the sky, swollen with foreboding, grows dark and silent. And Ibsen: *There's only one revolution I recognize—that was truly, thoroughly radical—... I'm referring to the ancient Flood! That one alone was truly serious. But even then the devil lost his due: you know Noah took up the dictatorship. Let's make this revolution again, but more thoroughly. It requires real men as well as orators. So you bring on the roaring waters, I'll supply the powder keg to blow up the ark.*

Now since dictatorship will be—alas!—inevitable in the somber global revolution that sends its bleak glow from the east over our black cowardice, the ultimate task of we anarchist individualists will be that of blowing up the final ark with bomb explosions and the final dictator with Browning shots. The new society established, we will return to its margins to live our lives dangerously as noble criminals and audacious sinners! Because the anarchist individualist still means eternal renewal, in the field of art, thought, and action.

Anarchist individualism still means eternal revolt against eternal sorrow, the eternal search for new springs of life, joy and beauty. And we will still be such in Anarchy.

*written under the name of Mario Ferrento*  
Il Libertario

# Unbridled Freedom

Enzo Martucci

Stirner and Nietzsche were undoubtedly right. It is not true that my freedom ends where that of others begins. By nature my freedom has its end where my strength stops. If it disgusts me to attack human beings or even if I consider it to be contrary to my interests to do so, I abstain from conflict. But if, pushed by an instinct, a feeling, or a need, I lash out against my likes and meet no resistance or a weak resistance, I naturally become the dominator, the superman. If instead the others resist vigorously and return blow for blow, then I am forced to stop and come to terms. Unless I judge it appropriate to pay for an immediate satisfaction with my life.

It is useless to speak to people of renunciation, of morality, of duty, of honesty. It is stupid to want to constrain them, in the name of Christ or of humanity, not to step on each other's toes. Instead one tells each of them: "You are strong. Harden your will. Compensate, by any means, for your deficiencies. Conserve your freedom. Defend it against anyone who wants to oppress you".

And if every human being would follow this advice, tyranny would become impossible. I will even resist the one who is stronger than me. If I can't do it by myself, I will seek the aid of my friends. If my might is lacking, I will replace it with cunning. And balance will arise spontaneously from the contrast.

In fact, the only cause of social imbalance is precisely the herd mentality that keeps slaves prone and resigned under the master's whip.

"Human life is sacred. I cannot suppress it either in the other or in myself. And so I must respect the life of the enemy who oppresses me and brings me an atrocious and continuous pain. I cannot take the life of my poor brother, who is afflicted with a terminal disease that causes him terrible suffering, in order to shorten his torment. I cannot even free myself, through suicide, from an existence that I feel



as a burden.”

Why?

“Because,” the christians say, “Life is not our own. It is given to us by god and he alone can take it away from us.”

Okay. But when god gives life to us, it becomes ours. As Thomas Aquinas points out, god’s thought confers being in itself, objective reality, to the one who thinks. Thus, when god thinks of giving life to the human being, and by thinking of it, gives it to him, such life effectively becomes human, that is, an exclusive property of ours. Thus, we can take it away from each other, or anyone can destroy it in herself.

Emile Armand frees the individual from the state but subordinates him more strictly to society. For him, in fact, I cannot revoke the social contract when I want, but must receive the consent of my co-associates in order to release myself from the links of the association. If others don’t grant me such consent, I must remain with them even if this harms or offends me. Or yet, by unilaterally breaking the pact, I expose myself to the retaliation and vengeance of my former comrades. More societarian than this and one dies. But this is a societarianism of the Spartan barracks. What! Am I not my own master? Just because yesterday, under the influence of certain feelings and certain needs, I wanted to associate, today, when I have other feelings and needs and want to get out of the association, I can no longer do so. I must thus remain chained to my desire of yesterday. Because yesterday I desired one way, today I cannot desire another way. But then I am a slave, deprived of spontaneity, dependent on the consent of the associates.

According to Armand, I cannot break relationships because I should care about the sorrow and harm that I will cause the others if I deprive them of my person. But the others don’t care about the sorrow and harm that they cause me by forcing me to remain in their company when I feel like going away. Thus, mutuality is lacking. And if I want to leave the association, I will go when I decide, so much the more if, in making the agreement to associate, I have communicated

to the comrades that I will maintain my freedom to break with it at any time. In doing this, one does not deny that some societies might have long lives. But in this case, it is a feeling or an interest sensed by all that maintain the union. Not an ethical precept as Armand would like.

From christians to anarchists (?) all moralists insist that we distinguish between freedom, based on responsibility, and license, based on caprice and instinct. Now it is good to explain. A freedom that, in all of its manifestations, is always controlled, reined in, led by reason, is not freedom. Because it lacks spontaneity. Thence, it lacks life.

What is my aim? To destroy authority, to abolish the state, to establish freedom for everyone to live according to her nature as he sees and desires it. Does this aim frighten you, fine sirs? Well then, I have nothing to do. Like Renzo Novatore, I am beyond the arc.

When no one commands me, I do what I want. I abandon myself to spontaneity or I resist it. I follow instincts or I rein them in with reason, at various times, according to which is stronger within me.

In short, my life is varied and intense precisely because I don't depend upon any rule.

Moralists of all schools instead claim the opposite. They demand that life always be conformed to a single norm of conduct that makes it monotonous and colorless. They want human beings to always carry out certain actions and to always abstain from all the others.

“You must, in every instance, practice love, forgiveness, renunciation of worldly goods and humility. Otherwise you will be damned”, say the Gospels.

“You must, in each moment, defeat egoism and be unselfish. Otherwise you will remain in absurdity and sorrow,” Kant points out.

“You must always resist instinct and appetite, showing yourself to be balanced, thoughtful and wise on every occasion. If you don't, we will brand you with the mark of anarchist infamy and treat you as a tyrant,” Armand passes judgment.

In short, they all want to impose the rule that mutilates life and

turns human beings into equal puppets that perpetually think and act in the same way. And this occurs because we are surrounded by priests: priests of the church and priests who oppose it, believing and atheistic Tartuffes. And all claim to catechize us, to lead us, to control us, to bridle us, offering us a prospect of earthly or supernatural punishments and rewards. But it is time for the free human being to rise up: the one who knows how to go against all priests and priestliness, beyond laws and religions, rules and morality. And who knows how to go further beyond. Still further beyond.

# Egoism

John Beverley Robinson

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

Again, it is identified with hedonism, or Epicureanism, philosophies that teach that the attainment of pleasure or happiness or advantage, whichever you may choose to phrase it, is the rule of life.

Modern egoism, as propounded by Stirner and Nietzsche, and expounded by Ibsen, Shaw and others, is all these; but it is more. It is realization by the individual that he *is* an individual; that, as far as he is concerned, he is the *only* individual.

For each one of us stands alone in the midst of a universe. He is surrounded by sights and sounds which he interprets as exterior to himself, although all he knows of them are the impressions on his retina and ear drums and other organs of sense. The universe for him is measured by these sensations; they are, for him, the universe. Some of them he interprets as denoting other individuals, whom he conceives as more or less like himself. But none of these *is* himself. He stands apart. His consciousness, and the desires and gratifications that enter into it, is a thing unique; no other can enter into it.

But egoism is more than this. It is the realization by the individual that he is above all institutions and all formulas; that they exist only so far as he chooses to make them his own by accepting them.

When you see clearly that *you* are the measure of the universe, that everything that exists, exists for *you* only so far as it is reflected in your own consciousness, you become a new man; you see everything by a new light: you stand on a height and feel the fresh air blowing

on your face; and find new strength and glory in it.

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

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

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

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

an all-devouring ideal. Curious, is it not, to one who looks on with a philosophical mind?

But the egoist has no ideals, for the knowledge that his ideals are only *his* ideals, frees him from their domination. He acts for his own interest, not for the interest of ideals. He will neither hang a man nor whip a child in the interest of "morality", if it is disagreeable for him to do so.

He has no reverence for "The State". He knows that "The Government" is but a set of men, mostly as big fools as he is himself, many of them bigger. If the State does things that benefit him, he will benefit; if it attacks him and encroaches on his liberty, he will evade it by any means in his power, if he is not strong enough to withstand it. He is a man without a country.

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

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

And for all the other small, tenuous ideals, with which we have fettered our minds and to which we have shrunk our petty lives; they are for the egoist as though they were not.

In brief, egoism in its modern interpretation, is the antithesis, not of altruism, but of idealism. The ordinary man—the idealist—subordinates his interests to the interests of his ideals, and usually suffers for it. The egoist is fooled by no ideals: he discards them or uses them, as may suit his own interest.

# Stirner, Marx, and Fascism

S.E. Parker

John Carroll, in his introduction to his abridged edition of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, quotes "the Polish Marxist" Leszek Kolakowski as stating that "Stirner's grounds are irrefutable. Even Nietzsche seems inconsequential to him." It would seem that either Kolakowski has changed his mind, or Carroll has misquoted him, for a glance at the section on Max Stirner in the first volume of Kolakowski's book *Main Currents of Marxism* reveals an all-too-familiar Marxist "critique" of Stirner's philosophy.

In the space of eight pages the reader is treated to several of the usual "interpretations". We are told, for example, that egoism would mean "a return to animality and the unbridled sway of individual passion", and that Stirner condemned "culture in the name of the monadic sovereignty of the individual". Both of these accusations were explicitly denied by Stirner, but this does not deter Mr. Kolakowski. Having made such statements without bothering to document them, he goes on to write the following passage:

As recent studies by Helms have shown, Stirner's doctrines inspired not only anarchists but various German groups who were the immediate precursors of fascism. At first sight, Nazi totalitarianism may seem the opposite of Stirner's radical individualism. But fascism was above all an attempt to dissolve the social ties created by history and replace them by artificial bonds among individuals who were expected to render implicit obedience to the State on grounds of absolute egoism. Fascist education combined the tenets of asocial egoism and unquestioning conformism, the latter being the means by which the individual secured his own niche in the system. Stirner's philosophy has nothing to say against conformism, it only objects to the Ego being subordinated to any higher principle: the egoist



is free to adjust to the world if it appears that he will better himself by doing so. His “rebellion” may take the form of utter servility if it will further his interest; what he must not do is be bound by “general” values or myths of humanity. The totalitarian ideal of a barrack-like society from which all real, historical ties have been eliminated is perfectly consistent with Stirner’s principles: the egoist, by his very nature, must be prepared to fight under any flag that suits his convenience.

This is a typical piece of Marxist nonsense. No one could be more obsessed with the creation of “social ties” based on “history” than the fascists. Vidkun Quisling, the Norwegian fascist, wrote

we recognize the profound truth of the historic past as well as the historic present...we must be permitted to believe in the continual historical and divine mission of the Nordic people’s of the world.

And far from being “asocial” the fascists insisted on the “organic society” as the goal of their effort. Fascism, stated Mussolini, “is always... an organic conception of the world”. Like the Marxists, fascists were strident opponents of “atomic individualism” and loved to attribute causal efficacy to abstractions such as “History”. As for their “egoism” fascists continually denounced “selfishness” and “individualism”. The First Programme of the German Nazi Party proclaimed the principle “the common interest before the self”. The Belgian fascist Jean Denis wrote: “The human being thrives not by referring everything to itself in a vain and selfish individualism but, on the contrary, by giving up the self and becoming part of communities”. And his colleague Leon Degrelle concurred when he stated:

This is the true Fascist miracle; this faith, the unspoilt, burning confidence, the complete lack of selfishness and individualism, the tension of the whole being towards the service...of a cause

which transcends the individual, demanding all, promising nothing.

What has such insistent altruism got to do with Stirner's conscious egoism? The answer is clear: nothing!

Where Kolakowski gets the idea that "Stirner's philosophy has nothing to say against conformism" is a mystery to me. Conformism rests upon the principle that the ego **must** subordinate itself to a "higher principle" and on Kolakowski's own admission Stirner's philosophy opposes that. At one point Kolakowski even summarizes Stirner as saying "My Ego is sovereign, it recognizes no authority or constraints such as humanity, the truth, morality, or the State".

It is certainly true that Stirner thought that a conscious egoist might at times have to **pretend** conformity if he or she does not have enough power to assert him/herself openly against authority. But such strategies are firmly based on a recognition of the purely prudential nature of such a pretense, as is shown in the following example given by Stirner:

The fetters of reality cut the sharpest welts in my flesh every moment. But **my own** I remain. Given up as a serf to a master, I think only of myself and my advantage; his blows strike me, indeed I am not **free** from them; but I endure them only for **my benefit**, perhaps in order to deceive him and make him secure by the semblance of patience, or again, not to draw worse upon myself by contumacy. But, as I keep my eye on myself and my selfishness, I take by the forelock the first good opportunity to trample the slaveholder into the dust. That I then become **free** from him and his whip is only the consequence of my antecedent egoism.

Thus the only relationship an egoist has with the "totalitarian ideal of a barrack-like society" is that of a prisoner of war waiting for the first chance to escape from his captors.

Kolakowski claims that Marx “seeks to preserve the principle of individuality—not, however, as something antagonistic to the general interest, but as completely coincident with it”. This is, no doubt, intended as a contrast to Stirner’s view “Let us therefore not aspire to community, but to **one-sidedness**”. Marx’s “preservation of individuality”, however, is highly suspect. According to Kolakowski when communism is achieved “the individual will accept the community as his own interiorized nature.” In other words, the conformity of community will be manifested as “conscience” and the individual will be “integrated” into the “community” by virtue of the command of an internalized authority.

Again, “it was Marx’s view that under communism men’s individual possibilities would display themselves **only in socially constructive ways**” (my emphasis). But who will decide what is “socially constructive” and what criteria will be used? What happens if an individual persists in behaving in socially **unconstructive** ways? Marx may have advanced “the outlines of a theory in which true individuality...is enabled to find a place in the community without sacrificing the uniqueness of its own essence”, but fine words like these are cheap and are apt to evaporate when confronted with what is construed as “asocial egoism”. The trouble with Marx’s “outline”, like all outlines of this sort, is that what is “true individuality” is decided by those who do the outlining, and those whose individuality is “untrue” stand a good chance of finding themselves at the wrong end of a gun—or its “therapeutic” equivalent.

