

THE REALM OF THE UNDERSTANDING  
AND THE INDIVIDUAL  
*PART I, CHAPTERS IV & V*

*by Karl Schmidt, 1819 - 1864*

**Contents**

IV. THE WAR AGAINST CRITIQUE.....	3
1. The Critique of Critical Critique.....	3
2. Ludwig Feuerbach.....	8
3. Max Stirner.....	10
V. THE AUDITING OF CRITIQUE.....	22

Transcriber's note:

This piece was transcribed from "The Young Hegelians: An Anthology", published in 1983, edited by Lawrence S. Stepelevich. Considering that the work I am transcribing, the title of which is just above, contains an extraordinary amount of quotations, with one or few lines of comment between them, I have taken the editorial liberty to clearly separate Schmidt's words from quotations, as well as quotations from other quotations, by starting each new one on a new line, something which wasn't done in the "Anthology", to make reading easier and more aesthetically pleasing, while of course doing nothing about it when nothing need be done. All footnotes are by series editor, who was listed above, I have not added any new notes or footnotes besides this one.

E.G., 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020

## IV. THE WAR AGAINST CRITIQUE

‘Critique’ celebrates its golden age and its consummation as ‘history’; but what is consummated must be annihilated; the annihilation of what is consummated lies at the same time in its consummation, fullness and wholeness is at the same time the end. ‘Pure critique’ is summoned to the battlefield and challenged to fight. It takes its stand. The slaughter begins.

### 1. The Critique of Critical Critique

‘The struggle between Strauss and Bauer concerning substance and self-consciousness is a struggle within Hegelian speculation. There are three elements in Hegel, Spinozistic substance, Fichtean self-consciousness, and Hegelian *absolute spirit*, the necessarily contradictory unity of the two. The first element is nature, metaphysically parodied, in *separation* from man; the second is *spirit*, metaphysically parodied, in *separation* from nature; the third is *actual man* and the actual *human species*, the metaphysically parodied *unity* of the two. Strauss has led Hegel to a Spinozistic standpoint; Bauer has led Hegel to a Fichtean standpoint thoroughly consistent within the theological domain. Both have *criticized* Hegel insofar as, for him, each of the two elements *falsified* through the other; whereas they have developed each of the elements into its *one-sided*, and thus consistent, realization. Both proceed beyond *Hegel* from this point in their critique, but both also remain firmly within Hegel’s speculation, and each represents only *one side* of Hegel’s system’ [Marx-Engels, p. 147].<sup>1</sup>

‘Also, for Bauer as for Hegel, who discloses and elevates to self-consciousness the reservedness of substance,<sup>2</sup> self-consciousness is substance elevated to self-

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1 [Because Schmidt’s work is a skillfully wrought satirical mosaic, depending largely upon the precise way in which its citations are stylistically combined with his own words, I have thought it best to use my own translations of the quoted passages, whether or not a better translation exists, in order to preserve the fluidity and grace of expression which is evident in the original German. I have thus inserted in the text bracketed references to the following editions of Schmidt’s sources: Marx’ and Engels’ *Die heilige Familie*, abbreviated ‘Marx-Engels’, in Bd. II of their *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962); Max Stirner’s *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, abbreviated ‘Stirner’, hrsg. von Ahlrich Meyer (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1972); Stirner’s *Kleinere Schriften und seine Entgegnungen auf die Kritik seines Werkes ‘Der Einzige und sein Eigentum’*, abbreviated ‘Stirner KS’ (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1976); and the Barnikol edition of Bauer’s *Das entdeckte Christentum*, abbreviated ‘Barnikol’ (where the original page numbers appear in the margins). Also inserted in brackets are section or paragraph numbers for Feuerbach’s *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* and for other, miscellaneous cited passages, e.g., from Shakespeare, Goethe, etc. In general, either Schmidt or his editor was very careless in the placement of quotation marks and in the transcription of passages. I have tried to correct the use of punctuation *in situ*. Against what is now common practice, but following Schmidt, lengthy prose quotations are not set off by indentation. Where major discrepancies in the citations occur, I have indicated this either by footnotes or by simply inserting ‘Cf.’ in the bracketed references in the text, thus inviting the interested reader to make the comparison himself. In all cases of such discrepancy, it is Schmidt’s erroneous version, rather than the correct original, which is translated. All notes in the text are Schmidt’s; all footnotes are my own. (Tr.)]

2 Schmidt’s paraphrase of Hegel as misquoted by Marx; Cf. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, hrsg. von Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952), p. 13. Tr.)]

consciousness or self-consciousness as substance, self-consciousness is transformed from a predicate of man to a self-reliant subject. It is the metaphysical-theological caricature of man in his separation from nature. The essence of this self-consciousness is thus not man, but the idea whose actual existence it is. It is the idea-become-human and therefore also *infinite*. All human properties transform themselves thence in a mysterious way into properties of the imaginary infinite self-consciousness' [Cf. Marx-Engels, p. 146].

'Mr Bauer, who is now accomplishing in *all* areas *his* opposition to *substance*, his philosophy of self-consciousness or of spirit, must therefore in all areas have to deal only with his own phantoms. Critique is, in his hand, the instrument to sublimate into mere pretense and pure thought anything which still maintains a finite, material existence outside of infinite self-consciousness. He does not combat the metaphysical illusion in substance, but rather the worldly kernel — nature; nature, not only as it exists outside of man, but also as it is his own nature. Presupposing substance in no area — he still speaks in this language — thus means for him to recognize: no being different from thinking, no natural energy different from spiritual spontaneity, no power of human essence different from understanding, no suffering different from activity, no impression left by others different from the impression effected by oneself, no feeling and willing different from knowing, no heart different from head, no object different from subject, no praxis different from theory, no man different from the critic, no actual community different from abstract universality, no *Thou* different from the *I*. It is accordingly consistent when Mr Bauer continues further to identify himself with infinite self-consciousness and with spirit, i.e., to set their creator in the place of these his creations. It is just as consistent to disavow as stubborn mass and material the rest of the world which obstinately persists in being something different from his product. And now he hopes:

It will not endure long  
And it will perish with bodies.  
[Goethe, *Faust*, Part I, lines 1357-8]

Hitherto not being able to get close to 'something of this gross world', he likewise constructs his own discord consistently for himself as a self-discord of this world, and constructs the rebellion of his critique of the development of mankind as an enormous rebellion of mankind against his critique, against spirit, against Mr Bruno Bauer and his associates. Mr Bauer has been a theologian from birth, but not an average one, rather a critical theologian or a theological critic. As the outermost extreme of old-Hegelian orthodoxy, as a speculative organizer of all religious and theological nonsense, he has already pronounced critique to be constantly his personal property. At that time he designated Straussian critique as human critique, and explicitly asserted the right of divine critique in opposition to that of Strauss. He later picked out of the religious masquerade the great self-esteem or self-consciousness which was the hidden kernel of this godliness, granted it autonomy as a special essence, and exalted it to the principle of critique under the sign of infinite self-consciousness'. In his own movement he then fulfilled the movement which the 'philosophy of self-consciousness' describes as an absolute act of life. He again removed the 'difference' of 'the product , *infinite self-consciousness*, from the producer, from *himself*, and recognized that in its movement there '*was only he himself*', and that thus the movement of the universe just becomes genuine and actual in his ideal self-movement. Divine critique in its return into itself has been restored in a rational,

conscious, critical way; being-in-itself has changed into being-in-and-for-itself; and the performed, actualized, revealed beginning has just become the conclusion. Divine critique, in contradistinction to human critique, has revealed itself as *the critique*, as *the pure critique*, as *the critical critique*. In the place of apologetics for the Old and New Testaments have appeared apologetics for the old and new works of Mr Bauer. The theological opposition of God and man, of spirit and flesh, of infinity and finitude, is transformed into the critical theological opposition of spirit, critique, or Mr Bauer, and the material of mass, or the profane world. The theological opposition of faith and reason has dissolved itself in the critical theological opposition of *common sense* and pure critical thinking. The '*Journal for Speculative Theology*' has been transformed into the newspaper of critical literature. The *religious redeemer of the world* finally actualized in the *critical redeemer of the world*, Mr Bauer. The last phase of Mr Bauer's development is no anomaly; it is the return of this development *into* itself out of *its alienation*. It is obvious that the moment in which *divine critique alienated* itself and emerged from itself coincides with the moment in which it became partially untrue to itself and created something human. *Absolute critique*, having reverted to its starting point, has finished its *speculative circular course* and with it the course of its *life*. Its further movement is a pure, prominent *circulating within itself*, concerned with every massive interest, and therefore without any further interest in mass' [Marx-Engels, pp. 149-51]

Even absolute critique has its dogma.

