

THE RECENT PHILOSOPHERS

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Anyone who had not already passed through the historical development of Christianity and German Philosophy might be of the opinion that recent German Philosophers have published their writings at the instigation of reactionaries. - I would have hardly expected to declare such an opinion of a man who earlier stood at the pinnacle of Young Hegelianism along with Bruno Bauer, although at that time the writings of Bauer were far removed from their later 'consequence', to say nothing of that cynicism recently expressed in Stirner's writings-but in spite of all this, it is nevertheless true that neither Bruno Bauer nor Stirner ever allowed themselves to be influenced from without. It is rather the case that this 'insanity' emerged directly from the inner living development of this philosophy and so it is that exactly in this manner, and no other, must the progeny of the Christian ascetics take their departure from the world.

I

It would not occur to anyone to maintain the astronomer to be at one with the Solar System he observes, but according to our recent German philosophers, the singular human being, who has observed nature and history, should be the 'species', the 'All'. In Buhls Monthly¹ it is said that every person is the State, Mankind - and, as the philosopher Julius² has lately written, every man is the species, the Whole, Mankind. For Stirner, 'As the individual is

1 (The Bertiner Monatsschrift of Ludwig Buhl (1814-1882), one of the short-lived Young Hegelian journals. It was established in 1843 and ceased publication in 1845, at the time of Hess' article. In 1841, in another Berlin journal, the Athenäum, Buhl had critically reviewed Hess' second book, Die europäische Triarchie. (Ed./Tr.)]

2 [(Gustav Julius was the editor of the Berliner Leitung-Halle who later revenged himself on Hess by reporting that Hess was involved with publishing criticisms of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. This set the police upon Hess, forcing him to leave Gologne for Paris in 1847. (Ed./Tr.)]

the whole of nature, so he is the whole of the species too.³ Since the rise of Christianity men have worked to resolve the difference between the Father and the Son, the Divine and Human in a word, between the 'Species-Man [*Gattungsmenschen*]' and the 'bodily' man. But as little has come of this effort as has come to Protestantism in its annulment [*Aufhebung*] of the visible Church - for the invisible Church (Heaven) and the invisible Priest (Christ) endure - and so a new clergy is permitted to rise up. The recent philosophers will gain just as little by casting off [*aufhoben*] this invisible Church and establishing the 'Absolute Spirit',⁴ 'Self-consciousness',⁵ and 'Species-Being [*Gattungswesen*]'⁶ in the place of Heaven. All of these attempts to *theoretically* resolve the difference between the particular man and the human species must miscarry, for even if the singular man does indeed comprehend the world and mankind, nature and history, he yet in actuality remains only a sundered man [*Vereinzelung*]' as long as the division of man is not practically overcome. But this separation of man will only be practically resolved through Socialism-that is, if men unite themselves in community life and activity, and surrender private gain. So long as they are separated in actual life, i.e., in social life, so long as the difference between the singular man and mankind be only theoretically, in 'consciousness' resolved, men will remain not only separated from one another in actual life, but the individual man will remain divided in his 'consciousness'. He must feel and think of himself as other than he is in actuality, in life. The longing, as

3 [Max Stirner in *The Ego and His Own* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), p. 183. This Dover edition follows the same pagination as the earlier 1963 Libertarian Book Club edition. The above citation is found on p. 125 of the somewhat abridged German edition of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1968) edited by H. G. Helms. It will hereafter be referred to as Helms. (Ed./Tr.)]

4 [The 'absoluten Geist' of Hegel. (Ed./Tr.)]

5 [The 'Selbstbewusstsein' of Bauer. (Ed./Tr.)]

6 [Feuerbach's term. (Ed./Tr.)]