Kolakowski claims that Marx believed that under communism “there is no question of uniformity being either imposed or voluntarily accepted”. Nonetheless, despite the promise that “in a communist society the universal development of individuals is no empty phase”, this could not take place by means of “the assertion of his rights against the community”. Community, community, community—always the “community”! But if I cannot assert “my right” “against the community” then my “unique essence” must be identical with the communal

“essence” and **my** “essence” will be nothing but an expression of the “community”. No wonder that Stirner’s one reference to Marx pointedly remarks that “To identify me now entirely with Man the demand has been invented, and stated, that I must become a real generic being”. Marx may have abandoned his talk about the spook “Man”, but he did so only to replace it with the spook “community”.

Preceding the quotation from the fascist Jean Denis that I gave above are the words “The concept of the **individual** which forms the erroneous philosophical foundation of the present regime...must be replaced with the concept of the **human being** which corresponds exactly to the reality of Man—a social being endowed with a fundamental dignity, which society can help develop and with which it has no right to interfere”. That is, of course, conditional upon “the giving up of the (untrue) self and becoming part of the communities”. In what way do Denis and Marx differ in their conception of “the community”? It is clear that both fascist and communist are at one on this point. Both think that the “true self” or the “true human being” can only be achieved when the “true community” has been brought about by means of the proper “historical development”. Both, despite their protestations to the contrary, view the individual as the subject of a religion of society whose content and context are decided by them.

Marxism, like fascism, is a philosophy of the herd.

Marxism, like fascism, is an enemy of individualism.

**My** uniqueness, as a Stirnerian individualist, is a result of my awareness of myself as a specific individual living at a particular time who cannot be defined by the gafflegab of peddlers of social salvation. **I** am here and now—not there and then.



# Freedom and Solitude

Marilisa Fiorina

Anarchy is the negation of authority of whatever kind, it is affection and solitude.

L. Ferre

To be alone, liberated from the yoke of collective life. Here is the most logical system for being truly free—free from convention, from dependence and the extortions of others. It is solitude alone that makes the individual really free.

Each day we are victims of hypocrisy, continually reciting the rules of bourgeois etiquette: “thank you...excuse me...I am sorry”. **Others** flatter, judge, criticize. **Others** decide for us, **others** live on our weaknesses, **others** cheat us, **others** steal from us, **others**, always **others**, usurp our lives.

It is they who love us, who hate us, who betray us, rob us of our thoughts, words, **life**. It would be logical to leave them all, to flee physically and mentally to a proper island of solitude, self-sufficient and courageous. Courageous? Courageous because it is difficult, because we are incapable of living really alone, because we have need of contact with others in order to express our feelings, to realize ourselves, even for the simplification of our actions.

It is difficult for one individual, weak, even psychologically insecure, to do without friendship, love and solidarity. And then, clearly, life in solitude would appear monotonous because, as always, our emotions, our adventures, arise from others, evolve among others.

There is another solitude, perhaps more understood, more naturally respected, than that of the hermit. It is when you no longer feel a part of these others, when you no longer participate in their mode of living, making a world apart from them in which they no longer count, from which they are excluded. It is when you no longer accept their love, their benevolence, their hypocrisy—and your solitude then

becomes **freedom, rebellion**, it is open defiance of **society**.

Anarchist individualists are alone, their life lies outside the rules imposed by others. They choose the individuals whom it pleases them to have near, to listen. The others they regard as if they were non-existent, or as enemies. Individualists live beyond the walls of society—but not as those driven out... They are mental, rather than physical, fugitives, and their solitude is **loved**, it is the realization of their **free** thought.

Translated by Stephen Marletta

**part two**





## The unitary triad: self realisation, communication, participation

(from *Treatise on Living for the Younger Generations*  
aka *The Revolution of Everyday Life*)

Raoul Vaneigem

*The repressive unity of Power is three-fold: constraint, seduction and mediation are its three functions. This unity is merely the reflection of an equally tripartite, unitary project, its form inverted and perverted by the techniques of dissociation. In its chaotic, underground development, the new society tends to find practical expression as a transparency in human relationships which promotes the participation of everyone in the self-realisation of everyone else. Creativity, love and play are to life what the needs for nourishment and shelter are to survival (1). The project of self-realisation is grounded in the passion to create (2); the project of communication is grounded in the passion of love (4); the project of participation is grounded in the passion for play (6). Whenever these three projects are separated, Power's repressive unity is reinforced. Radical subjectivity is the pressure—discernible in practically everyone at the present time—of an indivisible will to build a passion-filled life (3). The erotic is the spontaneous coherence which gives practical unity to attempts to enrich lived experience (5).*

THE CONSTRUCTION of daily life implies the most thoroughgoing fusion of reason and passion. The mystery with which life has always been deliberately surrounded has as its main function the concealment of survival's basic triviality. The will to live entails the demand for some measure of organisation. The attraction which the promise of a rich, multi-dimensional life has for each individual inevitably takes the form of a project governed in whole as in part by the very social power whose job it is to repress such desires. The oppression exercised by human government is essentially three-fold: constraint, alienating mediation and magical seduction. The will to live also draws its vitality and its coherence from the unity of a three-

fold project: self-realisation, communication and participation.

If human history was neither reduced to, nor dissociated from, the history of human survival, the dialectic of this three-fold project, in conjunction with the dialectic of the productive forces, would prove sufficient explanation for most things human beings have done to themselves and to one another. Every riot, every revolution, reveals a passionate quest for exuberant life, for total clarity in human relations, for a collective form of transformation of the world. In fact three fundamental passions seem to inform historical development, passions that are to life as the needs for nourishment and shelter are to survival. The desire to create, the desire to love and the desire to play interact with the need to eat and the need to find shelter, just as the will to live never ceases to play havoc with the necessity of surviving. Naturally these factors have no significance outside their historical context, but the history of their dissociation is precisely what must be challenged by a continual invocation of their unity.

Today, with the welfare state, the question of survival tends to be subsumed under the problem of life as a whole, as I hope to have shown. Life-economy has gradually absorbed survival-economy, and in this context the dissociation of the three projects, and of the passions underlying them, emerges ever more clearly as an extension of the aberrant distinction between life and survival. Since the whole of existence is torn between two perspectives—that of separation, of Power, and that of revolution, of unity—and is therefore essentially ambiguous, I shall discuss each project at once separately and unitarily.

### i

The project of self-realisation is born of the passion for creation, in the moment when subjectivity wells up and aspires to reign universally. The project of communication is born of the passion of love, whenever people discover that they share the same desire for amorous conquest. The project of participation is born of the passion for playing, whenever group activity facilitates the self-realisation of each individual.

Isolated, the three passions are perverted. Dissociated, the three

projects are falsified. The will to self-realisation is turned into the will to power; sacrificed to status and role-playing, it reigns in a world of restrictions and illusions. The will to communication becomes objective dishonesty; based on relationships between objects, it provides the semiologists with signs to dress up in human guise. The will to participation serves to organise the loneliness of everyone in the crowd; it creates the tyranny of the illusion of community.

Once cut off from the others, any of these passions may be incorporated as an absolute into a metaphysical vision which renders it inaccessible. Out philosophers will have their little joke: first they turn off the main switch, then they say the power has failed. Thus full self-realisation becomes a chimera, unobfuscated communication becomes a pipe dream, and the idea of social harmony becomes a passing fad. True enough, so long as separation is the order of the day, everyone is confronted by impossibilities. The Cartesian mania for cutting everything up into little pieces, and for succeeding only one step at a time, necessarily produces an incomplete and crippled reality. No wonder that the armies of Order must be recruited from the ranks of the halt and the lame.

### **The project of self realisation**

*The guarantee of material security leaves unused a large supply of energy formerly expended in the struggle for survival. The will to power tries to recuperate this free-floating energy, which should serve the blossoming of individual life, for the reinforcement of hierarchical slavery (A). Universal oppression forces almost everyone to withdraw strategically towards what they feel to be their only uncontaminated possession: their subjectivity. The revolution of everyday life must create practical forms for the countless attacks on the outside world launched daily by subjectivity (B).*

(A) The historical stage of privative appropriation has prevented man from himself becoming a creator God, obliging him instead to create such a God in ideal form in order to compensate for this failure. At heart, everyone wants to be God, hut up to now this desire has been

turned against humanity itself. I have shown how hierarchical social organisation builds the world up by breaking men down; how the perfection of its structure and machinery makes it function like a giant computer whose programmers are also programmed; how the cybernetic State being prepared for us will be the masterwork of men become the most cold-hearted of monsters. In these conditions, the struggle for enough to eat, for comfort, for stable employment and for security are, on the social front, so many aggressive raids which are slowly but surely becoming rearguard actions, their very real importance notwithstanding. The struggle for survival took up and still takes up an energy and creativity which are destined to fall on the welfare state like a pack of ravening wolves. Despite false conflicts and illusory activities, a constantly simulated creative energy is no longer being absorbed fast enough by consumer society. What will happen to this vitality suddenly at a loose end, to this surplus virility which neither coercion nor lies can really continue to handle? No longer recuperated by artistic and cultural consumption—by the ideological spectacle—creativity will turn spontaneously against the conditions of survival itself.

Rebels have nothing to lose but their survival. But there are two ways of losing it: by giving up life or by seeking to construct it. Since survival is simply to die very slowly, there is a temptation, containing a very great deal of genuine feeling, to speed the whole thing up and to die as fast as possible. To 'live' the negation of survival negatively. On the other hand, one can try and survive as an anti-survivor, focusing all one's energy on the enrichment of daily life. Survival can be negated through incorporation into joyous constructive activity. Both solutions further the unitary yet contradictory tendency of the dialectic of decomposition and transcendence.

Self-realisation cannot be divorced from transcendence. No matter how ferocious, the rebellion of desperation remains prisoner to the authoritarian dilemma: survival or death. This half rebellion, this savage creativity, so easily broken in by the order of *things* is the will to power.

## i

The will to power is the project of self-realisation falsified—divorced from communication and participation. It is the passion for creation, for self-creation, caught up in the hierarchical system, condemned to turn the mill of repression and appearances. Prestige and humiliation, authority and submission: the only music to which the will to power can dance. The hero sacrifices to the power of his role and his rifle. And when, finally, he is burnt out, he follows Voltaire's advice and cultivates his garden. Meantime his mediocrity becomes a model for the common run of mortals.

The hero, the ruler, the superstar, the millionaire, the expert... how often have they sold out all they held most dear? How many sacrifices have they made to force people, whether a few people or a few million, whom they necessarily take for fools (otherwise they themselves would be fools!) to put their photograph on the wall, to remember their name, to stare at them in the street.

And yet the will to power does contain traces of an authentic will to live. Think of the *virtù* of the *condottiere*, of the exuberance of the giants of the Renaissance. But the *condottieri* are dead and buried. All we have left are industrial magnates, gangsters and hired guns, dealers in art and artillery. For an adventurer, we are given Tintin; for an explorer, Albert Schweitzer. And with these people Zarathustra dreamt of peopling the heights of Sils-Maria; in these abortions he thought he could see the adumbration of a future race! Nietzsche is, in fact, the last master, crucified by his own illusions. His death was a replay, with more brio and more wit, of the comedy of Golgotha. It explains the disappearance of the feudal lords just as Christ's death explained the disappearance of God. Nietzsche may have had a refined sensibility but the stench of Christianity did not stop him breathing it in by the lungful. And he pretends not to understand that Christianity, however much contempt it may have poured on the will to power, is in fact its best means of protection, its most faithful bodyguard, since it stands in the way of the emergence of masters without slaves. Nietzsche thus blessed a hierarchical world in which the will to live condemns itself

never to be more than the will to power. His last letters were signed 'Dionysus the Crucified': he too was looking for a master, to whom he might humbly offer a crippled vitality. Meddling with the witch doctor of Bethlehem is a dangerous business.

Nazism is Nietzschean logic called to order by history. The question was: what can become of those who would be masters in a society from which all true masters have disappeared? And the answer: a super-slave. Even Nietzsche's concept of the superman, however threadbare it may have been, is worlds away from what we know of the flunkys who ran the Third Reich. Fascism knows only one superman: the State.

The State as superman is the strength of the weak. This is why the demands of an isolated individual can always fit in with a role played impeccably in the official spectacle. The will to power is an exhibitionistic will. The isolated individual detests other people, feels contempt for the masses of which he is a perfect specimen himself. He is, in fact, the most contemptible man of all. Showing off, amidst the crassest sort of illusory community, is his 'dynamism'; the rat-race is the perfect arena for him to display his 'love of danger'.

The manager, the leader, the tough guy, the mobster knows little joy. Ability to endure is his main qualification. His ethic is that of the pioneer, the spy, the scout—the shock-troops of conformity. "No animal would have done what I have done..." A will to *appear* since one cannot *be*: a way of escaping the emptiness of one's own existence by proclaiming one's existence ever more noisily. But only servants are proud of their sacrifices. The sovereignty of things is absolute here: now the artificiality of the role, now the 'authenticity' of an animal. Only animals can do what a human being would refuse to do. The heroes who march past, colours flying—the Red Army, the SS, the French *paras*—are the same people who burnt and cut living flesh in Budapest, Warsaw, Algiers. The discipline of armies has no other content than the canine savagery of the new recruit; the only thing a cop learns is when to snarl and when to fawn.

The will to power is a compensation for slavery. At the same time it is a hatred of slavery. The great men of the past never identified themselves with a Cause. They just used Causes to further their own personal hunger for power. But as great Causes began to break up and disappear, so did the ambitious individuals concerned. However, the game goes on. People rely on Causes because they haven't been able to make their own life a Cause sufficient unto itself. Through the Cause and the sacrifice it entails they stagger along, backwards, in search of their own will to live.

Sometimes desire for freedom and for play breaks out among law and order's conscripts. Think of Salvatore Giuliano, before he was co-opted by the landowners, of Billy the Kid, of various gangsters momentarily close to the anarchist terrorists. Legionnaires and mercenaries have defected to the side of the Algerian or Congolese rebels, thus choosing the party of open insurrection and taking their desire to play to its logical conclusion: the breaking of all taboos and the aspiration to complete freedom.

Teenage gangs also come to mind. The very childishness of their will to power has often kept their will to live almost uncontaminated. Obviously, the delinquent is always liable to be co-opted. First, as consumer, because he wants things he cannot afford to buy; then as he gets older, as a producer. But, within the gang, playing remains of such great importance that a real revolutionary consciousness is always a possible outcome. If the violence of teenage gangs were not squandered in exhibitionistic and generally half-baked rumbles, and aspired instead to the real poetry which is to be found in a riot, then this game-playing could easily set off a chain reaction: a qualitative flash. Almost everyone is sick of the lies they are fed all day long. All that is needed is a spark—plus tactics. Should delinquents arrive at revolutionary consciousness simply through understanding what they already are, and by wanting to be more, they could quite conceivably become the catalyst of a widescale reversal of perspective. The federation of such gangs would amount to a first manifestation of that



consciousness, and a precondition of its existence.