'Absolute critique emanates from the *dogma* of the absolute justification of "*spirit*". Absolute critique emanates further from the *dogma* of the *extra-worldly* existence of spirit, i.e., existence outside of the teeming mass of mankind. Absolute critique finally transforms, on the one side, "spirit" and "progress", and on the other side, "mass", into fixed essences, into concepts, and refers them then to one another as such given, firm extremes. It does not occur to absolute critique to inquire into spirit itself, to investigate whether or not "the catch-word", "self-deception", or "kernel-lessness" are grounded in spirit's own spiritualistic nature, in spirit's frivolous "pretension". On the contrary, spirit is *absolute*, but, unfortunately, at the same time it is constantly turning over into *spiritlessness*: It is constantly overlooking the most vital factor. It must therefore have an *adversary* which plots against it. Mass is this *adversary*. The same is the case with "progress". Despite the pretensions of "progress", *retrogressions* and *circular movements* are constantly becoming evident. Absolute critique, far removed from surmising that the category of "progress" is fully worthless and abstract, is rather clever enough to acknowledge "progress" as absolute, in order to insinuate that *mass* is the explanation of retrogression and a "personal enemy" of progress. Because "mass" is nothing but the "*antithesis of spirit*", of progress, of "critique", it can thus also only be determined through this imaginary antithesis; and, disregarding this opposition, critique knows only that which is *meaningless* concerning the *meaning* and the being-there of mass, and it knows, since mass is fully undetermined, to speak of it in *that sense* in which the "word" *even* includes the *so-called* cultured world. An "even" and a "so-called" are sufficient for a critical definition. Mass is thus distinguished from *actual masses*, and exists as "mass" only for the sake of "critique" ' [Marx-Engels, pp. 87-8].

'The relationship between "spirit and mass" *discovered* by Mr Bauer nevertheless still has a *hidden* sense. It is, of course, nothing else but the *critically caricatured consummation* of the *Hegelian apprehension* of history, which again is nothing else but

the speculative expression of the *Christian, Germanic* dogma of the opposition of *spirit* and *material*, of *God* and the *world*. This opposition, to be sure, expresses itself within history, within the human world itself, in such a way that a few select *individuals*, as the *active* spirit of the rest of mankind, stand over against that mankind which is just *spiritless mass* and *material*. Hegel's apprehension of history presupposes an *abstract* and *absolute* spirit which so develops itself that mankind is only a *mass* which upholds this spirit either more unconsciously or more consciously. He thus allows a *speculative*, esoteric history to take precedence within empirical, exoteric history. The history of mankind transforms itself into the history of the *abstract spirit* of mankind, spirit which is thus ulterior with respect to actual man' [Cf. Marx-Engels, pp. 89-90].

'Surely, for Hegel, the *absolute spirit* of history has its material in *mass* and its appropriate expression first in *philosophy*. *The philosopher*, meanwhile, appears only as the organ in which absolute spirit, the maker of history, comes to consciousness,<sup>3</sup> *almost as an afterthought*, after a completion of the movement. The philosopher's share in history reduces itself to his supplementary consciousness, for absolute spirit achieves the actual movement *unconsciously*. The philosopher thus arrives *post festum*. Hegel is guilty of a twofold incompleteness, first by pronouncing philosophy to be the being-there of absolute spirit, but then at the same time restraining himself from pronouncing the *actual, philosophical individual* to be *absolute* spirit; second, however, by allowing absolute spirit as absolute spirit to produce history only for *show*. Because absolute spirit, of course, just comes to *consciousness* in the philosopher *post festum* as creative world-spirit, thus its fabrication of history exists only in consciousness, in the opinion and mental imagery of the philosopher, only in speculative imagination. Mr Bauer preserves, cancels, and uplifts Hegel's incompleteness. Now he pronounces *critique* to be absolute spirit, and pronounces *himself* to be *critique*. As the element of critique is exiled from mass, so is the element of mass exiled from critique. Thus critique does not know itself in a *mass*, but rather in a trifling *little band* of chosen men, exclusively incarnated in Mr Bauer and his disciples. Mr Bruno preserves, cancels, and uplifts Hegel's other incompleteness further as he no longer makes history in fantasy *post festum*, as does Hegelian spirit, but instead, with *consciousness* in opposition to the mass of the rest of mankind, plays the role of *world-spirit*, appears in a contemporary dramatic relation to this mass, and, intentionally and after mature, careful deliberation, invents and fulfills history. On the one side stands mass as the passive, spiritless, history-less, *material* element of history. On the other side stands *spirit, critique*, Mr Bauer and company, as the active element from which all *historical* action proceeds. Society's act of metamorphosis reduces itself to the *cerebral activity* of critical critique' [Cf. Marx-Engels, pp. 90-91].

'Even *history*, like *truth*, becomes a singular person, a metaphysical subject, whose sole supporters are actual, human individuals. Absolute critique thus helps itself to these catchwords: "*History* does not let itself be mocked, *history* has spent its greatest exertions in this direction, *history* has been busy; why should *history* be so busy? *History* explicitly furnishes us with proof, *history* introduces truths, etc., etc.'" [Cf. Marx-Engels, pp. 83-84].

Indeed: 'History does *nothing*, it "owns no colossal wealth", it "fights no battles!" Rather, it is *man*, actual, living man, who does everything, who owns and fights, it is

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3 [Richard Dixon and Clemens Dutt mistranslate *Bewusstsein* as self-consciousness; cf The Holy Family in volume IV of Marx' and Engels' Collected Works (New York: International Publishers/London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), p. 85. (Tr.)]

not “history” which needs man as the means to work through its ends — as if it were a singular person — on the contrary, history is *nothing* but the activity of man in pursuit of his ends’ [Marx-Engels, p. 98].

Critique, because of its utterly theological tendency, must handle its past apologetically. Critique wanted to become acquainted with mass and preserve, cancel, and uplift it, thus it already knew in advance the gap which separates the critic from mass, the gap which just consists in being preserved, cancelled, and uplifted by the critic [Cf. Marx-Engels, p. 105].

‘Now since everyone is himself his own neighbor, “critique” busies itself chiefly with preserving, cancelling, and uplifting its own *massive enormity*, just like the Christian ascetics who begin the campaign of spirit against flesh by mortifying their *own* flesh. The “flesh” of absolute critique is its actually massive — covering twenty or thirty volumes — literary *past*. Mr Bauer must therefore liberate the literary biography of “critique” — which exactly coincides with his own literary biography — from its *massive illusion*, subsequently *improve* and *interpret* it, and “provide authority for critique’s earlier works” through this *apologetic* commentary’ [Marx-Engels, p. 105].

‘The self-apology of absolute critique has at its disposal an entire *apologetical* dictionary: “not even proper”, “only not marked”, “there was besides”, “not yet complete”, “nevertheless... nonetheless”, “not only... but especially”, “but only just as proper”, “critique should have...”, “if it had been possible for me and if it, on the other side, ...”, “if.. then one will surely concede at the same time...”, “now if it is natural, if it is not inevitable, etc., etc.”, “not even”. Not very long ago absolute critique expressed its opinion of similar apologetic windings as follows: “‘Although’ and ‘nonetheless’, ‘certainly’ and ‘however’, a heavenly Yes and an earthly No,<sup>4</sup> are the pedestals of modern theology, the stilts on which it moves along, the trick in which all of its wisdom is contained, the winding which returns into all of its windings, its alpha and omega.” [Discovered Christianity, p. 162).<sup>5</sup> [Barnikol, p. 153; Marx-Engels, p. 112].

The critics of critical critique have readily grasped the points in which critique has been vulnerable, and they have shown its weakness and one-sidedness, the weakness of pure spirit and the one-sidedness of the defense of this spirit. But because *Engels* and *Marx* are blinded by the gleam of another new ideal and captivated and stupefied by the delirium of another new idea, because they approach critique with spiritual prejudices and with an imaginary and thoroughly pondered heaven, they must step forth as fanatics, dressing their words with the holy light of their idea, they may not apprehend and comprehend critique clearly, and they must be dumbstruck by the superiority of ‘critique’, *of spirit par excellence*. Their motto is: real humanism.

‘And in Germany “real humanism” has no opponent more dangerous than spiritualism, or the speculative idealism which sets “self-consciousness” or “spirit” in the place of the actual, individual man and, with the evangelist, teaches: “Spirit is that which makes something alive, flesh is useless.” It is obvious that this fleshless spirit has spirit only in its fancy. What we resist in *Bauerian* critique is speculation simply reproducing itself as a caricature. We consider it to be the most nearly consummated

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4 [Bauer’s text, according to Barnikol, reads, ‘ein himmlisches Nein und ein irdisches Ja’, while Schmidt’s text, which is here translated, reads, ‘ein himmlisches Ja und ein irdisches Nein’. (Tr.)]