7 [In an 1840 German-English Dictionary (Philadelphia: Mentz and Son) the term *Vereinzelung*' not only connotes 'dismembering' but 'retailing; selling in singleportions', a usage undoubtedly known and appreciated by Hess. (Ed./Tr.)]

isolated individuals to become as we feel, imagine, and think of ourselves, has brought forth all of the illusions which have occupied our heads since the rise of Christianity to the present day. Instead of honestly confessing to ourselves, that we will only be something through a social union with our neighboring men, we have wanted to believe that our misery could be cast out, that the divisiveness of our social isolation could be pushed aside, that we could be divinized, and humanized by mere theoretical knowledge alone. We yet believed that through simple knowledge, through philosophical comprehension, through religious feeling, that we could become loving, moral, godly, virtuous, pious and blessed - indeed, upon this, we even imagined our nature to be religious, or thought it philosophical - although we yet remained in actual life loveless, worldly, miserable, impious, torn and sundered Egoists and inhuman men.

The rupture between theory and praxis,⁸ Godliness and worldliness - however one chooses to name it - this Christian dualism is to be found throughout the whole Christian era, and the modern, philosophical, atheistical Christians are just as subject to it as the old, believing Christians. The history of modern Christianity has had the same course as that of the old. The old Christianity, as a teaching, a theory, must institute a Church, a doctrine, a priesthood. This Church, once set into life, must pervert itself, that is, it will set itself in opposition to its established purpose. The Church, created to overcome the dichotomy between Godliness and worldliness, theory and praxis, to heal and to sanctify the world, to fill the chasm between the individual and the species, to reconcile the enmity between men, now brings forth these divisions in their sharpest forms. In response to clergy and laity arose Medieval lordship and bondage: the practical Egoism of the world against the theoretical Egoism of religion. We have the Church itself to thank

8 [The term "praxis" has here ceased to play the mediating role between theory and practice as earlier envisioned by Cieszkowski and has merely replaced the term 'practice'. (Ed./Tr.)]

for transforming the consciousness of man from the pantheism fundamental to the theory of Christianity into one of deep and abrupt contradictions between Heaven and Earth, this world and the other, spirit and body. In the course of Church history Christianity has reformed itself, and would restore its fundamental thought; it turns back to its primal sources, becomes Protestant, rationalistic, philosophical, atheistic - but it always remains what it was according to its principle; an expression of the separation between theory and praxis. In like manner the modern Christian, as the old, must institute a teaching doctrine, a Priesthood, a philosophical clergy, for it yet holds to the position that Mankind is to be taken up and taught only theoretically. Modern Christianity, this new religion, must have the same fate as the old religion - it must, once entered into life, lose itself and be transformed into its opposite.

The modern Christian Church is the Christian - State. We do not mean by this that mongrel being that can not break away from the old Church and so stands between it and the State, nor that fantastic image of our Romantics which floats in the air between the Medieval heaven and the actuality of this earth, in short, not 'German Christendom' but the modern, the 'free' State, as it really exists in France, England and North America, but which exists only as an Ideal for us Germans. This State is the modern Church, just as philosophy is the modern religion. The State is but only the actualized form of philosophy, just as the Church was but the actualized form of religion. But the 'Free State' as well, which originated in order to resolve the divisions of the Medieval world, has only called forth into life a newer and sharper antithesis between theory and praxis, for it has only replaced the old Heaven and old earth with a new Heaven and a new earth-it has only brought Christianity to its fulfillment.

The sundering of theory and praxis was still not universally and in principle carried out by the Medieval Church, by Medieval life. At that time consciousness moved itself within both the sacred world and this godless world, just as in that life the Clergy and

laity, nobility and peasantry moved separately and side by side. One excluded the other. The layman could not at the same time be a Priest, the serf could not at the same time be a Lord, the Earth could not be Heaven, the Body not Spirit, Man could not be God, and the individual could not at the same time be the generic being. That would be unChristian - for Christianity, this theoretical pantheism, certainly wants this duality in unity; the God-Man in one person is indeed the Christian ideal. Once again the attempt is being made to theoretically bring about within Christianity this enchanted condition, and hence to allow the divisiveness of actual human life to exist at a distance; to sanctify, to humanize, to elevate into general humanity these individual men, and - as in Heaven so on earth-to sanction separation and divisiveness.

And look! the enchantment is perfectly accomplished. The beatific spirits of the Christian Heaven now wander about on earth; they are-the 'free citizens'! Heaven is no longer in the beyond, but here and now; it is-the 'State'.