(B) So far the centre has never been man. Creativity has always been pushed to one side, suburbanised. Indeed, the history of cities is a very accurate reflection of the vicissitudes of the axis around which life has been organised for thousands of years. The first cities grew up around a stronghold or sacred spot, a temple or a church, a point where heaven and earth converged. Industrial towns, with their mean, dark streets, are focussed on a factory or industrial plant; administrative centres preside over empty rectilinear avenues. Finally, the most recent examples of city planning simply have no centre at all. It is increasingly obvious that the reference point they propose is *always somewhere else*. These are labyrinths in which you are allowed only to lose yourself. No games. No meetings. No living. A desert of plate-glass. A grid of roads. High-rise flats. Oppression is no longer centralised because oppression is everywhere. The positive aspect of this: everyone begins to see, in conditions of almost total isolation, that first and foremost it is they themselves that they have to save, they themselves that they have to choose as the centre, their own subjectivity out of which they have to build a world in which people can feel at home anywhere.

The only way of retrieving everyone's truth, the true roots of the social, is to retrieve a clear consciousness of oneself. As long as individual creativity is not the centre of social life, man's only freedom will be freedom to destroy and be destroyed. If you do other people's thinking for them, they will do your thinking for you. And he who thinks for you judges you; he reduces you to his own norm; and, whatever his intentions may be, he will end by making you stupid—for stupidity doesn't come from a lack of intelligence, as stupid people imagine, it comes from renouncing, from abandoning one's true self. So if anyone asks you what you're doing, asks you to explain yourself, treat him as a judge—that is to say, as an enemy.

“I want someone to succeed me; I want children; I want disciples; I want a father; I don't want myself.” A few words from those high on Christianity, whether the Roman or the Peking brand. Only unhap-

piness and neurosis can follow. My subjectivity is too important for me to take my lack of inhibition to the point of either asking other people for their help or of refusing it when it is offered. The point is neither to lose oneself in oneself nor to lose oneself in other people. People who realise that they depend ultimately on society must still first of all find themselves, else they will find nothing in others save the negation of themselves.

Strengthening the subjective centre is no easy matter—it is even hard to talk about. In the heart of each human being there is a hidden room, a *camera obscura*, to which only the mind and dreams can find the door. A magic circle in which the world and the self are reconciled, where every childish wish comes true. The passions flower there, brilliant, poisonous blossoms wide open to the mood of the moment. I create a universe for myself and, like some fantastic tyrannical god, people it with beings who will never live for anyone else. One of my favourite James Thurber stories is the one where Walter Mitty dreams that he is a swashbuckling captain, then an eminent surgeon, then a cold-blooded killer, and finally a war hero. All this as he drives his old Buick downtown to buy some dog biscuits.

The real importance of subjectivity can easily be measured by the general embarrassment with which it is approached. Everyone wants to pass it off as their mind ‘wandering’, as ‘introversion’, as ‘being stoned’. Everyone censors their own daydreams. But isn’t it the phantoms and visions of the mind that have dealt the most deadly blows to morality, authority, language and our collective hypnotic sleep? Isn’t a fertile imagination the source of all creativity, the alembic distilling the quick of life: the bridehead driven into the old world across which the coming invasions will pour?

Anyone who can be open-minded about their interior life will begin to see a different world outside themselves: values change, things lose their glamour and become plain instruments. In the magic of the imaginary, things exist only to be picked up and toyed with, caressed, broken apart and put together again in any way one sees

fit. Once the prime importance of subjectivity is accepted the spell things cast upon us is broken. Starting from other people, one's self-pursuit is fruitless; one repeats the same futile gestures time after time. Starting from oneself, on the contrary, gestures are not repeated but taken back into oneself, corrected and realised in an ideal way.

Our innermost dreams secrete an energy that demands nothing better than to drive the turbines of circumstance. The high technology of today bars the road to Utopia, and by the same token it suppresses the purely magical aspect of the dream. But all our dreams will come true when the modern world's technical know-how is placed at their disposal.

Even now—even without any help from technology—can subjectivity ever be really far from the mark? It is by no means impossible for me to give objective form to everything I have ever dreamt of being. Surely everyone, at least once in their life, has been a little like a Lassailly or a Nechaev: Lassailly, passing himself off at first as the author of a book he had never written, ended up as a true writer, as the author of the *Roueries de Trialph*; Nechaev, who began by cheating money out of Bakunin in the name of a non-existent terrorist organisation, would later become the guiding light of an authentic group of nihilists. One day I must be as I have wanted to seem; the particular spectacular role I have so long aspired to will surely become genuine. Thus subjectivity subverts roles and spectacular lies to its own ends: it reinvests appearance in reality.

Subjective imagination is not purely mental: it is always seeking its practical realisation. There can be no doubt that the artistic spectacle—and above all its narrative forms—plays on subjectivity's quest for self-realisation, but solely by captivating it, by making it function in terms of passive identification. Debord's propaganda film *Critique de la séparation* stresses the point: "As a rule the things that happen to us in our individual lives as organised at present, the things which really succeed in catching our attention and soliciting our involvement, are the very things that ought to leave us cold and distant spectators.

By contrast many a situation glimpsed through the lens of any old piece of artistic transposition is the very one that should attract us, and engage our participation. This paradox must be turned upside down—put back on its feet.”The forces of the artistic spectacle must be dissolved so that their equipment can pass into the arsenal of individual dreams. Once they are thus armed, there will be no question of treating them as fantasies. This is the only way in which the problem of the realisation of art can be framed.

### **Radical subjectivity**

*Each subjectivity is unique, but all obey the same will to self-realisation. The problem is one of setting their variety in a common direction, of creating a united front of subjectivity. Any attempt to build a new society is subject to two conditions: first, that the realisation of each individual subjectivity will either take place in a collective form or it will not take place at all; and second, that “To tell the truth, the only reason anyone fights is for what they love. Fighting for everyone else is only the consequence.” (Saint-Just)*

MY SUBJECTIVITY feeds on events. The most varied events: a riot, a sexual fiasco, a meeting, a memory, a rotten tooth. The shock waves of reality in the making reverberate through the caverns of subjectivity. I am caught up in these oscillations whether I like it or not, and, though not everything affects me with equal force, I am always faced with the same paradox: no sooner do I become aware of the alchemy worked by my imagination upon reality than I see that reality reclaimed and borne away by the uncontrollable river of things. A bridge has to be built between the work of the imagination and the objective world. Only radical theory can confer on the individual inalienable rights over his surroundings and circumstances. Radical theory grasps the individual at the roots—and the roots of the individual lie in his subjectivity, in that soil which he possesses in common with all other individuals.

You can't make it on your own. But can any individual—any

individual who has got anything at all straight about himself and the world—fail to see a will identical to his own in everyone he knows: the same search, the same starting points?

All forms of hierarchical power differ from one another, yet all perform identical oppressive functions. Similarly, all subjectivities are different, but all contain an identical desire for complete self-realisation. This is the sense in which we speak of ‘radical subjectivity’.

Each individual subjectivity is rooted in the will to realise oneself by transforming the world, the will to live every sensation, every experience, every possibility to the full. It can be seen in everyone, its intensity varying according to the degree of consciousness and determination. Its real power depends on the level of collective unity it can attain without losing its variety. Consciousness of this necessary unity comes from what one could call a *reflex of identity*—a diametrically opposite movement to that of identification. Through identification we lose our uniqueness in the multiplicity of roles; through the reflex of identity we strengthen the wealth of our individual possibilities in the unity of federated subjectivities.

Radical subjectivity is founded on the reflex of identity, on the individual’s constant quest for himself *in others*. “While I was on a mission in the state of T’chou,” says Confucius, “I saw some piglets sucking on their dead mother. After a short while they shuddered and went away. They had sensed that she could no longer see them and that *she was not like them any more*. What they loved in their mother was not her body, but whatever it was that made her body live.” Likewise, what I look for in other people is the richest part of myself hidden within them. Is the reflex of identity bound to spread? Not necessarily. But present-day historical conditions certainly favour such a development.

No one is questioning the interest people take in being fed, sheltered, cared for, protected from hardship and disaster. The imperfections of technology—transformed at a very early date into social imperfections—have postponed the satisfaction of these universal desires. Today, however, a planned economy allows us to foresee the final so-

lution of the problems of survival. Now that the needs of survival are well on the way to being satisfied, at least in the hyper-industrialised countries, it is becoming painfully obvious that there are also human passions which must be satisfied, that the satisfaction of these passions is of vital importance to everyone and, furthermore, that failure to satisfy them will undermine, if not destroy, all our acquisitions in the realm of material survival. As the problems of survival are slowly but surely resolved, they clash more and more brutally with the problems of life, which, just as slowly and just as surely, are sacrificed to the needs of survival. In a way, this simplifies matters: it is now obvious that socialist-type planning is incompatible with the true harmonisation of life in common.

**i**

Radical subjectivity is the common front of identity rediscovered. Those who cannot see themselves in other people are condemned for ever to be strangers to themselves. I can do nothing for other people if they can do nothing for themselves. This is the context in which we should re-examine such words as 'knowledge', 'recognition', 'sympathy' and 'supporter'.

Knowledge is only of value if it leads to the recognition of a common project—to the reflex of identity. True self-realisation calls for a good deal of knowledge of various kinds but much knowledge is worthless if it is not placed in the service of self-realisation. As the first years of the Situationist International have shown, the main enemies of a coherent revolutionary group are those closest to that group in knowledge and furthest away from it in their lived experience and the sense they give it. In the same way 'supporters' who identify with the group become an obstacle in its path. They understand everything except what is really at stake. They demand knowledge because they are incapable of demanding their own self-realisation.

By grasping myself, I break other people's hold over me, and thus let them see themselves in me. No one can develop in freedom without spreading freedom in the world.

“I want to be myself. I want to walk without impediment. I want to affirm myself alone in my freedom. May everyone do likewise. The fate of revolution need not concern us: it will be safer in the hands of everyone than in the hands of parties.” So said Coeurderoy. I agree one hundred per cent. Nothing gives me the right to speak in the name of other people. I am my own delegate. Yet at the same time I can’t help thinking that my life is not of concern to me alone, but that I serve the interests of thousands of other people by living the way I live, and by struggling to live more intensely and more freely. My friends and I are one, and we know it. Each of us is acting for each other by acting for himself. Such transparency is the only way to true participation.

### **The project of communication**

*Love offers the purest glimpse of true communication that any of us have had. But as communication in general tends to break down love becomes increasingly precarious. Everything tends to reduce lovers to objects. No real encounters, just mechanical sex—the posturing of countless playboys and bunnies. True love is revolutionary praxis or it is nothing.*

ALTHOUGH THE three passions underlying the three-fold project of self-realisation, communication and participation are equally important, they are not equally repressed. While creativity and play have been blighted by prohibitions and by every sort of distortion, love, without escaping from repression, still remains relatively the freest and most easily accessible experience. The most democratic, so to speak.

Love offers the model of perfect communication: the orgasm, the total fusion of two separate beings. It is a transformed universe glimpsed from the shadows of everyday survival. Its intensity, its here-and-nowness, its physical exaltation, its emotional fluidity, its eager acceptance of precariousness, of change: everything indicates that love will prove the key factor in recreating the world. Our emotionally dead survival cries out for multidimensional passions. Lovemak-

ing sums up and distils both the desire for, and the reality of, such a life. The universe lovers build of dreams and of one another's bodies is a transparent universe; lovers want to be at home everywhere.

Love has been able to stay free more successfully than the other passions. Creativity and play have always 'benefited' from an official representation, a spectacular acknowledgement which alienates them, as it were, at source. Love has always been clandestine—'being alone together'. It was lucky enough to be protected by the bourgeois concept of private life: banished from the day (reserved for work and consumption), it found refuge in the night's shadows, lit only by the moon. Thus it partly escaped the mopping-up operations to which daytime activities were subjected. The same cannot be said for communication. And now the ashes of false daytime communication are threatening to stifle even this spark of nocturnal passion. Consumer society is extending falsification further and further into the reaches of the night, where the simplest gestures of love are contaminated by its logic.

People who talk about 'communication' when there are only things and their mechanical relations are working on the side of the process of reification that they pretend to attack. 'Understanding', 'friendship', 'being happy together'—what can these words mean when all I can see is exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled, actors and spectators. And all of them flailed like chaff by Power.

Things are not necessarily expressionless. Anything can become human if someone infuses it with his own subjectivity. But in a world ruled by privative appropriation, the object's only function is to justify its proprietor. If my subjectivity overflows, if my eyes make the landscape their own, it can only be ideally, without material or legal consequences. In the perspective of power, people and things are not there for my enjoyment, but to serve a master; nothing really *is* everything is a function of an order based on property.

There cannot be any real communication in a world where almost everything one does is ruled by fetishes. The space between people and things is packed with alienating mediations. And as power becomes



increasingly abstract its own signals become so numerous, so chaotic, as to demand systematic interpretation on the part of a body of scribes, semanticists, and mythologists. Trained to see only objects around him, the proprietor needs objective—and objectified—servants. Such are the communications experts, organising lies for masters of dead people. Only subjective truth, buttressed by historical conditions, can resist their machinations. The only way to counter the deeper thrusts of oppression is by taking immediate experience as Base One.

i

The main pleasure of the bourgeoisie seems to have been to degrade pleasure in all its forms. Not content with imprisoning people's freedom to love in the squalid *ownership* of marriage (whence it can always be wheeled out for the purposes of adultery . . .), not content with setting things up so that deception and jealousy were bound to follow, this class has finally succeeded in separating lovers at the most basic level, within the physical act of love itself.

Love's despair doesn't come from sexual frustration. It comes from suddenly losing contact with the person in your arms; of both of you suddenly seeing one another as objects. Swedish social democracy, as everyone knows, has already marketed a form of manipulated and hygienic sex under the brand name of 'free love'.

But in the end the disgust aroused by this world of inauthenticity revives an insatiable desire for human contact. Love, it seems at times, is our only break. Sometimes I think that nothing else is as real, nothing else is as human, as the feel of a woman's body, the softness of her skin, the warmth of her cunt. That even if this is all there is, it opens the door to a totality that even eternal life could not exhaust . . .

And then, even during really magical moments, the inert mass of objects suddenly becomes magnetic. The passivity of a lover unravels the bonds which were being woven; the dialogue is interrupted before it is really begun. Love's dialectic freezes. Two statues are left lying side by side. Two objects.