5 [Schmidt, in one of his few specific references to a cited passage, has misidentified its source. It actually occurs on p. 102 of *Das entdeckte Christentum*, while Schmidt, copying the printer’s error in the first edition of Marx, has placed it on p. 162. (Cf. Barnikol, p. 44). (Tr.)]

expression of the Christian, Germanic principle which is now performing its swan song while it transforms “critique” itself into a transcendent power’ [Marx Engels, p. 7].

Engels and Marx thus do not combat critique at all, neither critique in and for itself, nor critique for its own sake, or for the sake of its own inner deficiency, they do not analyse critique as long as they salvage the elements of the analysis themselves; rather, they wage a holy war against critique because critique is their enemy, the most dangerous enemy of the ‘real humanism’ of a determined spiritual formula.

‘Real humanism’ is the presupposition and the basis on which stands ‘the critique of critical critique’. ‘Real humanism’ is the discovered philosopher’s stone because it creates the ‘actual, individual man’. — The critique of critical critique could not strike critique dead.

## 2. Ludwig Feuerbach

The founder of ‘real humanism’ fixes, ‘I am an actual, sensuous essence: my body belongs to my essence, indeed the body in its totality is my I, my essence itself’ [Cf. Feuerbach, §36] as the starting point of ‘modern philosophy’. Therefore

‘[O]nly what requires no demonstration, what is certain immediately through itself, what supports and accepts itself immediately, what is immediately followed by the affirmation that it is, is true and divine — the simply decided, the simply indubitable, the crystal clear. But only the sensuous is crystal clear; only where sensuousness begins does all doubt and strife cease. The mystery of immediate knowing is sensuousness’ [Feuerbach, §38].

However, ‘to the senses, not only “external” things are an object. Man himself is only given to himself through sense - he is himself an object as a sense object. The identity of subject and object, abstract thought only in self-consciousness, is truth and actuality only in the sensuous viewing of man by man. We feel not only stones and wood, not only flesh and bone, we also feel feelings as we press the hands or lips of a feeling essence; we perceive through our ears not only the roaring of water and the whispering of leaves, but also the soulful voice of love and wisdom; we see not only mirrored surfaces and colored apparitions, we also glance into the eyes of man; thus not only the external - but also the internal, not only flesh - but also spirit, not only the thing — but also the I, is an object of sense. Everything is therefore sensuously perceptible, if not immediately, then surely mediately, if not with the raw, plebeian senses, then surely with the refined senses, if not through the eyes of the anatomist or the chemist, then surely through the eyes of the philosopher’ [Feuerbach, §41].

The sensuous is thus ‘not immediate in the sense that it is profane, tremendously obvious, thoughtless, or self-evident’ [Cf. Feuerbach, §43].

‘The actual, in its actuality and totality, the object of modern philosophy, is only an object for an actual and complete man.<sup>6</sup> Modern philosophy thus holds as its principle of knowledge, as its subject, not the I, not absolute spirit, i.e, not abstract spirit, in

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6 [Feuerbach reads, ‘Wesen’; Schmidt reads, ‘Menschen’. (Tr.)]



short not reason *in abstracto*,<sup>7</sup> but rather the actual and entire essence of man. Reality, the subject of reason, is only man. Man thinks, not the I, not reason. Modern philosophy is thus founded on the Godhead, i.e., a truth of the whole man; or, it is even well founded on reason, but on the reason whose essence is human essence, thus not on an essence-less, colorless, and nameless reason, but rather on the reason which is saturated with the blood of man. Therefore if the old philosophers said, “Only the rational is true and actual”, then modern philosophy responds to them by saying, “Only the human is true and actual, for only the human is rational; man is the measure of reason” [Cf. Feuerbach, §50].

‘Truth does not exist in thinking, or in knowing for itself Truth is only the totality of human life and essence’ [Feuerbach, §58].

‘The individual man for himself does not have the essence of man in himself, neither in himself as the moral essence nor in himself as the thinking essence. The essence of man is comprised only in the community, in the unity of man with man – a unity which however is only founded on the reality of the difference between I and Thou’ [Cf. Feuerbach, § 59].

‘Solitude is finitude and narrowness; communal solidarity is freedom and infinity. Man for himself is man (in the usual sense); man with man, the unity off and thou, is God’ [Feuerbach, §60].

‘The highest and final principle of philosophy is accordingly the unity of man with man. All essential relationships – the principles of the various sciences are only various types and modes of this unity’ [Feuerbach, §63].

‘Modern philosophy, as the philosophy of man, is also essentially the philosophy for man – it has, without detriment to the dignity and independence of the theory, indeed in the most intimate harmony with this theory, an essentially practical tendency, to be sure, practical in the highest sense; it replaces religion, it has the essence of religion within it, it is, in truth itself, religion’ [Cf. Feuerbach, §64].

However, ‘to the senses’ is indeed only ‘sense’; ‘the sensuous’ is only ‘object’. ‘Man’ is not given through ‘the senses’, but through ‘thinking’, because man is a ‘thought’, an ‘abstraction. Thus, in the end, even Feuerbach may not and can not be content with the usual, actual, stalwart sensuousness, the sensuousness which is nothing but sensuousness, this determined sensuousness; but instead he needs the ‘refined sense’, the ‘philosophical eye’, i.e., the sense and the eye which are no longer sense and eye, but rather the sense and eye which peer through the thick cloud-cover of spirit and proceed, privileged and authorized, out of the spiritual wash; he thus needs ‘philosophy’ and ‘thought’. How could sense, this determined sensuousness, ever apprehend ‘man’? Is not ‘essence’ a matter of thought? Does not ‘the totality of human essence’ exist only in ‘thought’ alone? And this totality must and may, even for Feuerbach, appear only in thought, not in hard actuality. He must both wish and not wish it to make an appearance, i.e., he must make it into an exclusive object of yearning and hope. The sensuousness and the being of Feuerbach are not this determined sensuousness or this individual and exclusive being, but they are universal sensuousness and universal being – an abstraction. Feuerbachian man is a worthy essence of ‘modern philosophy’, and modern philosophy is, ‘in truth itself, religion. Feuerbachian man is Feuerbachian fantasy. Feuerbach’s ‘philosophy’ could not annihilate ‘critique’.

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7 [Feuerbach reads, *Tür sich allein*’; Schmidt reads, "*in abstracto*". (Tr.)]

### 3. Max Stirner

Stirner takes up the fight. His first victim is *the middle class*.

‘The middle class is nothing other than the thought that the state is, all in all, the true man, and that the human value of the individual consists in being a citizen of the state. The true man is the nation, but the individual is forever an egoist. Therefore strip off your individuality or your isolation, in which egoistical inequality and dissension swarm, and dedicate yourselves completely to the true man, the nation, or the state. Then you will be considered as a man and have everything which makes a man; the state, the true man, will authorize you as its own and give you your human rights. Man gives you his rights!’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 108].

So runs the speech of political liberalism.

‘Man’s freedom in political liberalism is freedom from *persons*, from personal mastery, from the *lord*, it is personal freedom securing each individual person against other persons. Nobody commands, the law alone commands. But if people have become *equal*, certainly their *possessions* have not. And indeed the poor *need* the rich as the rich *need* the poor, the one needs the money of the rich as the other needs the work of the poor. Thus nobody needs anybody as a *person*, but he needs him as a *giver*, and consequently as someone who has something to give, as a proprietor or an owner. Thus what a man *has* is what makes the *man*. And in *having* or in “property” people are not equal. — Accordingly, *social liberalism* concludes that *nobody* must *own*, as in political liberalism *nobody* should *command*, i.e., as to this point the *state* alone has maintained command, so now *society* alone should maintain ownership’ [Stirner, pp. 12 7-8].

‘Through the principle of work, to be sure, what pertains to fortune or competition in the state<sup>8</sup> is outdone. But at the same time the worker retains in his consciousness that what is essential for him is to be “the worker”, far from egoism, and submits to the supreme majesty of a workers’ society, as the middle class citizen has adhered with devotion to the competition state. The beautiful dream of a “social duty” still continues to be dreamed. We again suppose that society *gives* us what we need, and that on this account we are *obliged* to it, we are all indebted to it. We insist upon wanting to *serve* a “highest giver of all goodness”. The social liberals do not think that society is not at all an I which could give, lend, or vouchsafe, but rather an instrument or a medium which we may use to our advantage; or that we do not have societal duties, but rather only interests which society must help us to pursue; or that we are not bound to make offerings to society, but rather, if we make offerings, we expect offerings to us in return; because the social liberals — as liberals — are imprisoned in the religious principle after which they zealously strive, the religious principle which hitherto was the state — holy society. Society, by which we have everything, is a new mistress, a new spectre, a new “highest essence” which takes us “into service and duty”!’ [Stirner, p. 135].