Now are the 'citizens' actual men?-No, they are but the spirits of actual men. The bodies of these spirits are in the *civil society* [*bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*].

The bodiless Idealism of the Christian Heaven is come from Heaven unto earth, to become the State. But yet near it also exists the spiritless Materialism of the Christian World, existing in the civil society. The modern state has only sharpened the opposition between the individual and the species, and certainly, it has brought it for the first time into its *perfection*.

But now, the stronger, the more intensively and more universally this present contradiction exists between individual and species, and indeed the more men are violently seized by this contradiction, then all the more rapidly will history take its course, and all the greater will be the longing for a better reality, but a reality which is no longer sought in another world, but must be sought in present social life. Attempts to reform our

society will repeat until they suit our innermost consciousness, that consciousness derived from our lives. We now live in this reforming or revolutionary time.

But, as it has been said and recognized, Germany has not brought about - in reality - the modern free State. But even if this modern Church has not become practically existent for us, we still have brought it forth in all respects according to its theoretical actuality. Recent German philosophers have fallen out among one another for the reason that one holds the principle of the State without civil society to be consistent, the other holds that the principle of civil society is consistent without the State - and finally the third holds to the Whole, and therefore in principle advocates a contradiction between the State and civil society.

Feuerbach's *Philosophy of the Future*⁹ is nothing other than a philosophy of the present, but a present which to the German still appears as a future, an Ideal. The Principles of the Philosophy of the Future would discuss philosophically and theoretically what in England, France, North America and elsewhere is a present reality-the modern state confronted with its supplementary civil society, and under 'actuality' the 'base actuality' with its rights, its marriage, and its property-he appeals at one time to a narrow-minded egoism, at another time-contrariwise he anticipates the social man, the 'species-man', the 'essence of man', and takes it that these essences are self-consciously present in the individual. What a philosophical fraud and a bit of modern state sagacity it is when the generic-human can only exist in a society in which all men self-seekingly cultivate and posit themselves. This contradiction will only be solved by Socialism. It takes the termination and negation of philosophy seriously, it will set aside philosophy as well as the state, and will write no philosophical books over the negation of philosophy, for Socialism does not merely assert this or that, but

9 [Published in 1843, this work appears in a translation by Manfred H. Vogel, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (Indianapolis, 1966). (Ed./Tr.)]

it will tell how to deny philosophy as mere teaching, and how to finish it off in social life. However, consistent theoreticians still come to us out of the philosophical school, pure theoretical egoists who stand 'solitary' [*einsam*] on the most extreme peak of theoretical wisdom and look down with contempt upon the lesser doings of the *practical* Egoists, the base 'mass'. On this peak stands, for example, Bruno Bauer, lonely - as he puts it - as a modern pillar-saint. Most recently, there has arisen opposite Bauer another peak, which exactly reverses Bauer's position and defends the 'mass', the 'base actuality', the practical Egoist. This is Stirner, the 'Unique One [*der Einzige*]'.¹⁰ Let us now pay particular attention to him.

At first glance, it is already seen that the both aforementioned philosophers are but the two sides of the sundered man. The 'Solitary' and the 'Unique One' are opposing sides that presuppose one another, and we must - if only in passing-discuss the 'Solitary [*Einsamen*] in order to illuminate the 'Unique One'.

As Philosophy itself has pointed out, the crassest egoism slumbers in the background of religion.¹¹ But what is *philosophical* egoism other than private egoism? Is the consistent Philosopher, as he appears in Bruno Bauer, not the self-satisfied egoist, the solitary who is blissful and all-powerful in his self-consciousness? Has he not devoured, consumed, dissolved and digested the whole of nature and the human species? Is he not but as the pious Christian who has been elevated and consoled by his communion feast and so separated from this evil and fallen world? Has he anything other to do in the world except - to learn to despise it? - Read Bruno Bauer! No Church Father and no statesman has ever more cynically expressed their scorn of the world of the 'mass' than this recent philosopher - why not! For is the 'Critic'¹² unlike the national police which would hold the

10 [Stirner's self-designation in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (*The Ego and His Own*). (Ed./Tr.)]

11 [An obvious reference to Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*. (Ed./Tr.)]