Although love is always born of subjectivity—a woman is beauti-

ful because I love her—my desire cannot stop itself objectifying what it wants. Desire always makes an object of the loved person. But if I let my desire transform the loved person into an object, have I not condemned myself to conflict with this object and, through force of habit, to become detached from it?

What can ensure perfect communication between lovers? The union of these opposites:

- the more I detach myself from the object of my desire and the more objective strength I give to my desire, the more carefree my desire becomes towards its object;
- the more I detach myself from my desire, insofar as it is an object, and the more objective strength I give to the object of my desire, the more my desire finds its *raison d'être* in the loved person.

Socially, this interplay of attitudes can be expressed by changing partners at the same time as one is attached more or less permanently to a 'pivotal' partner. All these encounters would imply the communication of a single formulation endorsed by both partners. I have always wanted to be able to say: "I know you don't love me because you only love yourself. I am just the same. So love me."

Love can only be based on radical subjectivity. The time is up for all Christian, self-sacrificial and militant forms of love. To love only oneself through other people, to be loved by others through the love they owe themselves. This is what the passion of love teaches, and what the conditions of authentic communication require.

## i

And love is also an adventure—a search for a Northwest Passage out of inauthenticity. To approach someone in any spectacular, exhibitionistic way is to condemn oneself to a reified relationship from the very first. The choice is between spectacular seduction—that of the playboy—and seduction by the qualitative, by a person who is seductive because he is not trying to seduce.

De Sade describes two possible attitudes. On the one hand, the

libertines of *The 120 Days of Sodom* who can only really enjoy themselves by torturing to death the object they have seduced (and what more fitting homage to a *thing* than to make it suffer). On the other hand, the libertines of *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, warm and playful, who do all they can to increase one another's pleasure. The former are the masters of old, vibrant with hatred and revolt; the latter are masters without slaves, discovering in one another only the reflection of their own pleasure.

Present-day seduction is sadistic in that the seducer refuses to forgive the desired person for being an object. Truly seductive people, on the contrary, contain the fullness of desire in themselves; they refuse to play roles and owe their seductiveness to this refusal. In de Sade this would be Dolmancé, Eugenie or Madame de Saint-Ange. This plenitude can only exist for the desired person, however, if he recognises his own will to live in the person who embodies it. Real seductiveness seduces solely by its honesty; which is why it is not given to all who wish it. This is what Schweidnitz's *Béguines* and their thirteenth century companions meant by saying that resistance to sexual advances was the sign of a crass spirit. The Brethren of the Free Spirit expressed the same idea. *Anyone who knows the God inhabiting him carries his own Heaven within himself. By the same token, ignorance of one's own divinity really is a mortal sin. This is the meaning of the Hell which one carries with oneself in earthly life.*

Hell is the emptiness left by separation, the anguish of lovers lying side by side without being together. Non-communication is always like the collapse of a revolutionary movement. The will to death reigns wherever the will to live has been defeated.

## i

Love must be freed from its myths, from its images, from its spectacular categories; its authenticity must be strengthened and its spontaneity renewed. There is no other way of fighting its reification and its recuperation in the spectacle. Love cannot survive either isolation or fragmentation; it is bound to overflow into the will to transform the

whole of human activity, into the necessity of building a world where lovers feel themselves to be everywhere free.

The birth and the dissolution of the moment of love are bound up with the dialectic of memory and desire. During the *inception* of this moment, the present desire and the memory of the earliest satisfied desires (involving no resistance on the part of the parent) tend to reinforce one another. In the *moment* itself, memory and desire coincide: the moment of love is a space-time of authentic lived experience, a present embracing both the memory of the past and the taut bow of desire aimed at the future. At the stage of *breaking-up*, memory prolongs the impassioned moment but desire gradually ebbs away. The present disintegrates, memory turns nostalgically towards past happiness, while desire foresees the unhappiness to come. With *dissolution* the separation becomes real. The failure of the recent past cannot be forgotten, and memory eventually quells desire.

In love, as in every attempt to communicate, the problem is avoiding the stage of breaking up. One could suggest:

- developing the moment of love as far as one can, in as many directions as possible; in other words, refusing to dissociate it from either creativity or play, promoting it from the rank of a moment to that of the real construction of a situation;
- encouraging collective experiments in individual self-realisation; multiplying the possibilities of sexual attraction by bringing together a great variety of possible partners;
- permanently strengthening the pleasure-principle, which is the lifeblood of every attempt to realise oneself, to communicate or to participate. Pleasure is the principle of unification; love is desire for unity in a common moment; friendship, desire for unity in a common project.

### **The erotic or the dialectic of pleasure**

*There is no pleasure that does not seek its own coherence. Its interruption, its lack of satisfaction, causes a disturbance analogous to Reichian 'stasis'.* Op-

*pression by Power keeps human beings in a state of permanent crisis. Thus the function of pleasure, as of the anxiety born of its absence, is essentially a social function. The erotic is the development of the passions as they become unitary, a game of unity and variety without which revolutionary coherence cannot exist ('Boredom is always counter-revolutionary')—Internationale Situationniste, no. 3).*

WILHELM REICH ATTRIBUTES most neurotic behaviour to disturbances of the orgasm, to what he called 'orgastic impotence'. He maintains that anxiety is created by inability to experience a complete orgasm, by a sexual discharge which fails to liquidate all the excitation mobilised by preliminary sexual activity. The accumulated and unspent energy becomes free-floating and is converted into anxiety. Anxiety in its turn still further impedes future orgastic potency.

But the problem of tensions and their liquidation does not exist solely on the level of sexuality. It characterises all human relationships. And Reich, although he sensed that this was so, failed to emphasise strongly enough that the present social crisis is also a crisis of an orgastic kind. If it is true that "the energy source of neurosis lies in the disparity between the accumulation and the discharge of sexual energy", it seems to me that such neurotic energy also derives from the disparity between the accumulation and the discharge of the energy set in motion by human relationships. Total enjoyment is still possible in the moment of love, but as soon as one tries to prolong this moment, to extend it into social life itself, one cannot avoid what Reich called 'stasis'. The world of dissatisfaction and non-consummation is a world of permanent crisis. What would a society without neurosis be like? An endless banquet, with pleasure as the only guide.

## i

"Everything is feminine in what one loves", wrote La Mettrie. "The empire of love recognises no other frontiers than those of pleasure." But pleasure in general recognises no frontiers. Pleasure which does not increase evaporates. Repetition kills it, nor can it abide the frag-

mentary. The pleasure-principle is inseparable from the totality.

The erotic is pleasure seeking its own coherence. The movement of the passions towards intercommunication, interdependence and unity. Towards the re-creation in social life as a whole of the perfect pleasure experienced in the moment of love. And towards the establishment of the preconditions for playing with the one and the many, that is to say, for the individual's free and transparent participation in the quest for fulfilment.

Freud defines the goal of Eros as unification or the search for union. But when he maintains that fear of being separated and expelled from the group comes from an underlying fear of castration, he has things the wrong way round: fear of castration comes from the fear of being excluded. This anxiety becomes more marked as the isolation of individuals in an illusory community becomes more and more difficult to ignore.

Even while it seeks unification, Eros is essentially narcissistic and in love with itself. It wants a world to love as much as it loves itself. Norman O. Brown, in *Life Against Death*, points out the contradiction. How, he asks, can a narcissistic orientation lead to union with beings in the world? "In love, the abstract antimony of the Ego and the Other can be transcended if we return to the concrete reality of pleasure, to a definition of sexuality as being essentially a pleasurable activity of the body, and if we see love as the relationship between the Ego and the sources of pleasure." To be more exact, the source of pleasure lies less in the body than in the possibility of free activity in the world. The concrete reality of pleasure is based on the freedom to unite oneself with anyone who allows one to become united with oneself. The realisation of pleasure passes via pleasure of realisation, the pleasure of communication via the communication of pleasure, participation in pleasure via the pleasure of participation. This explains why narcissism turned towards the outside world, the narcissism Brown is talking about, can only lead to a wholesale demolition of social structures.

The more intense pleasure becomes, the more it demands the

whole world. “Lovers, give one another greater and greater pleasure,” said Breton. A truly revolutionary slogan.

Western civilisation is a civilisation of work and, as Diogenes observed, “Love is the occupation of the unoccupied.” With the gradual disappearance of forced labour, love is destined to retrieve all the ground it has lost. This naturally poses a direct threat to every kind of authority. Because the erotic is unitary, it implies the freedom of multiplicity. Freedom knows no propaganda more effective than people calmly enjoying the pleasures of the senses. Which is why pleasure, for the most part, is forced to be clandestine, love is locked away in a bedroom, creativity is confined to the backstairs of culture, and why alcohol and drugs cower under the shadow of the outstretched arm of the law.

The ethic of survival condemns the diversity of pleasures and their union-in-variety the better to promote obsessive repetition. But if pleasure-anxiety is satisfied by the repetitive, true pleasure can only occur thanks to diversity-in-unity. Clearly the simplest model of the erotic is the pivotal couple. Two people live their experiences as transparently and as freely as possible. This radiant complicity has all the charm of incest. Their wealth of common experiences can only lead to a brother-and-sister relationship. Great loves have always had something incestuous about them, a fact which suggests that love between brothers and sisters was privileged from the very first, and that it should be encouraged in every way. It is high time that this ancient and silly taboo was broken, and a process of ‘sororisation’ set in train: I would like to have a wife-cum-sister, all of whose friends were also my wives and sisters.

In the erotic realm there is no perversion apart from the negation of pleasure—its distortion into pleasure-anxiety. What matters the spring so long as the water runs? As the Chinese say: immobile in one another, we are borne along by pleasure.

Finally, the search for pleasure ensures the survival of the principle of play. It ensures real participation, protecting it against self-sacrifice, coercion and lies. The actual degree of intensity pleasure reaches is the measure of subjectivity’s grasp on the world. Thus ca-

price is the play of desire *in statu nascendi*; desire, the play of passion *in statu nascendi*. And the play of passion finds its coherent expression in the poetry of revolution.

Does this mean that the search for pleasure is incompatible with pain? Not at all—but pain has to be given a new meaning. Pleasure-anxiety is neither pleasure nor pain; it is just scratching yourself and letting the itch get worse and worse. What is real pain? A setback in the play of desire or passion; a positive pain crying out with a corresponding degree of passion for another pleasure to construct.

### **The project of participation**

*A society based on organised survival can tolerate only false, spectacular forms of play. But with the crisis of the spectacle, playfulness, which had been hounded almost out of existence, tends to re-emerge on all sides. It is now taking the form of social upheaval and already adumbrates, over and above this negative aspect, the future society based on true participation. The praxis of play implies the refusal of leaders, of sacrifice, of roles, freedom for everyone to realise himself, and transparency in all social relationships (a). Tactics are the polemical stage of play. Individual creativity needs an organisation concentrating and strengthening it. Tactics entail a certain kind of hedonistic foresight. The point of every action, no matter how circumscribed, must be the total destruction of the enemy. Industrial societies have to evolve their own adequate forms of guerilla warfare (b). Subversion is the only possible revolutionary use of the spiritual and material values distributed by consumer society: the ultimate weapon of transcendence (c).*

(A) Economic necessity and play don't mix. Financial transactions are deadly serious: you do not fool around with money. The elements of play contained within the feudal economy were gradually squeezed out by the rationality of money exchange. Playing with exchange meant bartering products without worrying too much about strictly standardised equivalents. But as soon as capitalism forced its commercial relationships on the world, all such caprice was forbidden; and today's dictatorship of the commodity shows clearly that this



system intends to enforce these relationships everywhere, at every level of life.

The pastoral relationships of country life in the high Middle Ages tempered the purely economic necessities of feudalism with a sort of freedom; play often took the upper hand even in the *corvée*, in the dispensing of justice, in the settling of debts. By throwing the whole of everyday life onto the battlefield of production and consumption, capitalism crushes the urge to play while at the same time trying to harness it as a source of profit. So, over the last few decades, we have seen the attraction of the unknown turned into mass tourism, adventure turned into scientific expeditions, the great game of war turned into operational strategy, and the taste for change turned into mere changes in taste.

Contemporary society has banned all real play. Play has become something for children only. (And even children are getting more and more pacifying, gadget-type toys rammed down their throats.) The adult is only allowed falsified and co-opted forms of play: competitions, games, elections, casino gambling... Yet it is obvious that this kind of rubbish can never satisfy something as strong as people's desire to play—especially today, when play *could* flourish as never before in history.

The sacred order knew how to cope with the profane and iconoclastic game, witness the irreverent and obscene carvings to be found in cathedrals. Without muting them, the Church was able to embrace cynical laughter, biting fantasy and nihilistic scorn. Under its mantel, the demoniac game was safe. Bourgeois power, on the other hand, had to put play in quarantine, isolate it in a special ward, as though afraid that it might infect other human activities. This privileged and despised area set apart from commerce constituted the domain of artistic activity. And so things remained until economic imperialism reached even this sphere and redeveloped it into a cultural supermarket.

It was in fact from art—from the zone where it had survived longest—that the urge to play broke through the strata of prohibitions

which had come to overlay it: this eruption was called Dada. “The Dadaist event awoke the primitive-irrational play instinct which had been held down in its audience,” said Hugo Ball. Once embarked on the fatal path of pranks and scandals, art was bound to bring down with it, in its fall, the whole edifice which the Spirit of Seriousness had built to the greater glory of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, play in our time has donned the robe of insurrection. Henceforward, the total game and the revolution of everyday life are one.

The desire to play returns to destroy the hierarchical society which banished it. It becomes the motor of a new type of society based on real participation. It is impossible to foresee the details of such a society—a society in which play will be completely unrestricted—but we may expect to find the following:

- rejection of all leaders and all hierarchies;
- rejection of self-sacrifice;
- rejection of roles;
- freedom of genuine self-realisation;
- transparent social relationships.

### i

All true play involves rules and playing with rules. Watch children at play. They know the rules of the game, they can remember them perfectly well, but they are always breaking them, always dreaming up new ways of getting round them. But cheating, for children, does not have the connotations it does for adults. Cheating is part of the game, they play at cheating, accomplices even in their disputes. What they are really doing is spurring themselves on to create new games. And sometimes they are successful: a new game is found and unfolds. They revitalise their playfulness without interrupting its flow.