‘*Humane consciousness* despises middle-class consciousness as much as it despises worker consciousness, because the middle-class citizen is only “provoked” by the tramp and his immorality, and because the *lazy sluggard* and his principles, which are “unethical” because they are impoverishing and unsocial, enrage the worker. Against

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8 [Schmidt adds, ‘im Staate’. (Tr.)]

them the humanitarian retorts, “The unsettledness of many is alone your product, Philistine! But that you, Proletarian, demand *grinding toil* of everyone, and want to make *drudgery* universal, further insinuates your subsequent status as a pack ass” [Cf. Stirner, pp. 136-7].

‘Of course it is necessary that man be without any master, but rather than that the egoist should again be the master of man, man should become the master of the egoist. Of course man must have leisure time, but if the egoist turns it to his own advantage, then it eludes man; therefore you must give leisure time a human significance. But you workers even undertake your work out of egoistical motives, because you want to eat, drink, and live; how should you be any less egoistical in your leisure time? You only work because it is good to be idle after work is done, and however you spend your leisure time is left to chance. But should every door be barred to egoism, then a completely disinterested” commerce, total disinterestedness, must be sought. This is only human, since only man is disinterested; the egoist is always interested’ [Stirner, p. 137].

‘And do you not notice that your disinterestedness, again, like religious disinterestedness, is a heavenly interestedness? The profit of individuals certainly leaves you cold, and you can proclaim abstractly: *fiat libertas, pereat mundus*, i.e., Let there be liberty, though the world perish. You do not even provide for the next day and generally do not have any serious concern for the needs of the individual, neither for your own good living nor for that of others; but, out of all of these things, exactly none are of consequence to you, because you are a – visionary’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 138]

Max Stirner has a rightful claim against critique, the claim of the negative pole against the positive, of one moment of the opposition against the other moment. *The Unique Individual and his Property* is the negation, opposition, and contradiction of critique, but because it is merely the negation, it is also itself critique and the completion of critique. Stirner represents ‘the mass’ of critique; he asserts the ‘right’ of the ‘mass’ which ‘critique’ holds to be ‘illegitimate’ against the ‘spirit’ which ‘critique’ has sanctified.

‘I have made my affairs dependent on nothing’ [Stirner, p. 3] – thus the unique individual begins the song of himself and of his life, and thus he shows at the same time that he is aware of enough strength in himself to be, all in all, himself. He proclaims enthusiastically: ‘I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself, as creator, create everything’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 5].

And what then does the unique individual know to create out of himself? What then is the creation of this creator?

Let us just consider his creations.

*The course of his life* - that is his first creation.

He gazes into and out of the world of his ancestors and finds therein the ‘ancients’ who ‘lived in the feeling that the world and worldly relations were the truth before which their swooning I must humble itself’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 16].

‘But even the ancients struggled to make their truth into a lie’ [Stirner, p. 17].

In Sophism ‘Greece made sport of that which till then had been for it a matter of enormous seriousness’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 17].

‘Do not be amazed’, say the Sophists with calm audacity, ‘and use your understanding, your wit, your spirit, against everything. With a good and skilled understanding one fares best in the world, one prepares the best share, the most agreeable life’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 17]. — this is their theory; and understanding is thus the heartening word against the enslaving force of steadfast, fatherly existents. — ‘Do not merely cultivate your *understanding*, but also<sup>9</sup> your heart’, said *Socrates*, the founder of ethics [Cf. Stirner, p. 18].

Here commences the period of the purity of the heart. The Sophists had proclaimed only the omnipotence of the understanding, but the heart was disposed toward the mundane, a servant of the world, having always remained affected by worldly desires. This crude heart had to be refined; the age of the *education of the heart*. Everything worldly must therefore come to disgrace before the heart; family, public affairs, fatherland, etc. must be given up for the sake of the heart, i.e., bliss, the bliss of the heart; for nothing more may the heart beat. This war from Socrates onward reaches its peaceful conclusion just on the day of the death of the ancient world [Cf. Stirner, pp. 18-19] - through *Skeptics*.

‘The sentiments and thoughts which we create out of the world contain no truth’ says Timon. ‘There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so’ [Shakespeare, Hamlet, II, ii, 252-3] [Cf. Stirner, pp. 24-5].

There is in the world no truth to apprehend, things contradict themselves, thoughts about things are indiscriminate; the apprehension of truth is done for, ‘and only the man who is unable to apprehend, the man who finds nothing in the world to apprehend, remains, and this man just leaves the world empty of truth and does nothing with it’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 25].

‘The man who is led by no more than his heart’s desire, his sympathy, pity, his *spirit*, is the innovator,<sup>10</sup> the — *Christian*’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 25].

‘Until the time preparatory to the Reformation the *understanding* was imprisoned by the dominion of Christian dogmas, when it arose sophistically in the Reformation<sup>11</sup> century and played a heretical game with all the propositions of faith’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 26].

Humanism is Christian Sophism:

‘If only the heart remains convinced of Christianity, the understanding may well do as it likes’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 26].

‘But the Reformation seriously addressed the heart itself, and since then hearts have become noticeably — more unchristian’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 26].

‘The heart, daily more unchristian, loses the content with which it is occupied until at last nothing is left for it except empty *cordiality*, the wholly universal love of men, the love of man, the consciousness of freedom, “self-consciousness”. Thus Christianity is just consummated because it has become naked, paralyzed, and void of content. There is now no more content against which the heart does not rebel, unless it is unconsciously or without “self-consciousness” infiltrated by this content. The heart criticizes to death with relentless *cruelty* everything that wants to intrude upon it, and

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9 [Schmidt omits Stirner’s ‘besonders’. (Tr.)]

10 [Stirner reads, ‘der Neue’, i.e., ‘the modern one’; Schmidt reads, *der Neuerer*, i.e., ‘the innovator’. (Tr.)]

11 [Stirner has this event in the *pre*-Reformation century. (Tr.)]

is capable of no friendship, no love. Whatever could there be to love in men, since they are altogether “egoists”, not one man as such, i.e., not one who is only spirit! The Christian loves *only the spirit*; but how could there be anyone who is actually nothing but spirit?’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 27].

‘For pure theory men are only there to be criticized and most thoroughly despised: They are, for it, no less than for the fanatic priest, only “dung” and other such clean things. Driven to the outermost point of disinterested cordiality, we must at last perceive that the spirit which the Christian loves alone, is nothing, or that spirit is a — lie’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 27]-

Thus begins the unique individual’s second day of creation.

‘I must oppose Christian “freedom” to idiosyncrasy.’ That is the ‘I become’ of the unique individual. Must I? Yes indeed, the unique individual *must*, because he always ‘*must*’, because the ‘*must*’ is his despotic lord and he its servile slave. ‘*Oppose?*’ Yes, ‘oppose’, for out of the ‘opposing’, and thus out of the ‘opposition’, and thus from his ‘opposite’, and thus from the world which he wants to conquer, the unique individual can not escape. He must oppose Christian freedom to idiosyncrasy, ‘-ness’ against ‘-ness’, for ‘one can get *rid* of quite a lot, but surely not everything; one becomes free of much, but not everything’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 173].

‘Against Christian freedom, idiosyncrasy is my whole essence and being — there, it is I myself’ [Stirner, p. 173].

‘I am *my own* at all times and in all circumstances, if I understand how to have myself and not waste myself on others’ [Stirner, p. 173].

‘The urgent pursuit of *determined* freedom always includes the intention of a new command [Stirner, p. 176].

‘Freedom you all want, you want *freedom*. Why then do you haggle over more or less? Freedom can only be complete freedom; a bit of freedom is not freedom. You despair of winning complete freedom, freedom from everything, indeed, you hold it to be madness even just to wish it? — Now, stop chasing after the phantom and use your effort toward something better than the — *unattainable*’ [Stirner, p. 176].

‘My freedom just becomes perfected when it is my — *force*; but through this I cease to be merely free, and I become my own. Why is the freedom of the people a “hollow expression”? Because the people have no force! I blow down the people with a puff from the living I, be it the puff of a Nero, a Chinese emperor, or a poor author’ [Stirner, pp. 183-4].

‘Force is a beautiful thing, and very useful; for one goes further with a hand full of force than with a sack full of right’ [Stirner, p. 184].

‘Whoever has force stands above the law’ [Stirner, p. 184].

‘Behave as if you were mature, thus you are without any other declaration of majority; if you do not behave accordingly, you are not worthy of it, and would never be mature even by a declaration of majority. The mature Greeks chased their tyrants out, and the mature son makes himself independent of his father. If the Greeks had waited until their tyrants had most graciously granted them their majority, they could have waited long. The intelligent father throws the son who does not want to be mature out of the house and maintains the house himself; it serves the pup right’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 185].

‘Idiosyncrasy involves everything owned and again honors what was dishonored by Christian speech. Idiosyncrasy, however, has no strange standards, as it is not at all an idea like freedom, ethical order, humanity, etc.; it is only a description of the — owner [Stirner, p. 188].

‘My power is my property.’ [Stirner, p. 203] - That is the property of the owner.