12 [A reference to the brothers Bauer, whose identification with the 'Critic' appears most fully in Edgar Bauer's 1844 work, *Der Streit der Kritik mit*

people in check? And what would this authority do if no vulgar, base, miserable rabble were to exist?¹³ As *philosophical* communism exhibits the same theoretical egoism as *religious* humanism, why should it not also have the same practical egoism in its background? As soon as it is revealed to the Monk that there is nothing to his Heavenly Egoism, his blessedness, he will become an animal directly, and collapse completely into Earthy Egoism, and thenceforth instead of striving for his alienated theoretical essence, for God and Heavenly Beatitude, he will strive for his alienated practical essence, money and happiness. Even so the Philosopher, for as soon as it develops that there is nothing to the 'Spirit', and it turns out that his 'imaginary essence' was quite unnecessary, he falls directly into a practical egoism, and casts aside transcendental Humanity along with all real humanity as well.

II

According to Stirner, the whole fault of previous egoists resided simply in the fact that they had no consciousness of their egoism - that they were not Egoists out of principle, but always affected to pay homage to Humanity, that the war of all against all - even in free competition - was not followed through consistently.

'Take hold, and take what you require!' With this the war of all against all is declared. I alone decide what I will have.

'Now, that is truly no new wisdom, for self-seekers have acted so at all times!' Not at all necessary either that the thing be new, if only consciousness of it is present. But this latter will not be able to claim great age, unless perhaps one counts in the Egyptian and Spartan law; for how little current it is appears even from the structure above, which speaks with contempt of 'self-seekers'.

Kirche und Staat. (Ed./Tr.)

13 [A common Young Hegelian conceit, inspired by Hegelian dialectics, that appears even in later works such as Marx's 1863 *Theorien über den Mehrwert* in which 'The criminal produces not only crime but also the criminal law.' (Ed./Tr.)]

One is to know just this, that the procedure of taking hold is not contemptible, but manifests the pure deed of the egoist at one with himself.

Only when I expect neither from individuals nor from a collectivity what I can give to myself, only then do I slip out of the snares of love; the rabble ceases to be rabble only when it takes hold. Only the dread of taking hold, and the corresponding punishment thereof, makes it a rabble. Only that taking hold is sin, crime-only this dogma creates a rabble. For the fact that the rabble remains what it is, it (because it allows validity to that dogma) is to blame as well as, more especially, those who 'self-seekingly' (to give them back their favorite word) demand that the dogma be respected. In short, the lack of consciousness of that 'new wisdom', the old consciousness of sin, alone bears the blame.¹⁴

Hence 'consciousness' is the only thing which we still lack in order for us to become perfect egoists, and with it 'the rabble ceases to be rabble'.

Not the mutual alienation of men, but rather the theoretical expression of this alienation; religion and philosophy; not the war of all against all, which emerges from the isolation and estrangement of men in life, but the bad consciousness which accompanies it; not the crime from above and the crime from beneath, not, in short, the rabble and its tyrants which egoism has brought forth in the world, but - says Stirner - the consciousness of sin which came with it bears all the guilt!

If you break a leg, and it causes pain, and the doctor places the leg in a cast, so it is according to our philosopher not the break, but rather the painful sense of the broken leg and the cast on the leg which is the cause of your troubles!

If you are *sick*, and have a *doctor*, and if you would be *healthy* again - so send the doctor away!

14 [See *The Ego*, pp. 257-8. (Ed./Tr.)]

This is the logic of the 'new wisdom'. Now how does it apply itself to what remains?

Not directly - complains Stirner - 'but only through money can one come out ahead of another, as, for example, the rich over the poor and the impoverished'. Now, Stirner has no complaint over this usual exploitation of one over the other if this only mutual exploitation is simply direct and personal. Stirner is not opposed to free competition because it is murder and theft [*Raubmord*], but only because it is not *directly* murder and theft.

But is *indirect* murder and theft something other than *conscious* murder and theft - and has not Stirner earlier complained that our Egoists lack an egoistic *consciousness*?