Play comes to an end as soon as an authority crystallises, becomes absolute and assumes a magical aura. Even so, playfulness, however lighthearted, always involves a certain spirit of organisation and the discipline this implies. If a play leader proves necessary, his power of decision is never wielded at the expense of the autonomous power of each

individual. Rather it is the focus of each individual will, the collective counterpart of each particular desire. So the project of participation demands a coherent organisation allowing the decisions of each individual to be the decision of everyone concerned. Obviously, small intimate groups, micro-societies, offer the best conditions for such experiments. Within them, the game can be the sole arbiter of the intricacies of communal life, harmonising individual whims, desires and passions. This is especially true where the game in question is an insurrectionary one imposed upon a group by its wish to live outside the official world.

The urge to play is incompatible with self-sacrifice. You can lose, pay the forfeit, submit to the rules, be given a bad time; but this is the logic of the game, not the logic of a Cause, not the logic of self-sacrifice. Once the idea of sacrifice appears the game becomes sacred and its rules become rites. In true play, the rules come packaged with ways of getting round them, of playing with them. In the realm of the sacred, by contrast, rituals cannot be played with, they can only be broken, can only be transgressed (let us not forget that pissing on the altar is still a way of paying homage to the Church). Only play can deconsecrate, open up the possibilities of total freedom. This is the principle of subversion, the freedom to change the sense of everything which serves Power: the freedom, for example, to turn Chartres Cathedral into a funfair, into a labyrinth, into a shooting-range, into a dream landscape...

In a group revolving around play, boring and domestic chores might be allotted as penalties—as the price paid, say, for losing a point in a game. Or, more simply, they could be used to fill unoccupied time, as a sort of active rest: having the value of a stimulant and making the resumption of play more exciting. The construction of such situations can only be based on the dialectic of presence and absence, richness and poverty, pleasure and pain, the intensity of each pole accentuating the intensity of the other.

In any case, any technique applied in an atmosphere of sacrifice and coercion loses much of its cutting edge. Its actual effectiveness is mixed up with a purely repressive purpose, and the repression of

creativity reduces the effectiveness of the oppressive apparatus. Ludic attraction is the only possible basis for a non-alienated labour, for truly productive work.

Within the game, the playing of roles inevitably involves playing *with* roles. The spectacular role demands complete conviction; a ludic role, on the contrary, demands a certain distanciation. One has to watch oneself over one's shoulder, just as professional actors like to joke *sotto voce* between dramatic tirades. Spectacular organisation is completely out of its depth with this sort of thing. The Marx Brothers demonstrated what a role can become if you play with it, and this despite the cinema's ultimately recuperative function—which gives some idea of what would happen if people started playing with real-life roles.

When someone begins to play a permanent role, a serious role, he either wrecks the game or it wrecks him. Consider the unhappy case of the provocateur. The provocateur is an expert in collective games. He has mastered their techniques but not their dialectic. At times he is able to give expression to the group's offensive tendencies—the provocateur always urges immediate offensive action—but in the end he is always betrayed by the demands of his role and mission, which prevent him from incarnating the group's need for defence. This contradiction is what seals his invariable fate. And who makes the best provocateur? The play leader who turns into a leader *tout court*.

The urge to play is the only possible basis for a community whose interests are identical with those of the individual. The traitor, unlike the provocateur, appears quite spontaneously in revolutionary groups. When does he appear? Whenever the spirit of play has died in a group, and with it, inevitably, the possibility of real participation. The traitor is one who cannot express himself through the sort of participation he is offered and decides to 'play' against this participation: not to correct but to destroy it. Treachery is the senile disease of revolutionary groups. And the betrayal of the principle of play is the prime treachery, the one which justifies all the others.

Inasmuch as it embodies the consciousness of radical subjectivity,

the project of participation enhances the transparency of human relationships. The game of insurrection is part and parcel of the project of communication.

(B) *Tactics*. Tactics are the polemical stage of play. They provide the necessary continuity between poetry *in statu nascendi* (play) and the organisation of spontaneity (poetry). Essentially technical in nature, they prevent spontaneity burning itself out in the general confusion. We know how cruelly absent tactics have been from most popular uprisings. And we also know just how offhand historians can be about spontaneous revolutions. No serious study, no methodical analysis, nothing remotely comparable to Clausewitz's book on war. Revolutionaries have ignored Makhno's battles almost as thoroughly as bourgeois generals have studied Napoleon's.

In the absence of a more detailed analysis, a few remarks are in order.

An efficiently hierarchised army can win a war, but not a revolution; an undisciplined mob can win neither. The problem then is how to organise, without creating a hierarchy; in other words, how to make sure that the leader of the game does not become just 'the Leader'. The only safeguard against authority and rigidity setting in is a playful attitude. Creativity plus a machine gun is an unstoppable combination. Villa's and Makhno's troops routed the most hardened professional soldiers of their day. But once playfulness rigidifies, the battle is lost. The revolution fails so that its leader can be infallible. Why was Villa defeated at Celaya? Because he fell back on old tactical and strategic games, instead of making up new ones. Technically, Villa was carried away by memories of Ciudad Juarez, where his men had fallen on the enemy from the rear by silently cutting their way through the walls of house after house. He failed to see the importance of the military advances of World War I machine-gun nests, mortars, trenches, etc. Politically, a certain narrow-mindedness prevented him from seeing the importance of gaining the support of the industrial proletariat. It is significant that Obregón's army, which defeated Villa's *Dorados*, in-

cluded both workers' militias and German military advisers.

The strength of revolutionary armies lies in their creativity. Frequently, the first days of an insurrection are a walk-over simply because nobody pays the slightest attention to the enemy's rules: because a new game is invented and because everyone takes part in its elaboration. But if this creativity flags, if it becomes repetitive, if the revolutionary army becomes a regular army, then blind devotion and hysteria try in vain to make up for military weakness. Infatuation with past victories breeds terrible defeats. The magic of the Cause and the Leader replaces the conscious unity of the will to live and the will to conquer. In 1525, having held the princes at bay for two years, some forty thousand peasants, for whom tactics had been replaced by religious fanaticism, were hacked to pieces at Frankenhausen; the feudal army lost only three men. In 1964, at Stanleyville, hundreds of Mulelists, convinced they were invincible, allowed themselves to be massacred by throwing themselves onto a bridge defended by two machine-guns. Yet these were the same men who had previously captured trucks and arms from the National Congolese Army by pitting the road with elephant traps.

Hierarchical organisation and complete lack of discipline are both inefficient. In classical warfare, the inefficiency of one side triumphs over the inefficiency of its adversary through technical superiority. In revolutionary war, the poetic force of the rebels takes the enemy by surprise, so depriving him of his only possible advantage, the technical one. As soon as the guerrillero's tactics become repetitive, however, the enemy learns to play by his rules, and an anti-guerrilla campaign will then have every chance of destroying or at least blocking an already inhibited popular creativity.

### **i**

How can the discipline combat requires be maintained among troops who refuse blind obedience to leaders? Most of the time, it must be said, revolutionary armies either succumb to the devil of submission to a Cause or plunge into the deep blue sea of a heedless search for pleasure.

The call to self-sacrifice and renunciation in the name of freedom is the foundation stone of future slavery. On the other hand, premature rejoicing and haphazard pleasure-seeking invariably herald repression and the Bloody Sundays of order being restored. No, the game has to have coherence and discipline, but these must be supplied by the pleasure principle itself. The risk of pain is part and parcel of the quest for the greatest possible pleasure. Whence the energy with which this quest is pursued: there is no other explanation, for instance, for the verve with which the roistering soldiery of pre-Revolutionary France would attack a town over and over again, no matter how many times they were repelled. What drove them onward was their passionate anticipation of the *fête* to come—in this case, a *fête* of pillage and debauchery. Pleasure is heightened when it is long in the making. The most effective tactics are indistinguishable from calculated hedonism. The will to live, brutal and unvarnished, is the fighter's most deadly secret weapon—and one liable to be turned against any who do not take it seriously: when his own life is in the balance, a soldier has every reason to shoot those placed in authority over him. A revolutionary army has thus everything to gain from making its every member into a skilled tactician in his own right and, above all, into his own master, into someone who knows how to work logically and consistently towards his own gratification.

In the struggles to come, the desire to live intensely will replace the old motive of pillage. Tactics will become a science of pleasure, reflecting the fact that the search for pleasure is itself pleasurable. Such tactics, moreover, can be learned every day. The form of play known as armed combat differs in no essential way from that free play sought by everyone, more or less consciously, at every instant of their daily lives. Anyone who is prepared to learn, from his simple everyday experience, what tends to kill him and what tends to strengthen him as a free individual, is already well on the way to becoming a true tactician.

There is no such thing, however, as a tactician in isolation. Only a federation of tacticians of daily life can meet the requirements of the desire to destroy the old society. To equip such a federation, to supply

its technical needs, is one of the immediate goals of the Situationist International: strategy is the collective construction of the launching pad of the revolution on the basis of the tactics of the individual's daily life.

## i

The ambiguous notion of humanity sometimes generates a degree of indecision in spontaneous revolutionary movements. Only too frequently, the desire to make people the central concern opens the door to a paralysing humanism. How often have revolutionaries spared their future executioners! How often have they accepted a truce which has given the enemy forces time to regroup! The ideology of humanism serves reaction and underwrites the worst inhumanity: Belgian paratroopers in Stanleyville.

No compromise is possible with the enemies of freedom—and humanism does not apply to mankind's oppressors. The ruthless elimination of counter-revolutionaries is a humanitarian act because it is the only course that averts the cruelties of bureaucratised humanism.

Lastly, another problem of spontaneous insurrection derives from the paradoxical fact that it must destroy Power *totally* by means of *partial* actions. The struggle for economic emancipation alone has made survival possible for everyone, but it has also subjected everyone to survival's limitations. Now there can be no doubt that the masses have always fought for a much broader goal, for an overall transformation of their condition, a change in life as a whole. Of course, the idea that the whole world can be changed in one fell swoop has a mystical dimension, which is why it can so easily degenerate into the crudest reformism. Apocalypticism and demands for gradual reform eventually form an unholy alliance of undialectically resolved antagonisms. It is not surprising that pseudo-revolutionary parties always pretend that compromises are the same as tactics.

The revolution cannot be won either by accumulating minor victories or by an all-out frontal assault. Guerrilla war is total war. This is the path on which the Situationist International is set: calculated harassment on every front—cultural, political, economic and



social. Concentrating on everyday life will ensure the unity of the combat.

(C) *Subversion*. In its broadest sense, subversion (*détournement*) is an all-embracing reinsertion of things into play. It is the act whereby play grasps and reunites beings and things hitherto frozen solid in a hierarchy of fragments.

One evening, as night fell, my friends and I wandered into the Palais de Justice in Brussels. The building is a monstrosity, crushing the poor quarters beneath it and standing guard over the fashionable Avenue Louise—out of which, some day, we will make a breathtakingly beautiful wasteland. As we drifted through the labyrinth of corridors, staircases and suite after suite of rooms, we discussed what could be done to make the place habitable; for a time we occupied the enemy's territory; through the power of our imagination we transformed the thieves' den into a fantastic funfair, into a sunny pleasure dome, where the most amazing adventures would, for the first time, be really lived. In short, subversion is the basic expression of creativity. Daydreaming subverts the world. Sometimes subversion is like Monsieur Jourdain speaking prose; sometimes it is more like James Joyce writing *Ulysses*. That is, it may be spontaneous or it may require a good deal of reflection.

It was in 1955 that Debord, struck by Lautréamont's systematic use of subversion, first drew attention to the virtually unlimited possibilities of the technique. In 1960, Jorn was to write: "Subversion is a game made possible by the fact that things can be *devalorised*. Every element of past culture must be either re-invested or scrapped." Debord, in *Internationale Situationniste* no. 3, developed the concept further: "The two basic principles of subversion are the loss of importance of each originally independent element (which may even lose its first sense completely), and the organisation of a new significant whole which confers a fresh meaning on each element." Recent history allows one to be still more precise. From now on it is clear that:

- As more and more things rot and fall apart, subversion ap-

pears spontaneously. Consumer society plays into the hands of those who want to create new significant wholes.

- Culture is no longer a particularly privileged theatre. The art of subversion can be an integral part of all forms of resistance to the organisation of everyday life.
- Since part-truths rule our world, subversion is now the only technique at the service of the total view. As a revolutionary act, subversion is the most coherent, the most popular and the best suited to the praxis of insurrection. By a sort of natural evolution—the desire to play—it leads people to take up an ever more extreme and radical stance.

### i

Our experience, both spiritual and material, is falling to pieces about our ears, and its disintegration is a direct consequence of the development of consumer society. The ‘devalorising’ phase of *détournement* has in a sense been taken care of by contemporary history itself; negativity has thus taken up residence in the reality of the facts, while subversion has come more and more to resemble a tactic of transcendence, an essentially *positive* act.

While the abundance of consumer goods is hailed everywhere as a major step forward, the way these goods are used by society, as we know, invalidates all their positive aspects. Because the *gadget* is primarily a source of profit for capitalist and bureaucratic regimes, it cannot be allowed to serve any other purpose. The ideology of consumerism acts like a fault in manufacture, sabotaging the commodity it packages and turning what could be the material basis of happiness into a new form of slavery. In this context, subversion broadcasts new ways of using commodities; it invents superior *uses* of goods, uses whereby subjectivity can take strength from something that was originally marketed to weaken it. The crisis of the spectacle will throw the forces now mobilised for deception into the camp of lived truth. The problems of tactics and strategy revolve around the question of how to turn against capitalism the weapons that commercial neces-

sity has forced it to distribute. We need a manual of subversion—a ‘Consumer’s Guide to Not Consuming’.

Subversion, which forged its first weapons in the artistic sphere, has now become the art of handling every sort of weapon. Having first appeared amidst the cultural crisis of the years 1910–25, it has gradually spread to every area touched by social decomposition. Despite which, art still offers a field of valid experiment for the techniques of subversion; and there is still much to be learnt from the past. Surrealism failed because it tried to re-invest Dadaist anti-values which had not been completely reduced to zero. Any attempt to build on values which have not been thoroughly purged by a nihilistic crisis must end in the same way: recuperation by the dominant mechanisms of social organisation. Contemporary cyberneticians have taken their ‘combinatory’ attitude towards art so far as to hail any accumulation of disparate elements whatsoever, even if the particular elements *have not been devalued at all*. Pop art or Jean-Luc Godard—the same apologetics of the junk-yard.