‘I am only not entitled to what I do not do with free courage, i.e., what I do not entitle myself to. I decide if it is right in me; there is no right *outside* me. If it is right *for me*, it is right. Possibly that is therefore not yet right for the others; that is their worry, not mine: They may defend themselves. If there were something not right for the whole world, but right for me, i.e., if I wanted it, then I would not ask anything about the whole world. Everyone who knows to treasure *himself* does so, each to the degree that he is an egoist, because force goes before right, and indeed — with full right’ [Stirner, p. 208].

Perhaps you say, ‘Of course everything would go in utter confusion if everyone could do whatever he wanted!’ ‘But whoever told you that everyone can do everything? Then why are you there, you who do not need to stand for everything? Guard yourself, and nobody will do anything to you! Whoever wants to break your will has to deal with you, and is your enemy. Treat him as such. If millions more stand behind you for protection, then you are an imposing power and will have an easy victory. But even if you impress your adversary as a power, you are thereby still not a sanctified authority for him, unless he is a scoundrel. He does not owe you respect and attention, even though he will pay attention in the face of your force’ [Cf. Stirner, pp. 215-6].

‘Right is a spanner in the works, thrown in by a spectre. Power — I am that myself, I am the powerful one and the owner of power. Right is above me, is absolute, and exists in something higher, by the grace of which it flows into me: Right is a gift of the grace of the judge; power and force exist only in me, the powerful and forceful [Stirner, pp. 230-1].

For me in *my business* ‘no majesty, nothing holy, is a barrier, nothing which I know how to overcome. Only what I can not overcome still restricts my force, and I of restricted force am temporarily a restricted I, not restricted by the force *outside* me, but rather restricted by my own still deficient force, by my own *powerlessness*. Yet, “the guard dies, but does not surrender!”<sup>12</sup> Above all, only a physical adversary!

I want any foe

That I can see and fix in my eye,

Who, himself full of courage, enflames my courage too, etc.’

[Stirner, pp. 233-4]

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12 [At Waterloo, General Pierre Jacques Etienne, Comte Cambronne, supposedly replied ‘La Garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas!’ to demands that he surrender his hopelessly cornered Garde Imperiale. Although Cambronne denied having said any such thing, although his more probable reply was simply ‘Mcrdc!’, and although he was actually taken prisoner in the battle, this line, which was probably just a fiction of the journalist Rougement, became Cambronne’s epitaph, inscribed on his monument in Nantes. The ‘mot de Cambronne’ was certainly freshly in the mind of both Stirner and Schmidt, since the frenchman had died only recently, in 1842. In later years, Cambronne’s alleged defiance may have inspired another commander on a Belgian battlefield. General Anthony Clement McAuliffe, who, on 23 December 1944, to Nazi demands that he surrender his 101st Airborne Division, replied ‘Nuts!’ (Tr.)]

‘What is *my* property? Nothing but what is under my *force*! To what property am I entitled? To every property to which I — *empower* myself. I give myself the right to property by taking property, or I give myself the power of the property owner, full power, empowerment. Whatever cannot be snatched away from me by force remains my property; very well, let force decide property, and I choose to expect everything from my force! Strange force, force which I leave to another makes me a bondman; so may my own force make me an owner. Let me then retract the force which I have yielded to others out of ignorance about the strength of my own *force*! Let me say to myself that whatever my force reaches is my property, and let me claim as property everything which I feel strong enough to gain, and let me extend my actual property as far as I entitle, i.e., — empower, myself to seize it’ [Stirner, pp. 284-5].

‘Egoism does not think of sacrificing anything, of compromising itself; it simply decides that what I need I must have and I will provide’ [Stirner, p. 285].

‘Grab and take what you need!’ That is the rule of the egoist and ‘thus the war of all against all is declared. I alone determine what I want to have. “Now”, the Philistines of love will cry, “truly that is not new wisdom, for the selfish have always behaved in this way!” It is not at all necessary that the matter be new, if only the *consciousness* of it is present. But this consciousness cannot claim to be of an advanced age, unless perhaps one considers here Egyptian and Spartan law; for how unfamiliar it is follows from the above reproach, which speaks of the selfish with contempt. One should just know that that process of grabbing is not contemptible, but manifests the pure act of the egoist who is at one with himself’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 286].

Later the cheated will pull up their courage, certainly from the egoistic standpoint, with the question:

“By what is your property safe, you who are privileged?” and they answer themselves: “By us, who refrain from usurpation. And therefore by our protection! And what do you give us for it? Boots and scorn you give to the ‘common people’; police surveillance and a catechism with the main point: ‘Respect what is *not yours*, what belongs to *others*! Respect others, especially your superiors!’ But we retort: ‘If you want our respect, *then buy* it for the price which we approve. We want to leave you your property, if you compensate us properly for leaving it” [Cf. Stirner, p. 300].

“With what do you compensate us for chewing potatoes while we calmly watch you slurp oysters? Buy the oysters as expensively from us as we must buy the potatoes from you, then you may continue to eat them. Or do you mean that the oysters do not belong to us as much as they belong to you? You would scream out against force if we reached out to devour them, and you would be right. Without force we do not get them, as you do not have them unless you use violent force on us.” [Stirner, p. 300].

“We want nothing given by you, but we also want to give you nothing. For centuries we have bestowed alms upon you out of obliging stupidity, we have contributed the mite of the poor, and we have given to the lord what is — not the lord’s; now just once open your purse, for from now on the price of our wares increases most enormously. We want to take nothing at all from you, only you should pay better for what you want to have. Then what do you have?” “I have an estate of a thousand acres.” “And I am your farmhand and I will only plow your field hereafter for a Thaler a day.” “Then I will hire someone else.” “You will not find anyone else, for we farmhands no longer do things differently, and if one announces that he will take less, then he had best beware of us. There is the housemaid who is now also demanding as much, and you will no

longer find one below this price.” “Oh, then I will be ruined.” “Not so rash! You will surely take in as much as we do, and if not, then we will reduce our share so that you may live like us.” “But I am used to better living.” “We have nothing against that, but it is not our problem; if you can make more, then do it. Why should we work for less than our price so that you can live in luxury?” [Stirner, pp. 301-2].

“But you uneducated people surely do not need so much.” “Now, we are taking something more so that we can provide for ourselves the education which we perhaps need”. “But if you thus reduce the rich, who will then sustain the arts and sciences?” “Well now, the multitude must manage it; we all donate to make a nice little sum; besides, you rich now buy only the most insipid books and lachrymose portraits of the Virgin, or a nimble pair of dancer’s legs.” “Alas, accursed equality!” “No, my good old sir, nothing of equality. We only want to be considered for what we are worth, and if you are worth more, then you should after all be considered more worthy. We only want to be *worth our price*, and we intend to show ourselves worthy of the price that you will pay” [Cf. Stirner, p. 302].

‘Above the gate of our time stands not that Apollonian “Know yourself!” but instead a “Make use of yourself!”’ [Stirner, p. 353].

Thus, ‘I no longer *submit* to any power and I recognize that all powers are only my power, which I instantly have to subjugate if they threaten to become a power against or over me; each of them is allowed to be only one of means to succeed, as a hound is our power against the game, but if he attacks us ourselves, then we kill him. I then degrade all powers which govern me so that they serve me. Idols exist through me; I need only not create them anew, then they exist no more; “higher powers” exist only through my elevating them while I render myself inferior’ [Stirner, p. 357].

‘My business with the world consists in my enjoying it, and so exhausting it for my self-enjoyment. *Business is enjoying the world*, and appertains to *my — enjoying myself*’ [Stirner, p. 358].

‘From now on sounds the question, not how man can acquire life, but how he can waste it and enjoy it; or not how man is to establish the true I in himself, but how he is to disintegrate himself and live to the hilt’ [Stirner, p. 359].

‘A person is “called” to nothing, and has no “burden”, no “determination”, no more of a “calling” than has a plant or a beast. The flower follows no calling to consummate itself, but spends all its energies to consume and enjoy the world as well as it can, i.e., it sucks in as much of the earth’s juices, as much of the ether’s air, as much of the sun’s light, as it can get and retain. The bird does not live according to any calling, but it uses its energies, as much as it can, to catch beetles and sing to its heart’s delight. But the energies of the bird and the flower are meager compared to those of a man, and a man who applies his energies will intervene in the world much more forcefully than will a flower or a beast. He has no calling, but he has energies which make themselves felt where they are because their being indeed consists only in their making themselves felt, and they are as little able to remain idle as life, which, if it “stood still” even for a second, would no longer be life’ [Stirner, p. 386].

‘Therefore, because energies always prove themselves active of themselves, the command to use them would be superfluous and senseless. To use his energies is not man’s *calling* and burden, but rather it is his ever actual, present act’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 367].