Stirner has nothing at all to object against the usual form of practical egoism except that it lacks 'consciousness'. It will become clear, however, that it is not the usual egoism which lacks the consciousness of egoism, but only the *fancied* Egoist.

Simply, and in general, what is Egoism? - and wherein stands the difference between the egoistical life and the life of love?

To love, to create, to work, to produce, is directly pleasurable; I can not love without at the same time to live, to live *well* - I can not produce without at the same time to consume, to *enjoy*. The Egoist also wants enjoyment! Now through what does Egoism distinguish itself from the life of love? Through this: that the Egoist would have life without love, enjoyment without work, and consume without producing - he takes only unto himself and never gives from himself, that is, he never gives himself over to anything. As an Egoist, he knows himself but yet does not know himself; he has no content, and so must always strive to seize upon a foreign content - for the Egoist stands over and against himself as a strange other. He can not create, for he has no content. He must forever hunt after pleasure, for he can never come upon 'the full enjoyment of life', and he comes not thereto for he can not create.

‘Therefore do you not create and love only to obtain pleasure?’

No, you precocious child, in no way do I create and love for pleasure, but rather do I love out of love, create out of creative desire, out of the vitality of life, out of direct natural energy. If I love for the sake of enjoyment, then not only do I not love, but I also have no enjoyment - and if I work, act, in order to gain something, I am thence not freely acting, and not only have no joy and love in the work, but in fact nothing is gained for me; I exhaust only myself in this ‘work’, in this ‘industriousness [*Erwerbstätigkeit*]’.¹⁵

The egotistical life is the self-divisive and self-consuming life of the animal world. The animal world is but the natural history of self-disintegrating and self-destroying life in general, and our whole history - up to this point - is nothing but the history of the social animal world.

But through what is the social animal world distinguished from the *wild* animal world? - Through nothing but *consciousness*. The history of the *social* animal world is but the history of the *conscious* animal world, and just as the natural animal world finds its highest expression in *the beast of prey* [*das Raubtier*], so the social animal world finds its highpoint in the *conscious beast of prey*.

Civilized barbarism begins exactly where uncivilized wilderness stops. The savage is still the beast of prey, whose estrangement in life is but ‘immediate’, ‘personal’, that is to say life is set over against him as natural or physical; whereas, with the barbarian, spiritual no less than physical life - his visible self {physical individuality) - opposed and foreign to him.

Just as unconscious Egoism, so conscious Egoism has its own history of development. And so as it has come about in the history of the animal world, so must it also happen in the history

15 [A general theme in Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. (Ed./Tr.)]

of man: the sundering of the species into hostile individuals, societies, peoples, and races - for this sundering, this mutual estrangement, is but the *first* form of existence of the species. In order to come into existence, the species must *individualize* itself. Through this opposition and struggle of individuals consciousness is first awakened in mankind. The first consciousness is the egoistic consciousness. Man could not begin to say 'I' without considering you, his *alter ego*, his neighboring humans and nature as foreign to him, and appearing to himself as being among hostile circumstances and powers. The *social* world of animals, with all of its egoistical desires, was first present in the awakening consciousness of men. Even then, the individual stood isolated, for in his *consciousness* all others stood opposed to him. As Egoism is the mutual estrangement of the Species, so then *religious* consciousness is the *consciousness* of this estrangement. The animal world of the wild simply has no religion, for it lacks the consciousness of its estrangement, that is, it lacks the *consciousness of sin*. And so, the first consciousness in man is the *consciousness of sin* - this being otherwise expressed in the myth of the 'Fall'.¹⁶ This is the beginning, the first emergence of 'conscious' Egoism.

In the beginning, only individuals stood over and against the singular man as alien beings; the particular things of nature as well as men surrounded him as unique natural powers. But indeed, the more he now gained in knowledge, the more his egoism, his religiosity, his consciousness of sin expanded, until finally he discovered that the whole of mankind was set against him, and then this estranged Being of Mankind, this whole Species became for him his Godly Man, his God-Man, his Christ.

Egoism cannot create, and has no content, as its content is alienated from it - hence it can only 'consume' and 'enjoy' others. Equally, the conscious Egoist can only consume, and even Christ, the God-Man, will only 'consume', and 'partake' of Holy

16 [Cf. Hegel's similar treatment of the Fall in his *Encyclopedia*, Appendix to Para. 24. (Ed./Tr.)]