In the realm of art it is also possible to undertake a tentative search for new forms of agitation and propaganda. In 1963, for instance, Michèle Bernstein produced a series of works in plaster with toy soldiers, cars, tanks, etc. With such titles as ‘The Victory of the Bonnot Gang’, ‘The Victory of the Paris Commune’, ‘The Victory of the Budapest Workers’ Councils of 1956’ these works sought to dereify historical events, to rescue them from artificial entombment in the past. They tended at once towards two goals: the rectification of the history of the workers’ movement and the realisation of art. No matter how limited and speculative, agitational art of this kind opens the door to everyone’s creative spontaneity, if only by proving that in the particularly distorted realm of art subversion is the only language, the only kind of action, that contains its own self-criticism.

There are no limits to creativity. There is no end to subversion.

# Preface

from *The Right to be Greedy*  
by For Ourselves

Bob Black

## Preface to the Preface

I was never a member of For Ourselves, the San Francisco Bay Area pro-situationist group which wrote and self-published *The Right to Be Greedy* in 1974. The principal author was Bruce Gardner, who has long since dropped out of sight. I came across the pamphlet a couple of years later, by which time For Ourselves was defunct. I was charmed and challenged by its “communist egoism,” its audacious attempt to synthesize a collectivist social vision of left-wing origin with an individualistic (for lack of a better word) ethic, one usually articulated on the right.

I was coming from the New Left of the 60s, but I was increasingly disgruntled with the left of the 70s. It retained or exaggerated all the faults of the 60s left (such as current-events myopia, theoretical incoherence, historical amnesia, and—especially—the cult of the victim) while denying or diminishing its merits, among them a sense of revolution against the totality, a sense of verve and vitality, and a sense of humor. The left demanded more sacrifice and promised less satisfaction, as if there was not already too much sacrifice and too little satisfaction. I began to wonder whether the failure of the left to root itself in a substantial social base, or even to hold on to much of what base it once had (mostly on campus, and among the intelligentsia, and in the counter-culture), might not in part derive from its own deficiencies, and not only from government repression and manipulation. Maybe the leftists were not so smart or the masses so stupid after all. Guilt-tripping might not go over very well with ordinary people who know they are too powerless to be too guilty of anything. Demands for sacrifice lack appeal for those who have al-

ready sacrificed, and been sacrificed, too much and for too long. The future promised by the left looked to be—at worst, even worse—and at best, not noticeably better than the status quo. Why rush to the barricades or, for that matter, why even bother to vote?

More or less in isolation, I sought out currents that were more liberatory, more libertarian, and more libertine. I discovered, among others, the situationists. In Raoul Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, especially, I found a congenial concept of “radical subjectivity” offering some promise of a revolutionary transcendence of moralism. *The Right to Be Greedy* further developed this dimension of the revolution of everyday life, the only revolution that matters.

The circumstances in which I brought about the reprinting of *The Right to Be Greedy* explain a few of my Preface's peculiarities. In the early 1980s I got to be in contact with publisher Mike Hoy of Loompanics Unlimited. Hoy came out of an extreme right-wing background to get involved in the libertarian movement. There too he staked out an extreme position as an amoral egoist anarcho-capitalist: Loompanics, he boasted, was “the lunatic fringe of the libertarian movement.” By the time I happened by, Hoy was beginning to find even that position restrictive. By then Hoy and I both thought of ourselves as egoists, but from that we drew very different political conclusions. In fall 1982, as a lark, I sent *Greedy* to Hoy, saying something to the effect of “...you think you're an egoist? Try this on for size.” Months passed, I heard nothing from Hoy, I forgot all about it. Then in February 1983 he wrote in to say that the Loompanics reprint of *Greedy* has been typeset and would you please provide a preface within a few days?

So I did. I slanted it toward a mostly libertarian or apolitical readership, which, I could safely assume, knew nothing about the situationists or their predecessors (those involved in such as dada, surrealism, and lettrism). I did the very little I could, in a very small space, to supply a little context and forewarning. I even tried a bit of cross-ideological outreach, as when I suggested that the communist egoism

of For Ourselves involved “multiplier effects”—a technical term from economics that libertarians should be familiar with. Anarcho-leftists who are, almost without exception, ignorant of the neo-classical micro-economics to which they object, sometimes stumbled over the phrase. Had I written a Preface for them, it would have been different.

### The Preface

Most libertarians think of themselves as in some sense egoists. If they believe in rights, they believe these rights belong to them as individuals. If not, they nonetheless look to themselves and others as so many individuals possessed of power to be reckoned with. Either way, they assume that the opposite of egoism is altruism. The altruists, Christian or Maoist, agree. A cozy accomodation; and, I submit, a suspicious one. What if this antagonistic interdependence, this reciprocal reliance reflects and conceals an accord? Could egoism be altruism’s loyal opposition?

Yes, according to the authors of this text. What’s more, they insist that an egoism which knows itself and refuses every limit to its own realization is communism. Altruism and (narrow) egoism or egotism they disparage as competing and complementary moralisms in service to capital and the state. They urge us to indulge a generous and expansive greed which goes beyond self-sacrifice and petty selfishness to encompass the appropriation of everything and everyone by each and all of us. “Wealth is other people,” wrote Ruskin. The radically and rationally (self)-conscious egoist, appreciating this, enriches him-self in and though other subjectivities. In social life at its (con)sensual and satisfying best—sex, conversation, creation—taking from and giving to others constitute a single play-activity rich with multiplier effects. For the lucid and ludic egoist, anything less than generalized egoism is just not enough.

The individualists have only worshipped their whims. The point, however, is to live them.

Is this a put-on, a piece of parlor preciosity? There is more than a touch of that here. Or a mushminded exercise in incongruous eclecticism? The individualist egoist is bound to be skeptical, but he should not be too quick to deprive himself of the insights (and the entertainment!) of this unique challenge to his certitudes. The contradictions are obvious, but whether they derive from the authors' irrationality or from their fidelity to the real quality of lived experience is not so easy to say. If Marxism-Stirnerism is conceivable, every orthodoxy prating of freedom or liberation is called into question, anarchism included. The only reason to read this book, as its authors would be the first to agree, is for what you can get out of it.

At least for those not conversant with Hegelian Marxism, "critical theory," and the latest French fashions in avant garde discourse, the mode of expression in this work may seem unusual. But it's very much in the tradition of those (mainly European) oppositional currents—such as dada and surrealism—which tried to combine political and cultural iconoclasm. In the late 1950s, a small French-based but international organization called the Situationist International resumed this project at a high level of intransigence and sophistication.

The situationist drew attention to the way the "spectacle" of modern capitalism (including its Leninist variants), the organization of appearances, interposes itself between isolated and enervated "individuals" and a world which they produce by their activity but neither control nor comprehend. Mediation supplants direct experience as the fragmentation of daily life into so many standardized prefab roles produces individuals with a dazzling array of forced "choices" but drained of effective autonomy by the loss of initiative to create their own lives. Politically, the situationists bitterly denounced the established left, but moved toward an ultra-left stance themselves when they embraced council communism. Calling for the abolition of work—its transformation into productive playlike pastimes—on the one hand, and for workers' councils, on the other, is only one of

the contradictions which the sits failed to resolve. The French general strike of 1968 vindicated the sits' thesis that the affluent society had merely modernized poverty, and even showcased a number of their slogans, but the S.I. was at a loss what to do next and broke up in 1972.

Ever since, situationist ideas—and poses—have percolated into popular culture. (The Sex Pistols' manager Malcolm McLaren was perhaps the first to sell a denatured situationism to the trendies). In the early 1970s, “pro-situ” groups (as they are known) formed in Britain, New York City, and especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. One of these groups, Negation, reformed as For Ourselves around 1973, and by the following Mayday produced the present text. For Ourselves was particularly beholden to the situationist Raoul Vaneigem, whose celebration of the “radical subjectivity” of “masters without slaves” figures prominently in the theory espoused in *The Right to Be Greedy*. All too soon the group collapsed, some of its members regressing into Marxism from which they had never really escaped.

The text manages to be at once too Marxist and oblivious to the extent of its incompatibility with Marxism. Too Marxist, in that the illusion of Man as essentially Producer persists, and a “democratically” planned economy based on the councils is touted as the structural basis of a new and free society. And too enamored of Marxism in that the attempt to square communist egoism with the Marxist scriptures is far more ingenious than persuasive—though perhaps it does show that Marx was more radical than he himself supposed. It's a pity For Ourselves didn't try to Marxize Stirner as they Stirnerized Marx: then we might have a better sense of the level at which it just might be possible to harmonize the two great revolutionary amoralists.

Egoism in its narrowest sense is a tautology, not a tactic. Adolescents of all ages who triumphantly trumpet that “everyone is selfish,” as if they'd made a factual discovery about the world, only show that they literally don't know what they're talking about. Practical egoism must be something more, it must tell the egoist something useful about himself and other selves which will make a difference in his



life (and, as it happens, theirs). My want, needs, desires, whims—call them what you will—extend the ego, which is my-self purposively acting, out where the other selves await me. If I deal with them, as the economists say, “at arm’s length,” I can’t get as close as I need to for so much of what I want. At any rate, no “spook,” no ideology is going to get in my way. Do you have ideas, or do ideas have you?

# The Union of Egoists

Svein Olav Nyberg

A common misconception about egoism, and about the egoism of Stirner in particular, is that it is a reclusive, anti-social kind of behaviour. As far as Stirner is concerned, such commentators must have been asleep through that half of his book which is devoted to describing exactly the social interactions of an egoist, or more precisely—what social interactions are like when they are not mediated by ideals or “natural bonds”.

Egoism is not anti-sociality, like some believe, but is better seen as a more mature kind of sociality.

Stirner is a dialectical philosopher, and as such his focus is on relations. As is with relations, it often comprises three elements, the two relata, and the relation itself, and hence the famous triad is a common occurrence in dialectical philosophy. So also with Stirner. Stirner’s main triadic development is that of (1) The “natural” or material bond of the ancients, (2) The bond by ideas, our “equality before reason”, into (3) the willed or owned relation.

In his book, Stirner starts the description of owned relations with relations to material objects and ideas. A willed relation to these are said to be that they are your property (“eigentum”).

The opposite of the willed relation is, as indicated, the bond, the “ought” and the “shall”. These are simply relations that are not mine to dispose of, but which are given me from without—without also in the sense of an “essence” I must confirm to and cannot dispose of.

A particular case of such a bond is when you are not to let go of an idea. In Hegelian terms: When that thought is seen as exempt from and sacred to “the power of the negative”. Such an idea is called a fixed idea. It is, in Stirner’s words “An idea that has subjected the man to itself”—an idea that you are not to criticise. [Recall that *Der Einzige* is “the power of the negative” to himself.]

Ideas are often expressed in the material world, as we call it. One such idea is that of “property”. It should be noted that the common use of this word is that of conformation to an idea—a Fixed Idea—about what you can [“morally”] lay your hands on. By Stirner, however, property in this sense, “sacred property” or as he even calls it “state property”, is not exempt from criticism and from—his laying hands on it. It is in the sense of idea already his property in his thinking it as such—in the intentional, willing act. However, factual possession, laying hands on it, depends also on “my might”, as Stirner expresses it.

Now, once the relation of *Eigentum*—of “property” in the Stirnerian sense has been understood—and not before, can we proceed to the meeting of two Einzige, two Subjects. There are several ways in which two people can meet:

1. The Bond. This is a meeting of two people according to how they “ought to” behave towards one another. It is not as such a meeting which is willed, but rather a meeting according to the “ought”. Examples of such are when the father and the son meet in the roles of father and son. “Father” and “son” they will always remain in a descriptive sense. But when they meet according to such roles, they meet by an “ought” and not by a “will”. Roles are ascribed when the relation is seen as a static object.

2. The property. The relation can be a one-sidedly willed one. In this, the one is an Einzige whereas the Other has become Eigentum (for the one who is Einzige). Perhaps this is the state of things where we can say “Hell is the Other” (i.e. when that Other guy is Einzige and I am reduced to a role as Eigentum).

However, Moses Hess criticised Stirner’s conception of what Stirner call *Verein der Egoisten* [The Union of Egoists] along the lines that in such a meeting, there would have to be one who dominated and one who submitted to domination. That is, Hess imagined that “The Union of Egoists” would be a relation of the kind (2) described above.

Now, (2) might describe a Hobbesian egoist. But can it describe

la dernière maille de la chaîne Hegelienne (as Stirner has been called)? No, that is a bit too crude. Stirner did himself reply to this criticism by pointing to examples: Two friends playing with their toys, two men going together to the wine shop. These do of course not comprise an exhaustive list of unions, and our man Stirner does indeed speak of unions consisting of thousands of people, too, unions uniting to catch a thief or to get better pay for one's own labour.

More philosophically, Moses Hess describes a one-sidedness, and thinks it is a necessary one for an Stirner. What is then more natural than to apply a little dialectical reasoning to figure out what Stirner really did mean. I propose it is

3. the union. The relation is understood as a process. It is a process in which the relation is continually renewed by that both [/all] parts support it through an act of will. The Union requires that both/all parties are present through conscious egoism—i.e. own-will. If one part silently finds him/her-self to be suffering, but puts up and—keeps the appearance, the union has degenerated into something else.

Only after development has come to the understanding of the union of egoists does Stirner come to the ultimately important relation—the relation of me to myself. In the section entitled “My self-enjoyment”, Stirner sets up mere valuing of life against enjoyment of life. In the former view, I am an object to be preserved. In the latter I see myself as the subject of all my valuing relations.

In this sense, Stirner can rebuke the question “what am I?” and replace it with “who am I?”, a question which has its answer in this bodily person who asks the question. This is the “nothingness” of which Stirner speaks of as I. “Not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but a creative nothing.”

My relation to myself is thus a meeting of myself as willer, a union with myself and a consumption—appropriation—of myself as my own.

“There is no room for God in the man who is full of himself.”

—Posted outside a local church



From *Sovereign Self*

## A Letter to Lovers

Crescencia Desafio and  
Katherine DiFiore

A note on the individual and relationships

One thing I can be sure of—I am me despite you, and you are you despite me. Our relationship is not a separate entity within itself, but neither are either of us this relationship. Relationships, romantic or otherwise, are nothing more and nothing less than interactions between individuals. You and I have made the choice to come together and to live our own lives alongside one another.

Our romance is not infinite. I will continue my relationship to you as long as it is relevant to my life. As we each grow and change, our relationship to each other may too evolve. It may come to an end as we each move on with our own lives. I do not expect that our relationship will remain static or that our interactions will always transpire in the same way. What I do hope is that our friendship will last and that an end to our romance is not an end to our interactions altogether. First and foremost what I want in any relationship is a friendship, romance is secondary.