‘The true man does not dwell in the future, an object of yearning, but rather he dwells, actually and existing-ly, in the present. However and whoever I may be, joyful and sorrowful, a child or a senile old man, in confidence or in doubt, asleep or awake, I am this, I am the true man’ [Stirner, p. 367].

‘We are altogether perfect, and on the whole earth there is not one person who is a sinner! There are madmen who imagine themselves to be God the Father, God the Son, or the Man in the Moon, and so also the world<sup>13</sup> abounds with fools who fancy themselves sinners; but as the former are not the Man in the Moon, so the latter are not — sinners. Their sin is imaginary’ [Stirner, p. 404].

‘You have never seen a sinner, you have only — dreamed him’ [Stirner, p. 405].

‘I no longer serve any idea, any “higher essence”, thus it is obvious that I also no longer serve any man except — under all circumstances — me. But thus I am, not only by my act and my being, but also for my consciousness, the *unique individual*’ [Stirner, pp. 405-6].

‘I am not an I along with other I’s, but the only I: I am unique. Therefore my requirements are also unique, as are my acts; in short, everything which is mine is unique. And only as this unique I do I take everything as mine to own, as only as this do I get busy and develop myself. Not as a man and not for man<sup>14</sup> do I develop, but as I, do I develop — myself’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 406].

‘The ideal “man” is *realized* if the Ghristian view is turned over into the proposition: “I, this unique individual, am man.” The conceptual question, “What is man?” has then changed into the personal question, “Who is man?” By “what”, the concept is sought, in order to realize it; by “who”, it is no longer a question at all, but the answer is instantly, personally present in him who asks the question; the question answers itself. It is said of God, “Names name thee not. That is true of me; no *concept* expresses me, nothing assigned as my essence exhausts me; they are only names’ [Stirner, pp. 411-412].

‘In the unique individual the nakedness and barrenness of concepts and ideas come to light in his nakedness and barrenness, in his shameless uprightness; vain pomp is revealed as his enemy; it becomes clear that the greatest “catchword” is that which appears to be the slogan with the most content. The unique individual is the upright, undeniable, revealed catchword; he is the keystone of our world of catchwords, of this world in whose “beginning was the Word”.<sup>15</sup> The unique individual is the declaration by which it is conceded with all frankness and honesty that it declares nothing [Cf. Stirner KS, p. 347].

‘It<sup>16</sup> ought to be nothing but the common catchword, only so that through this it<sup>®</sup> is actually that which the bombastic catchwords of enemies are unable to be, and so that it thus brings to shame the making of catchwords’ [Cf. Stirner KS, p. 347].

‘The unique individual is a slogan without thought; it has no content of thought. But then what is his content, if not thought? One who can not exist for the second time accordingly also can not be expressed’, for if he could be expressed, actually and

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13 [Stirner reads, ‘es’. (Tr.)]

14 [Stirner’s text is ambiguous regarding accusative singular or dative plural; Schmidt has removed, and perhaps ‘solved’, the ambiguity by substituting the dative singular. (Tr.)]

15 [Cf. John 1.1. (Tr.)]

16 [Stirner reads, ‘er’, i.e. ‘he’ the unique individual Schmidt reads ‘es’. (Tr.)]

completely expressed, then he would be there for the second time, would be there in the “expression” [Stirner KS, p. 348].

‘The judgment, “You are unique”, signifies nothing else than “You are you”, a judgment which the logician calls a nonsensical judgment because it judges *nothing*, says nothing, because it is empty, or a judgment which is not a judgment’ [Stirner KS, p. 349].

‘You, the unthinkable and unspeakable, are the content of the catchword, the owner of the catchword, the embodied catchword; you are the *who*, the *he* of the catchword. In the unique individual science can come forth as life, since for life<sup>17</sup> the it becomes the *he*, and the *he* who then seeks himself no longer in the word, in the *logos*, in the predicate’ [Cf. Stirner KS, p. 350].

The unique individual recognizes all relations in the present world, only divests it of its illusion of holiness. His egoism ‘is not an opposition to love, not an opposition to thinking, not an enemy of a sweet life of love, not an enemy of surrender and sacrifice, not an enemy of the most inward cordiality, not even an enemy of critique, not an enemy of socialism, in short, not an enemy of an *actual interest*; he does not exclude any interest. He is only directed against disinterestedness and against what is uninteresting, not against love, but against holy love, not against thinking, but against holy thinking, not against the socialists, etc.’ [Cf. Stirner KS, p. 375].

‘It is said of God that he is perfect and has no calling to strive for perfection. That is also true of me alone. I am the owner of my force, and I am that when I know myself as *the unique individual*. In *the unique individual* the owner reverts even to his creative nothing out of which he is born. Each higher essence over me, be it God, be it man, weakens the feeling of my unique individuality, and fades only before the sun of this consciousness. If I set myself toward myself, the unique individual, my affair then stands on the ephemeral one, on its mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say that I have set my affair on nothing’ [Cf. Stirner, p. 412].

That is the unique individual and his property. That is the act of the unique individual, a unique act.

The unique individual is the first attempt to escape from the dominion of spirit. The tribute he must pay is that he himself comes to be the most spiritual of spirits, the ghost of ghosts, the fanatic of fanatics, the holy of holies, the god of gods, or rather the devil of devils. The unique individual knows that there is nothing to the world of spirits, that it is only the *universal* shadow of the shadows, called men, floating around the world, that spirit is only the tyrannizing chimera of man. He has sought the incantation before which spirit flees and collapses in its exhalation, but - he has himself, because he was short-sighted, erred along the way and has died in error. The unique individual has not consumed the world of spirits, on the contrary, he is consumed by it. He has chewed it, but not digested it; he has swallowed it, but - Misfortune!-it lies too hard in his stomach: He dies of the world of spirits and in the world of spirits. He is ‘*pure Being*’, the immutable, dead existence — the abstract abstraction. The critique of the unique individual is therefore the last critique of critique; ‘Critique’ defeats the unique individual, but the victory over him is costly; It must pay him with its existence.

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17 [Stirner reads, ‘in dem ihr...’ i.e., ‘in which (life) its (science’s)...’ or ‘in which (life) for it (science)...’ Schmidt reads, ‘in dem ihm...’ i.e., ‘while (or since) for it (i.e., life)...’ (Tr.)]

The unique individual is the conclusion of the world; he fed and fostered the communists, communists, i.e., universal men, general men, common men, and communal men, men who under the cloak of communism maintain, and must maintain, egoism, because egoism is their own essence, egoism is the truth of communism. The communist opposes and confronts the egoist; Communism can not live without egoism. In just this way the communist must remain opposed to the egoist, because without him the egoist does not exist. The love, the deep sigh of the heart of the egoist, is the communist. The egoist is the frantic communist, the dionysian, orgiastic song of the communist, the truth, the unveiled and brazen shame and form of the communist. He is devil against God, the evil one who belongs to the holy spirit, the hell which is the discovered heaven. The communist belongs to the egoist and the egoist to the communist. Both are only thinkable and actual in and with each other, both stand and fall together; Egoist and communist are *basically* one, but fight on *account* of their unity and *in* their unity with each other. — It is not an accidental, but a necessary, designation when the unique individual chooses ‘egoist’ as his name. He wants therewith to refer always and everywhere in himself to himself and to escape from spirit. Indeed, ‘he who flees is not yet free, for in fleeing he is still conditioned by that before which he flees’. The egoist is for him and with him the power which limits, suppresses, and shatters everything even the individual, the entire embodied man; *the egoist* — naturally not the ordinary, not the profane egoist, in the sense and in the meaning in which one is trained from infancy, but rather the egoist for whom one must imagine ‘the identical judgment’ [Cf. Stirner KS, p. 349, p. 354], the egoist who is not an enemy of a sweet life of love, not an enemy of surrender and sacrifice, not an enemy of the most inward cordiality, not an enemy of critique, not an enemy of socialism, not an enemy of an actual interest [Cf. Stirner KS, p. 375] but rather he who wants to annihilate only ‘holiness’ and who has sworn eternal enmity to disinterestedness and to the uninteresting, thus the egoist who, under the sign of mere thought, hallows holy thought, i.e., universal, exclusive thought, the thought which because of its holiness alone can claim the name of thought, who with his unholy socialism lifts socialism in general into heaven, who thereby to preserve an actual interest, turns love into a chaste daughter of heaven and a coveted nun, who, through his actual interest, makes his stand opposed to the uninteresting, the non-actual, the illusory, the diabolical interest, and thus venerates the actual interest as God. — The unique individual is altogether consumed by spirit and therefore needs *spirit* for his foremost axiom and leading principle: He wants, through thoughtlessness, to end thinking. But what does thoughtlessness begin when thought attacks it? The poor thing, where can it flee? Indeed, thoughtlessness is not so thoughtless as you may well believe; it is the opposite of thought, hence itself a thought, and can on this account, in spite of its thoughtlessness, rightfully mean and say that it itself should distinguish the robberies of the unique individual through the *consciousness* of robbery from all other, ordinary robberies, and that one should just *know* that the process of seizing is not contemptible — it can rightfully mean and say this because it is *meaning* and *thought*. — He wants, through lack of respect, to end respect. I respect nothing — he says. I respect nothing — is, however, also respect, even if respect for — nothing. He wants, through praxis, through action, to end theory. His highest category is thus the will; he is intoxicated by the liquor of the will, and as a drunkard who does not stand on his own feet, but reels and staggers, and before whom the actual makes a wry face, has become faint, impotent, unsteady, spineless, in order to become actually an individual, a unique individual. He *wants* to

retract everything into himself; he *wants* to do what he *wants*; he arrives, however, at wanting, and can never go beyond it. 'Wanting' is his God, the catchword he adores, his happiness and his salvation, his dream of a better time — his idea.