Communion. In like manner, the human species, the 'Spirit' of mankind, the 'Essence' of man, can only be acquired, taken up, held, broken up, consumed, digested, partaken of, and 'enjoyed' by the Egoist. 'Critical Philosophy' is just as much an egotistical institution as Holy Communion. It is the religion of Spiritual and theoretical Egoism, and thus the consciousness of Egoism. As such it lacks, just as religion in itself, the practical side of the egoistical consciousness - egotistical praxis. Egotistical consciousness is but the theoretical expression of egotistical praxis, without which this consciousness is unthinkable, as unthinkable as the consciousness of sin without sin.

As egotistical theory and consciousness have reached their most exalted point in religion and philosophy, so egotistical praxis must reach its highest point; and now it has, in the modern, Christian- commercial world [*Krämerwelt*].

What is our commercial world? It is the acme of the animal social world, and as the beast of prey was the high point of the native and wild world of animals, so the commercial world is the supreme attainment of the conscious and social animal world. In the self- enclosed existence of the animal body, in *blood*, the beast of prey enjoys his own self-enclosed existence. In the isolated life of the social body, in *gold*, the commercial world enjoys its own isolated existence, The *thirst for wealth* in the mercenary world is the *blood lust* of the beast of prey - the mercantile world is *avaricious*, and the bestial world is *preying*. The money-hungry possessive animal consumes not only its alienated theoretical essence - its God - but above all it consumes its estranged practical essence: money. To satisfy its egotistical needs, it not only attends its *Holy Mass*, but above all attends to the *profane Mass* (the Mercenary Mass)¹⁷ held in the market place. And if this world knows how to revere the Church and God as its *Sunday meal*, so must it also take into account the stock-market and the cult of wealth (money making) as its *daily bread*.

17 [A fine word play, as the German *Messe* can denote either the religious Mass of the Catholic or the commercial trade-fair. (Ed./Tr.)]

Egoism and the egotistical consciousness always go hand in hand in the social animal world. Indeed, the more cultivated the theoretical estrangement, the more cultivated is the practical as well, and - conversely - the more cultivated the practical the more cultivated the theory, the consciousness of egoism. Not only is the beast of prey perfected in our mercenary world, but the *consciousness* of this highest expression of the animal world is perfected as well. What, until now, has always been more or less allowed to happen without either consciousness or will the mutual exploitation of men - will now be consciously carried out with a will. Privileged plundering comes to an end; *the arbitrary exercise of power is now universal human right*. The rights of man are now identical to those of the human animal, that is, the rights of all isolated and so-called 'independent' and 'free'¹⁸ toward the alienated essence of all; here, the war of all against all is *sanctioned*. The celebrated declaration of 'The Rights of Man' is celebrated in that henceforth all preying beasts are equally justified, justified - as the 'Constitutionalists' of the 'free States' say - because they are autonomous and free beings, justified because they, as Egoists, as 'independent individuals', are now *recognized* and legally *acknowledged*.

The 'free competition' of our modern mercenary world is not only the perfected form of *rapacious robbery*, but it is also the perfected *consciousness* of the complete diversity of human estrangement. The prehistorical wild, classical slavery, roman bondage, were all more or less unfitted to the essence of this estrangement. They still had limited perspectives, and so had not attained to the universality and general justification of rapacity now found in our commercial world. The present mercenary world is the developed, essentially befitting, 'conscious', and 'principle' form of Egoism.

And now we can also understand what Stirner really wants – unconsciously wants - since existing egoism does not attract him in that he is unconsciously at one with it. I am sorry to have to

18 [A referenee to the Berlin Young Hegelians, the 'Free Ones'. (Ed./Tr.)]

declare, in spite of Stirner's protests, that his 'wisdom' is 'out of date', and I can give him only the comfort of knowing that 'critical' wisdom is even older.

What is the 'new wisdom' of Stirner?

In order to escape from the religious animal world, Stirner calls upon us to return once again to the world of wild animals; *retournons à la nature!*

On the other hand, what does 'critical' wisdom desire?