Our romance is only strong when we are strong in ourselves. Relationships do not have insecurities; individuals have insecurities, and as long as the individuals are weak, the relationship will follow suit. I will not and cannot use this romance as a bandaid for my insecurities. If I want to have mutually beneficial relationships, I must first confront my own demons. No friend can do that for me. I cannot honestly interact with you and respect your autonomy until I can be honest and respectful of myself. I will not nurture a relationship; I will only nurture people. I will not look to you or

anyone for validation because I know that I alone am enough. On the flipside, I refuse to be your crutch, your security blanket. Not because I do not care about you, but because I know that you too, alone, are enough for yourself.

I can only own that which is mine. You are not mine, and I am not yours. I resent any entitlement to my time, my thoughts, my space, and my relationships. These are not collective property. These are my own. All that we choose to share with each other are gifts. Any gift given out of manipulation, guilt, or obligation has lost, in that process, all meaning, all joy. I will not carry on any relationship that does not better my own life. I will not ask, beg, or force you to share anything that is yours. I continue to share some of my time, thoughts, space—these bits and pieces of myself—with you, because I cherish our interactions: the long nights spend conversing, adventures in the woods, epic meals prepared and shared between just the two of us—these are gifts we have generously given.

My separate relationships cannot be weighed against each other, they are each unique and incomparable. I will not play the game of quantifying my relationships in order to measure them against each other for the sake of competition and validation. Each relationship, while somewhat connected, is separate. It is up to each of us to choose not to let our jealousies and insecurities cloud our abilities to interact with others. I will not be fought over. I am not a prize to be possessed. Know that if I take space for myself it is not an insult to you. I do not value you any less because I need space to myself or because I share myself with others. Just as I enjoy sharing my time and space with you, our relationship is not my only one. I am an autonomous individual; no quarrel between lovers can decide my choices. I *will* continue to interact with others and I expect you to do the same. It is absurd to believe that either of us should cut ties with anyone else for the sake of this romance. If separately we are bettered and strengthened by each of our relationships, then in turn this relationship is bettered and strengthened.

*I care for you because you, in and of yourself, add some panache to my individual awesomeness.*





## Towards an Indigenous Egoism

Alex

### Introduction

I am an indigenous person of the Oglala Lakota nation. My ancestors are from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Before then, they were nomadic and traveled freely across the entire area known as the Great Plains. I am also an individualist anarchist and, for better or worse, exist within a “radical” community of other anarchists here in the United States. I have been bombarded with countless write-offs of individualist and egoist thought: calling it capitalist, colonialist, or even white supremacist. I'm writing this particular piece in response to a friend of mine who made the claim that individualism and self-interest are basic tenets of colonization. While this may be true if self-interest is defined by colonial ideology, I will present an individualist and egoist-anarchist thought that is a tool of decolonization and indigenous resistance.

### Individualism, Colonialism, and Entitlement

What makes individualism and egoism so appealing is the sense of liberty and freedom it offers: the sense that no one else should restrain you from achieving your desires and that you and your desires are important. We are deprived of freedom in every culture and society: we face the coercion to work, to serve the collective, to honor the morality of God and the church, to fear prison an internalize policing, to fulfill social roles, to reproduce the family, to submit to authority, to be a productive contributor to society and humanity. Active pursuit of freedom seems a natural reaction to constraints. European explorers, colonists, and settlers were seeking this freedom. They felt entitled to resources and the land, which lead to the removal and relocation of Indigenous peoples. They felt entitled to the exploitation of free labor, which lead to the transport

and slavery of Africans. It was in their interest to expand the wealth and power of their nation or colony, and disregard the interests of anyone who would be in the way of this. In short, colonization is acting on behalf of the self-interest of the colonizer.

However, Max Stirner's definition of what constitutes a *voluntary egoist* offers a different vision of colonial individualism. A colony is a collective that exists to benefit its mother country with natural resources, labor, the spread of nationalist and Christian ideologies and culture, and strategic control of land from which to wage war. Everyone who exists within a colony is then existing to serve their country, whether it be as workers to extract resources or in factory production, in armies to fend off rival countries and Indigenous peoples, as missionaries to spread religion among Indigenous nations, or as politicians to maintain the order of the colony's population. The thirteen colonies realized their lack of freedom from Britain, and initiated the American Revolution, created the Declaration of Independence, and the creation of the United States of America. The United States is founded on an illusion of freedom, liberty, and individualism. This has always been a central marker of American national ideology. But a delusional mass that continues to serve and submit to various authorities are not voluntary egoists, but rather, in Stirner's words, *involuntary egoists*. A patriotic person may join the military and fight his country's enemy in his self-interest, but in doing so he is submitting to his commanding officer, to the politicians who decided to go to war, to the duty to obey orders, and to his devotion to Country. He is giving up his freedom as an individual and serving a collective: his idea of a "greater good." He is giving up the ability to become his full Self. The same can be applied to the religious man who serves God in self-interest, to attain salvation and avoid eternal suffering in his imagined Hell. He represses many aspects of himself to conform to his idea, or his church's idea, of God and morality. Every man who fought in the American Revolution, and every person who has immigrated to America—for freedom, for individualism, for

the American dream—has been chasing individualism, which can never be achieved by servitude.

## The History of American Colonialism and Indigenous People

Colonial individualism and entitlement were expressed at the expense of Indigenous peoples. In order for these explorers, colonists, and settlers to expand and have access to whatever would bring them power and wealth, Indigenous people had to be subjugated. In a military sense, this was not an easy task at first, but due to epidemics brought by Europeans, many Indigenous nations were severely weakened or nearly wiped out entirely. This allowed European/American colonizers to gain a military advantage. Forced removal from land followed; any land that held value of any sort was cleared out and exploited by the colonizers, resulting in near extinction of animals and plants that Indigenous people relied on to sustain themselves. Any resistance to removal brought warfare and the individuals who advocated for such things were called “savage” and either forcibly civilized or killed. The civilizing was left to missionaries, whereas the killing was the job of the United States and Canadian governments. Both spiritual and cultural traditions and ceremonies were outlawed. Belongings considered to be sacred were taken away and destroyed. Children were removed from families and sent to boarding schools. Their hair, which held tremendous spiritual meaning, was cut off to resemble the style of whites. They were hit and beaten for speaking their traditional languages. They were converted to Christianity. They were educated as the colonizers saw fit, to be suited to living up to Western cultural standards. Everything was done to exterminate Indigenous culture, in the service of colonialism.

## Self-Hatred in Modern Day Indigenous Communities

We have survived through a great deal. History has erased us; to most

we no longer exist. We are still very much alive, but modern-day reservation life is no treat. Colonization's effects still haunt us as a people, often subtly. Alcoholism, addiction, domestic abuse, economic deprivation, poverty, diabetes, and suicide are at high rates on reservations all across North America. Most of these stem from self-hatred, both individually and collectively. Is it a coincidence that many of these issues also plague African-American neighborhoods in major cities across the United States? These are the results of colonization, of removing indigenous peoples from the land they're accustomed to living with, of forcing them to assimilate to Western civilized cultural standards and a capitalist market economy.

### The Colonizer in Our Heads

Aside from the self-hatred I see in fellow Native people, I also witness assimilation and a sense of identification with the colonizer. The remnants of our communities are now run by tribal governments, tribal police, and tribal courts pushing reform and imitating the way that the colonizer runs things in his world. Our youth are encouraged to go to college, get careers, and be successful; or join the army to fight in the United States government's wars to enforce colonialism in other parts of the world. I frequently attend, dance, and sing at powwows across North America, and see crosses and Nike symbols on individuals' dance outfits. It's unheard of for there not to be an American flag carried in at grand entry, followed by a song to honor all Native and non-Native veterans for "protecting our freedom" and "allowing us the privileges to do what we're doing today."

### Individualism as a Tenet of Decolonization

It should be evident that when we talk about "self-interest," we cannot speak of objectivity. What may be in your self-interest could also very well be something against my self-interest. This makes the blanket statement, "self-interest and individualism are tenets of colonialism" a simplistic view of what self-interest is, and avoids the question

of whose interest it is that we're talking about. As an Indigenous person who takes a strong stance against assimilation, colonialism, and capitalism, it is certainly not in my interest to maintain those structures.

Individualism is the idea that you and your desires are important. Egoism implies this and also states that one ought to act on behalf of oneself to realize those desires. As Indigenous people, what could we use more than self confidence? We need to know that we as individuals and as a people, matter. For centuries we've been beaten down, physically and psychologically. We've been oppressed by Power for so long that we're convinced that we don't matter, that we're worthless, that we're savages: less than human and unfit for society. The psychological effects of colonization have been studied, dissected, and proven to result in both internal and external self-hatred.

Some of us have accepted this; we abuse ourselves and each other. Or we self-medicate to numb ourselves from the pain. Some of us assimilate to be recognized by our oppressors, to feel a sense of self-worth. I for one want to appease no one. I want to know that I matter to me, not to the society that denies me my desires, keeps me from freedom, a society responsible for all of the damage done to Indigenous peoples worldwide. One thing that I do see at powwows all across the continent are bumper stickers and clothing expressing "Native Pride." This is something that my elders have said as far back as I can remember. "Be proud of who and what you are." If we were to take on this pride and understand that we do matter, to us, and start acting in our self-interest, it would mean war against those who stand in our way, who keep us from our freedom.

### Egoism Means War on Society

The part of individualism that the European explorers and colonizers failed to realize was its rejection of duty, devotion, and submission. I recognize no authority figure over me, nor do I aspire to any particular ideology. I am not swayed by duty because I owe nothing

to anyone. I am devoted to nothing but myself. I subscribe to no civilized standards or set of morals because I recognize no God or religion. No amount of pressure, judgment, or force should cause me to restrain myself from that which I desire. Egoist anarchists have declared war on society, war on civilization. This resistance is in the interest of anyone who desires a life free of submission to a ruling power, to anyone who dreams of a world of freedom, to those who would build community with those who share common interests and affinity: a world of free association, so we can live as we please and experience a fulfilling life. This should apply to no one more than Indigenous peoples. As the Western culture's standards and values have been forced down our throats, we need to remember who we are. We need to remember the importance of self and our desires.

The rejection of this submission does not come easily. When I say war on society, I mean it. Decolonization can only occur if we confront our enemy: the colonizer. If we don't, then we're only perpetuating the colonizer/colonized relationship.

We can never expect the oppressors to give up their privileges for the sake of the oppressed. This initiation and confrontation may necessitate violence.

It should be noted that colonialism was imposed through military force. Ultimately, it is the system's monopoly on the use of violence that enables it to impose its will.

*Warrior magazine*

We have to remember what it means to be a “warrior.” We honor our veterans as Native people, to revive the traditions of honoring our warriors; but a true warrior doesn't fight for her enemy, and she doesn't submit to an authority that dominates and subjugates her and her people. A true warrior fights for himself, his family, and his community. Make no mistake: our indigenous ancestors didn't go down without a fight. We remember the Sioux uprising, where a broken promise of food led to attacks on white settlers and theft

of food from settlements. Andrew Myrick, a lead trader who said of the broken promise, “if they are hungry, let them eat grass,” was one of the first killed, found days later with his mouth stuffed with grass.

The history of indigenous resistance began the day Columbus and his men landed and continues today in struggles such as the refusal of the Diné to relocate as strip mines rip apart their lands and generating plants poison the desert air. I think it's time we stress the importance of Self. I think it's time we brainstorm new strategies and study the history of Indigenous resistance to formulate new paths toward decolonization and the destruction of civilization.





from *My Own* #3

## An Egoist Method

Apio Ludd

What do I mean when I talk about egoism? For some, egoism is a philosophy. James L. Walker, for example wrote *The Philosophy of Egoism*. Yet he himself points out in that book that .You, as a person of flesh and blood, will not be successfully classified in philosophy... And since I, as a person in flesh and blood, am the center of egoism, it can.t very well be a philosophy, though no doubt many egoists, by talking about .the ego. rather than about themselves in flesh and blood, have created a kind of .egoist. philosophy. But by making an abstraction, .the ego., the center rather than each unique flesh and blood individual, their philosophy contradicts egoism. They have created a new spook to haunt their heads. I despise philosophy (though, yes, I raid it for weapons to use against it) because it appears to me as nothing but a haunted, spook-riddled realm.

Others see egoism as an ethic. Some, like Ayn Rand, go so far as to claim that acting on one.s self-interest is what is best for society, and so promote it as a panacea for social ills. Here they expose that they are still moralists. But others instead see it as a purely a personal ethic. You and I would be better off *for ourselves* if we acted egoistically. But even as this personal, utterly selfish ethic, it becomes a *rule* for my behavior, a law outside of me telling me what to do. So my egoism is also not an ethic.

It seems to me that everyone acts egoistically. Christians or moslems who have faith and act on it do so to gain favor with the god they believe in. Altruists giving to charity feel good about themselves. Even one who jumps into a raging river to save a drowning child does so because of a compulsive urge. But most act out of .involuntary. or .duped. egoism. Involuntary, in that they have convinced themselves that they really are acting out of some higher interest; duped, because

they have duped themselves into believing their interest coincides with and needs to conform to the alleged .higher interest., that to ultimately achieve their own highest interest they must enslave themselves to the interest of a higher power, god, humanity, state, nation, duty, justice, etc. So, while still doing what they do in a self-interested way, they do it without being aware they are doing so, without willfully creating and using themselves and their worlds on their own terms, i.e., without making their egoism their own. Rather than a philosophy or an ethic, I consider egoism (for the willful, aware egoist) as a method for encountering, analyzing and using my world. I don't speak of *the* egoist method, because I figure that each unique individual, encountering her world in her own way, will develop an egoist method of his own. So I am talking about *my* egoist method. But there are things that I can say in a general way about how such a method would operate.

First of all, when I use an egoist method, I knowingly and willfully make myself the center of my universe. Everyone unknowingly and involuntarily *experiences* themselves as the center of their universe. Due to the way perception operates in living beings, this seems to be inevitable and probably necessary for survival. But human beings *think*.<sup>\*</sup> So along with perceptions, they have *conceptions*, abstractions and ideas to which they can ascribe value, power, will, even a kind of personhood at times. And, in fact, most human beings project their own centrality onto some such abstraction or idea: god, humanity, nature, nation, family, duty, justice, love, etc. Then, even though this abstraction or idea is actually their own invention, they make themselves its slave, and if their experience contradicts the alleged will of their chosen spook-master, they deny it, they sacrifice themselves for this *thought* that they have made their master. And what makes

\* It is quite possible that other living beings think as well, but so far I have seen little evidence that other living beings develop and enslave themselves to abstract conceptions as humans do.

these abstractions powerful is their *alienation* from the one who thought them, their removal into the realm of the *sacred* which is the ultimate haunted realm.