The unique individual *wants*, i.e., he *ought*. 'In the ought always lies the weakness that something is recognized as justified, and yet, it is not able to assert itself.'<sup>18</sup> He is the objectified will, *the* will in human configuration — the phantom, *the* spirit. — He wants, through the unspiritual world, through nature, to end the world of spirits. He calls for whomever will listen to him to be like the flower of the field or like the sheep and the ox. Nature is thus his universality. As nature does, so ought man to do, i.e., man ought to be and become man ; man ought to mold himself to 'nature', i.e., to a new spirit. He wants to get rid of spirit, since he despises it. But in and with this despising he remains stuck in spirit, which is for him still an object worthy of despising, which is thus for him still something worthy, which he still must, and wants to, make into a thing, which is still his own shadow, his unavoidable ghost.

The unique individual can not get away from his opposition. He needs privileged robbers' states in order to rob, he needs stupidity in order to cheat the stupid, he needs spirit in order to be able to be spiritless. He is a Brahmin and differs from the Indian Brahmins only in that they say their 'Om' all their life long, but the unique individual says 'Un'. 'Un' is his principle and his highest bliss, the moment in which he cries out 'Un' in ecstasy and in mystic delirium: 'unsayable', 'unspiritual', 'untrue', 'unholy', 'unethical', 'unjust', 'unfair', etc.

The unique individual stands on the same ground as his foes. He is, as well as they, an idealist. He luxuriates in his ideal and dreams therefore, also consistently, of a world full of egoists, of an egoistic world which should then come to be. 'The cheated will later step forward with an egoistic consciousness' [Cf. Stirner, p. 300]. What he, the unique individual, thinks and is, the rest of the human creations which exist in his head should also think and be. As if then the unique individual were not sunk down and thrown down into the abyss of nothingness, as if he then were among all others what he would be as an egoist among egoists. As if these 'egoists' differed from 'men'. As if the egoists were not as good '-ists' as the pantheists and communists, i.e., a fantastic universality. The egoist must pretend a world of egoists because he himself is not enough. The unique individual must give a commission to his time, must write 'Make use of yourself!' above the gate<sup>19</sup> of his time in order to introduce a new spirit and a new misery, a new hunt and a new madness. He must fashion a new chimera, but the chimera which gives 'humanity' its true expression, with which he leads this 'humanity' on and away, he, the robber — his gang of robbers.

The unique individual does not produce uniqueness.

'We could, if he were entirely, as he says, "*the unique individual*", no longer quarrel with him, indeed if only he existed and we did not. But we are not yet at that stage. What then is he? He is at most an individual, as I am, insofar as he is an egoist. What could we in this form, he and I do with each other? We could jostle and use force on each other — we have in common only that we are both these brittle, completely *detached* individuals. But then why does the egoist write his book? Why does he put himself to useless trouble with language, with thought and other universalities?

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18 [This sentence, enclosed in quotation marks by Schmidt, epitomizes thoughts found in Stirner, p. 307, pp. 326-7, and pp. 332-3- (Tr.)]

19 [I assume 'Phorte' is a misprint for 'Pforte'. (Tr.)]

Through that he does not become what he wants to become, the “unique individual”; rather, he becomes public property. He even duplicates his book, he diffuses his thoughts about others; he becomes “transcendent”, he has put a “phantom” into the world, and the more spirit spouts forth in his executions, the more mischievous is the goblin which he produces. This “unique individual” could not be born without becoming a man for all the world, as he launches himself, the “unique individual” he moves unfeelingly like a drop into the universal sea. That we have him is already enough to annihilate him; that we can speak with him is already his refutation.’<sup>20</sup>

The unique individual does not know that he creates ‘universalities’ through ‘thoughts — the form of the unique individual’ should be a mere shell into which all ‘content’ can be stuffed; he also does not know that content collapses with form and that he, *pure* form, is also *pure* content.

Therefore, unique individual, do you also dream? Do you also make yourself, ‘a madman’, into the ‘Kaiser’, the Pope, and the ‘Lord God’? Egoist — are you also spiritual, spiritualized, and spiritually sanctified? Now, just dream on, dogmatic dogmatist, on until the Last Judgment, where, with the resurrection of all, even your ideal and your idea will attain reality. Then the war of all against all will break out. ‘Then one will revolt against the other and one will strike the other dead in the holy strife in order to be nearest to the great egoist — Max Stirner. Then the farmhands will be unanimous and the housemaids will do a dance entwined around one another and will mutually confirm with eternal vows that henceforth they choose to work only for a Thaler a day. Then nectar and ambrosia will flow and roasted pigeons will fly into the gaping, snapping mouth of the egoist. Then God will be all in all. — Farewell, unique individual.

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20 [This passage is probably excerpted from a contemporary critique of Stirner’s work. ( Tr.)]

## V. THE AUDITING OF CRITIQUE

‘Critique’ was the unique and exclusive power ‘of the world’. ‘Critique’ brings to ‘self-consciousness’ the immobile and the motionless, absorbing and negating everything, entangling everything in its womb, in the grave of the ‘substance’ which admits a silent universality: It makes the full, lifeless, color-faded, and color-fading pictures of ‘substance’ into definite, resolute, and animated configurations. ‘Critique’ steals<sup>21</sup> the fire from the ‘species’ and imparts the spark of life to man, ‘the spirit of his travels’, ‘the reformation of illusions’, ‘of dogmas’, ‘of the contradictions in man’s brain’, ‘ci the human head’, through which he learns to be independent of critique, to exist in himself, to stop and go by himself For ‘critique’, ‘spirit’ is no longer a dead, abstract beyond which persists in itself, insists upon itself, and does not exceed its once assumed form and figure; instead, critique is in ‘*the world*’. [Critique is] that which is coming to be, that which eternally works and lives, a new shaping and a new shape, perpetual progress, a conversion and a metamorphosis of the realm of spirit, the process of development, the principle of movement, ‘the law of the development’ of the spirit of the world and of the time. In ‘critique’ spirit opens its workshop and shamelessly displays its true being, shows how it continues and advances and how it furthermore is nothing but this continuing and advancing, shows how it criticizes anew and solves anew each acquired result, i.e., itself, how it only and alone is only this chasing after itself with itself, - how it works and creates and lives and moves and struggles. Critique is of an elastic nature, to be characterized nowhere in a ‘spiritual’ field comprehensibly and vulnerably and just now at its end and in its consummation of the total, personal, individual negation of its consummation — to be presented and portrayed as it has destroyed and dissolved this determined standpoint and this determined form of world-spirit, even while it still appears to be working within this form — as it corrects itself, whatever it admits and accepts originally as accurate and legitimate it allows to stand and later to fall, lets its own decisions, assertions, and proofs gradually elapse in its own invalidity and waste away through itself,— as it generates itself in its annihilation the world of spirits until it has subjugated everything under it and has become ‘world-spirit itself’.

‘Critique’ has succeeded in overturning the hitherto prevailing world-view and in freely suppressing the hitherto dominant spiritual powers; with it ‘could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey / On self-condemning bosoms’ (Byron, *Childe Harold*, III, [59]);<sup>22</sup> what *Bacon* asserted about philosophy is true of critique, that it, with only a little trouble, leads away from ‘God’, but, exhaustively driven, leads back to God. In critique was the fulfillment of the prophetic words of the poets first possible, Shakespeare’s ‘there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so’ [*Hamlet*, II, ii, 252-3], and Byron’s:

The Mind which is immortal makes itself  
Requital for its good or evil thoughts, —  
Is its own origin of ill and end —  
And its own place and time; its innate sense,  
When stripped of this mortality, derives  
No colour from the fleeting things without.

21 [I read ‘stiehlt’ for ‘stick’. (Tr.)]

22 [Schmidt has misidentified the stanza in *Childe Harold* as III, 19. (Tr.)]