The High Priest of 'Criticism' says that the world is a vulgar and base 'mass', and it must be transcended by the 'Critic'. Only spirits without bodies exist in the Critical Heaven, lonely, conscious Egoists, without egotistical praxis, without egotistical needs. Now, is it yet necessary for me to tell you that the classical base of these solitary Egoists less egotistical praxis, these self-satisfied beatific Egoists, is the Christian Heaven, the *sinless paradise*? But I would tell you where this garden with its innocent populace *really* is - in the world beyond the city gate.

The 'consequence' of the 'Unique One' rationally expressed is the categorical imperative - become animals!

The 'consequence' of the 'solitary' rationally expressed is the categorical imperative - become plants!

Stirner's *Ideal* is the *civil society*, in which the State - as the world of animals - takes up into itself the world of plants.

Bauer's *Ideal* is the *State*, in which the civil society - *the world of plants* - up into itself the world of animals.

III

In recent times so much has been said of the 'bodily' individual, of 'actual' men, of the 'realization' of the Idea, that it should cause no wonder if news of it has also reached Berlin, and

because of this 'philosophical heads' have been roused out of their beatitude.

However, the philosophical heads have understood the matter *philosophically*. Indeed, the *living individual* should step into the place of the spiritualized man, but not that *self-estranging*, isolated, heartless, spiritless, soulless, dead body given by the Egoist, that which the Egoist has displaced from himself in order to 'enjoy'. If this were to be the case, then we would only have the estranged *invisible* Ego in place of the estranged *visible* Ego, theoretical in place of practical Egoism, in place of 'spiritual' alienation the alienation of our 'natural' life, and in place of the philosophical 'in-and-for-itself' its so-called 'otherness'. But we want *being-for-another*, the '*for-one-another*' of men - the active and *creative* individual. However, in so far as human qualities are primarily our general property when developed through a social *upbringing*, so then the property of the individual will first complete itself, become his real property, only when he can manifest it through cultivated social qualities *worked out* in social life. But just as universal human qualities - in so far as they are not cultivated - are not *actual* but merely the *possibility* of our universal property, so also, if our socially conditioned qualities remain unmanifested in life, they are not actual but merely the possibility of our personal, social property. Or, philosophically expressed: so long as their 'spiritual' property is not real, men are in fact 'in-themselves', but in so far as they do not possess their spiritual property they are not 'for-themselves.' Further, that these persons are still less *social owners*, humans-for-one-another, self-actualizing, creative, and living is something self-evident - but this cannot be philosophically expressed. Philosophy, which has so many 'categories' is not acquainted with the category '*for-one-another*'. It cannot bring itself to go beyond the category of the 'in-and-for-itself'.

Now Stirner does note that the 'in-and-for-itself' of philosophy is but an abstraction, but instead of proceeding to the 'being-for-one-another' he rather turns back to the 'other-being' of nature,

to preying, to the unspiritual. Out of pure anguish, out of his 'physical' individuality he then loses sight of all human understanding and feeling.

Stirner is under the illusion that he, the 'Unique One', is the headless and heartless *rear-end*, but in fact he is nothing more than his illusion, for he is not only 'spiritless' but bodiless as well. It is the same with the 'Critical Head' - Bauer's 'Solitary' is not only bodiless but heartless and headless as well.

How does the 'Unique One' criticize liberalism, humanism, and socialism? On the grounds that reason, humanity, and love are, to *philosophy*, but abstractions and hence have no reality *in general*. Again, as we are now *brought up* to personality, we are not allowed to develop, cultivate, work out, or manifest our character from within ourselves. And so, because our essence up until now was to us but an *estranged and holy thing*, so we should consume this *holy thing*; 'If you *devour the sacred*, you have made it your own! Digest the sacramental wafer, and you are rid of it!'¹⁹

As if we no longer consumed our 'holy' property! As if the estranged 'holy' property would become personal through our consumption of it! And if our actual property would now step forth and replace the previous illusion, would it be something other than the manifest culmination of our qualities? Would it be something other than the *production* of our lives instead of the *consumption* of our lives?