So when I use an egoist method, I become aware again of my *actual* experience of my universe, free from the impositions of thought, and willfully grasp this experience as my own. This doesn't mean that I stop thinking, of course, but rather that I make thinking my own and recognize what I create through thinking as nothing more than conceptual tools that I use. This requires me to hunt out all the traces of the sacred, first within myself in order to root them out, to destroy the spooks that may haunt me. This is essential to my *self-liberation*. But since I find myself in a world in which social institutions (the actual embodiment of spooks others conceived and imposed by force long ago) also get in the way of my full self-creation on my own terms, I also turn my attack on the sacred outward, onto the whole of the social world I experience, exposing the delusions and deceptions of all the various institutions that make up the social reality that has been imposed in my world. So many of the activities, interactions, relationships, conflicts, etc. of the social world are ritualistic absurdities. They only make sense in a sacred, *religious* context, a context in which some higher power demands the use of certain fetishes and the performance of certain rituals, as well as the suppression of heretics and unbelievers. An egoist method involves the demolition of all that is sacred, through exposure, mockery and blasphemy of every deity, every fetish, every ritual. It is a method for breaking these things down into their phenomenal components as I experience them and exposing their dependence on the continuing active belief and consequent servitude of individuals who have let their heads be haunted.

With a *practical* application of this method, it is possible to develop an ongoing self-theory capable of taking on the current social structures from a specifically anarchist perspective, that is, from a perspective that strives for *individual* autonomy against every authority

and recognizes the responsibility of each individual, not to anyone else or to any higher power or value, but rather for her own life and activity. Thus, it provides a starting point for an anarchist critique of the state, of economy, of the family, of morality, of religion, of the various social constructions of identity, etc. In every one of these things, there is something of the sacred, something of the power that individuals have alienated from themselves to create and empower the spooks they serve, and if I willfully examine them from starting from myself as center and my experience of these things on the phenomenal level, their absurdity is exposed. From there, I strive to express these critiques in such a way that they do not become new doctrines creating a new ideological spook, but instead goad others toward their own individual insurrections against the ruling structures and institutions, and the ideas behind them, and find ways to interweave these insurrections that enhance them all.

Of course, it would require many pages to go into detail about how an egoist method would operate, to fully explain how phenomenal experience provides a basis for developing practical critique, how dialectic in its original sense of an ongoing clash and interweaving of ideas, experiments, analyses and practices is a necessary part of such a method so that it can keep on developing, to show how this method undermines all theological, philosophical, ideological, i.e., all spook-ridden, thought. But I hope that this brief look has provoked some readers to look into what such a method might mean for them, how they might use it in their own insurrection and selfcreation.

from *My Own* #1

## What Is An Individual?

Apio Ludd

*(The following article is the first in a series of somewhat experimental articles in which I am developing my perceptions and experiences of autonomous self-creation and self-ownership.*

*Because of the nature of the topic, I am writing these pieces mostly in the first-person singular and combining this with directly addressing the reader. Though at times this may seem a bit clumsy or unsettling, I think it is most fitting for the topic.)*

What am I as an individual? The unique *embodiment* of a specific fabric of interweaving, everchanging emotions, actions, thoughts, interactions, relationships... Where do these interweaving, fluid threads come from? In the present world, until I become aware of this and begin to take these threads into my own hands, they mostly come from the things and being that make up the specific social context into which I was born, where I was raised and educated, and where I continue to carry out my roles and functions.

The activities through which I and other people survive—working, buying, selling—are products of this context. They can cause me to consume most of my time in activities and interactions that are not my own. Consider the amount of time wasted waiting in lines, the amount of time spent in the tedious motions through which I get and pay money, and the endless banal verbal exchanges with strangers about whom I couldn't care less.

These activities and interactions inevitably affect my emotions, for the most part by watering them down to a pathetic mediocrity. But then I consider how most people use their so-called free time (the time not devoted to social obligation and survival, which in this society are the same thing). They fill these “free” hours being

entertained (going to movies, watching TV, listening to music—particularly pop music). Every form of entertainment plays with the emotions. But beyond this, movies, TV shows, pop music and other forms of entertainment also have the function of defining the acceptable parameters of emotion, giving examples of how to feel them in specific situations, how to express them. So if I remain passive in the face of the influence of entertainment, even my emotions will not be my own creation, but a patchwork of givens that I have gathered from movies, television, pop songs and so on. This is why it is so easy for so-called passions, relationships, aspirations and individual endeavors to fall into clichéd patterns that are repeated over and over again, not just by specific individuals, by you and me, but all across the social wasteland in which you and I live.

To break from this, I need to learn to willfully create my passions and my desires as my own, to develop a capacity for intentional spontaneity, recognizing that without conscious choice, there is no spontaneity, only reaction and habit.

It may seem paradoxical to talk about willfully creating passions and desires. How could I possibly create my *impulses* willfully? Well, I have heard many a so-called radical (particularly communists) claim that the passions and desires of individuals are created by the social context. But an abstraction cannot create anything. The concrete reality behind this is that specific individuals who have an interest in defining everyone's passions and desires use certain techniques to define and channel our feelings and our impulses. This is not a conspiracy theory; it is simply a description of advertising, public relations, political propaganda and, as I already mentioned above, passive entertainment. To give an example, say that I suddenly get an urge for "Ben and Jerry's Funky Monkey"<sup>1</sup>. Obviously there is nothing innate about such a desire, since this company for exploiting the hippie sweet tooth has only been around for about three decades. My urge for this product would have been artificially

<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, it will never happen since I am allergic to milk...

created using a combination of advertising, labeling, identity and related techniques. On a less blatantly commercial level, what if I had a fetish for rubber, leather or high heels? Once again, this is an artificial passion, something created through a series of social processes—that is to say through the specific activities (whether conscious or not) of specific individuals. No one is born with these fetishes. In fact, they do not exist as fetishes at all until they are identified as such by the authorities who claim expertise in identifying sexual deviance and who change what may have been a momentary excitement into an identity.

But the point I am making with these examples is that passions and impulses, feelings and desires are not innate, but created, and there is no reason why I couldn't willfully create mine for myself. If I don't, it is because I fall into the expected channels of habit and social norms. So in order to begin willfully creating my own feelings, impulses and desires I need to decisively break with habit, bursting through the channels of social expectation and experimenting with intentional spontaneity.

Spontaneity can really only exist as a conscious, intentional choice. When I act unconsciously (and this is how most people act most of the time in this society), I will tend to limit my actions to habit, role, identity and mere reaction, none of which involve genuine self-creation, being instead submission to what is expected, to what is created to keep me enslaved. This is the very opposite of spontaneity. Where there is no will, there cannot be spontaneous activity.

I look upon desire—as opposed to the mere “ghost of desire” (William Blake)—as the impulse to create. It moves me to act upon my world, to experiment and explore. This impulse can only exist in its full force to the extent that my life is not already created for me. This means that it can only exist in conflict with the present social order, since that order usurps my capacity to create my own life, forcing me to submit or rebel. What is called “desire” in that order



is merely the longing for an already defined, external object that is not my own creation, even if I produce it myself. Self-creation is rebellion against that reality.

from *My Own* #6

## Nameless: An Egoist Critique of Identity

Apio Ludd

*Only when **nothing** is said about you and you are merely **named**, are you recognized as you. As soon as **something** is said about you, you are only recognized as that thing..*

Max Stirner

It's amusing how often people confuse identity with individuality. *Identity* traces back to a Latin word meaning “sameness”. And sameness implies the existence of something with which I can be the same.

It is certainly possible to conceive of individuals as identical atoms bashing into each other—marxists like to assume that this is what individualists are talking about—but even atoms only become identical when you or I conceive of them as *atoms*, giving them an *identity*. Atomization is a process that has its basis in the denial of my unique individuality, and identification plays a part in this process.

Stirner referred to you and I, i.e., to any individual in the flesh at this moment, as .the unique. (*der Einzige*). In *Stirner's Critics*, he explains that this is merely a name, nothing more. To speak, to write, he had to use a name. But, he wrote, “The unique . has no content; it is indeterminacy in itself.... To give it content before I live it out in my world, before you live it out in your world, is to give it an identity, a sameness, to destroy it as *unique*. To give a conceptual content to the unique is to make it an absurdity.

But even as unique, I am forced to contend with identity. There are the banalities of having to identify myself, for example, when entering a tavern, or when cashing a check, or when stopped by the cops. In every one of these instances, someone has been delegated a certain legal authority to make sure that I am *the same as* something required by their rules. Am I *the same as* someone old enough to drink? Am I *the same as*

the one authorized to cash the check? Am I *the same* as a person with no outstanding warrants? Each of these *identities* are concepts that I am supposed to live up to. And if I fail, I suffer the consequences. But, in fact, no one is ever *the same* as any of these things. Even if I can meet each of these challenges to get what I want (some drinks, some needed cash, some distance from the pigs), I am not any of those things. And those who impose these tests on me are my enemies in that they impose abstractions onto my unique self forcing a conformity to their rules and to a social requirement for personal consistency. They seek to undermine my ownness and with it my uniqueness.

In addition, every ruling social order is set up only to process individuals in terms of categorical identities: race, gender, nationality, sexuality, etc. Though these are all fictions, they affect people physically and mentally. These categories have served as justifications for enslaving individuals, excluding individuals, placing restrictions on individuals, beating and killing individuals, etc., *ad nauseum*. It makes sense that those who have experienced abuse based on such categorical identities would unite to fight against this abuse and those who carried it out. What doesn't make sense to me is that most of those who unite for this purpose don't base their unity on their shared desire to eradicate the abuse, but rather on the categorical identity that has served to justify this abuse. In other words, they choose to unite not as *enemies* of an order they aim to destroy, but as *victims* of an order from which they want recognition and justice. A social order can only recognize *categories*, not unique individuals. Justice can only deal with what can be measured and weighed, i.e., what can be compared and equated. Identity, sameness, belonging to a group, different ways of expressing the requirement for social recognition and justice. I, as an egoist aware of my uniqueness respond differently, as an enemy, aiming to destroy categorical identity and those who benefit from it immediately as I experience them here and now. If I unites with others, they will be those whose aims and powers enhance my own. Not identity politics, but the destruction of identity and politics, in favor of myself and my associations.

But I am not a moralist. I may well find uses for identity in some sense, even while recognizing that it is always a lie. In fact, I use identity whenever I say “I.” In this word, I identify myself here and now, my immediate concrete self, with my concept of myself in the past. As unique (i.e., as I exist concretely here and now), I am not the same as that, but I choose to unite myself with that, even to the extent of identifying with it, because it gives me a significant power in relating to my world and in interacting with others, just as identifying other with the past forms of these others that I have encountered enhances that power. So here, identity can become my *tool*. However, here as well, I am not talking about *categorical* identity, but about personal identity, equations that I make for myself, knowing full well that they are nothing more than conceptual tools for my use, for enhancing my self-enjoyment. If I take them to *be* myself, I am deluding myself.

Recently, I have come across communiqués from individuals (apparently acting in small groups) who describe themselves as individualist-nihilists and egoist-nihilists, laying claim to various attacks against the ruling order. Anyone who rebels and attacks the ruler order *for themselves* is certainly my comrade. I feel a kinship with her even if I don’t agree with all of his decisions about how he goes about her action. But I wonder why someone who’s acting for himself, from his own life, feels the need to lay claim to her action at all, let alone by using a group name, creating a group identity. If I choose to attack the ruling order or to act against the law in any other way, this choice springs from the immediacy of my life here and now, and I owe no one an explanation. Nor do I need the inspiration of other actions to move me. It is my own life and my own opportunities that move me. It’s true that a rebellious

act may move the rebel with passion so she wants to express her rage and joy. Then he might write to claim his act, but there is no need to do so and a great deal of wisdom in not doing so. But what I question most in this is that individuals who claim an act in this way are taking on an *identity*. This is why they have to name themselves (and as beautiful and poetic as some of these names are, they remain labels for an identity). The signed communiqué replaces the immediate fleeting meaning of the action for the unique individuals who carried it out with a permanent meaning intended to explain the action to an audience. With permanent meanings come permanent identities and the unique individuals disappear into this crystallized form. A unique individual, acting for herself, is *nameless*. She is nameless, because her existence is too immediate and fleeting for any name that is not completely empty of meaning or thought to express him. If he chooses to act, it makes sense for him to act anonymously, *without* an identity. If she chooses to talk about her act, to make it a matter for conversation or debate, or to let others know that they are not alone in their rebellion, it makes sense for her to do this anonymously as well. It isn't difficult to figure out how. The individual, acting from his uniqueness, has no need to *identify* with his action, she was completely in that action at the moment that she did it. In any case, the full implications of claiming one's acts should be a matter for ongoing debate without taking away from the solidarity and kinship one feels with those who in their rebellion make different choices.

Identity is about *defining* what you are. As I said, there are moments when playing with such definitions may make sense (or give pleasure). But these definitions, these identities can never be *me*. They can, however, become prisons locking me

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into the cell of a role or a set of roles. And if I am not to be a slave, I have to reject these roles, except as occasional masks I may don when it serves my interests. Of course, when I don't conform to roles, I become unpredictable, I become fleeting, I become unintelligible to the institutions and to those with institutional ways of viewing their worlds. Stirner says, in *Stirner's Critics*, that he "names the unique and says at the same time that 'names don't name it'..." Precisely as a unique individual I am *nameless*, precisely as such I have no identity. I am simply *myself* here and now.



The project of self-realisation is born of the passion for creation, in the moment when subjectivity wells up and aspires to reign universally. The project of communication is born of the passion of love, whenever people discover that they share the same desire for amorous conquest. The project of participation is born of the passion for playing, whenever group activity facilitates the self-realisation of each individual.

Isolated, the three passions are perverted. Dissociated, the three projects are falsified. The will to self-realisation is turned into the will to power; sacrificed to status and role-playing, it reigns in a world of restrictions and illusions. The will to communication becomes objective dishonesty; based on relationships between objects, it provides the semiologists with signs to dress up in human guise. The will to participation serves to organise the loneliness of everyone in the crowd; it creates the tyranny of the illusion of community.