But is absorbed in sufferance or in joy.  
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.  
[Manfred, III, iv, 129-36]

‘Critique will involuntarily remind one of the three axioms of the loafer Nante,<sup>23</sup> which read: “Do not be amazed, fear means nothing to me”; and “Lot is dead”, i.e., all solemnity ridiculous. Critique was the piercing eye by which hitherto believed could be placed above man as a transcendent power was simply glanced at and, through the mere glance, was reduced to “personality”, as to the author of personality; critique looked things sharply in the face and — see here! — not things, but rather only this sharp glance of critique remained as that which was “alone significant” of them. In short, the combined spiritual powers which hitherto had sustained the history of mankind, staggered before this omnipotence of “personality”.

‘The critics’ were the victors in the ‘Olympic Games of spirit. In them bloomed ‘the elite of mankind’. In them ‘the aristocracy of mankind caroused at a small table’.

‘Critique’ was ‘great’, ‘monstrously great’. It has stormed the ‘heaven of religion’ with the sharp sword of ‘*man*’ and of the ‘infinite self-consciousness’. It has allowed ‘the sanctuary of the state’ to collapse before ‘mankind’. It has sacrificed the ‘inhuman’ to ‘mankind’, ‘spiritlessness’ to ‘spirit’, ‘mass’ to the critic, and, after a clarifying and an enlightening of the contradictions in the predominant mental images, after a preserving, cancelling, uplifting, and evacuating of the hitherto prevalent development of the human race toward the false, illusory foundation of humanity, has arrived at the abstraction: ‘Development!’ Critique has not allowed any thought to ascend beyond it unless it has plucked the feathers out of that thought; it has beaten one ‘idea’ with another, overthrown one ‘privilege’ of spirit with another, dispelled one ‘dogma’ with another...

*But —*

It has not overthrown the ‘original privilege’, the ‘original idea’, the ‘original dogma’, and it cannot overthrow them without overthrowing itself ‘Critique’ lets itself proceed and stand ‘uncritically’ and ‘uncriticized’. ‘Critique’ wants to liberate the world from ‘dogma’, and yet it forces upon the world ‘the dogma of dogmas’, the dogma of critical infallibility, the dogma that critique itself is all, that the rest is nothing, that critique is the heaven and saviour of mankind, that everything left outside of it is Satan with his hell. Critique wants to annihilate heaven and hell, and makes itself into heaven, and makes the world of masses and the world-mass into hell. Critique wants to strike transcendence dead, yet it cries: ‘I am, that is, *spirit* is eternal, *spirit* is all, *spirit* must remain — even if the body dies.’

‘Critique’ is ‘for critique’ an ‘idea’, a ‘feeling’, a ‘heart-stirring mental image’ — the yearning and hoping, the luxurious feeling of bliss, the worthy object of devotion and reverence.

Hegel has liquefied the whole world in all of its forms and contrasts with his ‘not only... but also’ which always preceded and supported the ‘neither... nor’. He held these contrasts and contradictions to be rational, declared them to be the idea itself, and allowed them to endure and proceed after their critique and alignment in and along the thread of dialectic; he is the personified reason of the world of spirits.

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23 [Der Eckensteher Nante is a Berlin folk character who was popularized by Ludwig Lenz (1813-96) and Adolf Glasbrenner, or Glassbrenner (1810-76). (Tr.)]

Critique has placed self-consciousness, spirit, the author of the Hegelian dialectic, at the head of all; it has taken contrasts and contradictions at their word as contrasts and contradictions, has found them to be null and void, and has dissolved them with 'critique' and with 'self-consciousness'; it is the understanding of the world of spirits, the understanding which by itself and through itself ruins all actual configurations because they are not it itself, a pure, actual, true understanding; it is the understanding which does not achieve understanding in the presence of sheer understanding, which further is nothing but understanding, and which further retains nothing but the understanding, the understanding which represents the state of the understanding in a specific highest person — *the realm of the understanding*.

But critique, as well as Hegel, has remained responsible for demonstrating that this its objective dialectic, this eternal process, lacking individuals, is the true and the absolute; both critique and Hegel have rather presumed that dialectic and process were as such. Critique wants, through thinking, to decompose thought. Therefore no determined thought endures before critique, which undermines, lacerates, dissects<sup>^^</sup> every determined and solid thought through another thought, another mental image, another fantasy and so on to *progressus in infinitum*, until it itself has reached the thought. But before "the thought", before the 'objective world', before 'humanity', before 'self-consciousness', before the 'concept'-there the understanding, which is 'holy' to critique, brings critique to a standstill. 'Spirit', 'development', 'truth' as the power of critique, and 'freedom' as the essence of the critic, must remain firmly 'the universal', thus, 'the absolute', and are inviolable. Because 'critique' is 'spirit' and has a 'principle' - and as long as spirit rules, the principle rules also, and with it the dogmatism which is just spirit, and even if the principle of critique were anxiety in the face of the principle, the principlelessness and its dogmatism would be only the flight, within dogmatism, from dogmatism — critique is transcendental, having emerged, not out of transcendence, but out of beyondness, and it must grow dumb at its conclusion and write its resignation on its banner. At its zenith, godless individuality is not permitted to rule in 'history', but rather history must develop itself 'purely' and 'objectively'. 'Not I! Not I' — says the ogre of critique — 'The talk is not of me! I do not make history, but only say what exactly are the interests and intentions of history in each period.' The critic is, even in history, only 'a servant of thought who, as honorably and as truly as possible, seeks to articulate what critique says to him'. The critic can not and is not allowed to know that perpetual process and 'presuppositionlessness' are a 'presupposition' before which he must castigate himself, fast, kneel, and pray, which tortures him and drives him incessantly further, so that it is *he* who writes these histories thus and not otherwise, so that *he* first creates 'objectivity' and then organizes his creations, so that '*history*' is an 'illusion', a 'phantom of spirit', a 'spiritual folly', an 'absurd fancy'. "Then 'spirit', 'the universal', 'that which embraces the whole world', 'that which dwells in heaven', 'that which hangs over the individual', 'the essence', 'the concept', 'the idea', would be annihilated and 'the critic' as such, and with him critique, would be killed.

The critic has *himself* portrayed *himself* everywhere, and through this, through his individuality, '*he himself*' has become 'great'. Or tell me, critic, have you in all of your works presented anything else except yourself? Indeed, I do not even want to ask yourself, but only something other than *your* thoughts, *your* opinions, *your* fantasies? Have you worked for the sake of anything else, or has your own individuality forced and driven you, have you left yourself no peace until you have found yourself, the



*pure* critic? You mean that you have worked for 'humanity' and have not taken yourself into consideration, that you are therefore *great* because you have done much work and are, through that, 'the critic'. Surely your work for 'humanity' was *your* interest for *yourself*. And *your* greatness? 'In what, then, consists *your* greatness?' Exactly in this, that you are more than other people (the 'mass'), are more, since *people* are ordinary, are more than 'ordinary people'; exactly in your elevation over people. Before other people you do not distinguish yourself by being a person, on the contrary, because you are a 'unique' person. You show well what a person can accomplish, but because you, a person, accomplish it, therefore others, also people, can never accomplish it by any means. You have achieved it only as a unique person and are therein unique. Man does not constitute your greatness, but you create it, because you are more than man, and more forceful than other people.

The process of history, development as a category, is the last illusion of the holy, behind which spirit has taken refuge and with which it has veiled itself, the most extreme consequence of bondage and, conjointly, of egoism – the self-surrendering self-externalization. With 'history' critique has disclosed and constituted itself as the realm of spirits, its and the most nearly perfect and most nearly universal form and formula, set in the place of old, not yet precise, forms and formulas; and by itself, the absolute, has dislodged the earlier, still unclear, absolute. 'Critique', 'the thinking' which thinks itself, 'the development' which develops itself, has, as 'history', stepped into its improved holy cathedral, where it sings a *Te Deum* in the most holy holiness. 'Critique' from now on has no more to revolutionize, because 'history', 'world-spirit', 'providence', does all for the best'.

Because of the substantial character of 'critique', the individual critic has had to and must surround himself with glory, hypostatize his thoughts, transform his individuality into objectivity, his judgment into universal truth – become religious and theological. He must defend all of his higher declarations with the courage and the fiery zeal of apologetics. He is not allowed ever to err or ever to have erred, because he is not a separate thing, not something independent, not something particular, not something individual, because he denies himself and does not participate in his declaring, because he has abandoned all finitude and narrowness and has yielded and surrendered himself to the holy goddess, '*Critique*'.

'The critic' was the gravedigger of ancient times, the promulgator of death, of that which had no more life. He was not strangled by the universal death which went around the globe, until death had seized everyone, and the critic died because he had nothing left to bury. Critique is the death which devours all old and decayed life; when death has devoured it, then death itself is no more. Critique is the road which must be travelled to reach the seventh heaven, spirituality in person, holiness in its full pathos, the realm of spirits and of the understanding in its full extent, and therewith and thereby solid ground; but whoever travels this road, never arrives –

Stop!