Socialism is unconcerned with the State, for it rests upon totally Other grounds. Stirner knows only of the first beginnings of socialism, which still rest upon the premises of politics and political economy. He knows of such as Babeuf, the French and Worker forms of communism only by hearsay, for otherwise he must know, for example, that even communism which stands the ground of politics has already long passed beyond the conflicting poles of Egoism (*interet personnel*) and Humanism (*devoeuement*). Of 'society' he knows only as much as the 'Critic' knows. His

19 [The *Ego*, p. 97; *Helms*, p.72. (Ed./Tr.)]

opposition to the State is the completely commonplace opposition of the open-minded Bourgeois, who likewise blame the State if the people are impoverished and starving.

It has also come to the attention of our Berlin philosophers that people have been talking a great deal about 'Anarchy'. He likewise desires 'Anarchy'. But with a view to declare a 'new wisdom', he not only sets out with this category of Proudhon²⁰ against the sovereignty of every external authority, but against the 'sovereignty of Reason' itself. However, this wisdom is so little new, that to encounter it one must turn back to the beginning of history, to the source of our social world of animals; whereas, in order to encounter the Anarchy of Proudhon, one need but turn back to the religious and political revolutions of our newest and most recent history.

Every page of his writings makes it clear that the 'Unique One' is not only serious in his opposition to certain forms of reasoning and morality, but is absolutely set against the *reasonable content* of all previous forms of morality. As an example, he would ignore the canonization of the 'human' by 'humane liberalism' if the 'human' were taken as a human possibility, since the error of the 'humanists' would then be but a logical one, and not a real mistake, but - 'Do you suppose the humane liberal will be so liberal as to aver that everything possible to man is *human*? On the contrary! He does not, indeed, share the Philistine's moral prejudice about the prostitute, but "that this woman turns her body into a money-getting machine" makes her despicable to him as "human being". His judgement is, the prostitute is not a human being; or, so far as a woman is a prostitute, so far is she unhuman, dehumanized.²¹ Now, this is what Stirner has set forth regarding Humanism - but he would agree with Humanism in respect to its content if it would catch sight of something human in the 'money-getting machine'! - This then is what Stirner

20 Proudhon was the first to accept and apply the term 'Anarchy' as a definite political category. (Ed./Tr.)

21 [The *Ego*, p. 126. Stirner is citing Bauer. (Ed./Tr.)]

expresses regarding Humanism. Certainly, Stirner would find Humanism in accord with the content of his own thought were it but to catch sight of something still human in the money-making machine!

Humanism, to Stirner, is not in error because it turns men into merely a 'principle', that is to say, because it has as a content only the theoretical abstraction of men-and so an illusion-but rather because (hear! hear!) ' Criticism, among social theories is indisputably the most complete, because it removes and deprives of value everything that *separates* man from man... How can you be truly single so long as even one connection still exists between you?'²²

Hence, in order to transcend and annul the contradiction between the human 'Idea' and inhuman reality, we should not seek to develop and perfect men, but rather 'turn away' from ourselves and return to the 'beast'. The man who takes himself for 'a beast, would easily find that the beast, which follows its own impulse-its own advice, as it were - does not impel itself to do the most senseless things, but takes very correct steps'.²³
Retournons à la nature!

Socialism declares; you should not be idealists, but real men. Stirner, to the contrary, declares: 'Thousands of years of culture have obscured to you what you are, have made you believe you are not egoists but are *called* to be idealists - good men. Shake that off!'²⁴

A Socialist establishes the proposal that we should become *real species-being* [*wirkliche Gattungswesen*],²⁵ and thereby proposes a society in which everyone can cultivate, exercise and perfect their human qualities. Stirner wants to know nothing of *this* actual man. He presents his opposing view of actual men in the

22 [The *Ego*, p. 134; *Helms*, p. 101. (Ed./Tr.)]

23 [The *Ego*, p. 134; *Helms*, p. 101. (Ed./Tr.)]

24 [The *Ego*, p. 191; *Helms*, p. 110. (Ed./Tr.)]

25 [The exact phrase that Stirner attributes to Marx in the *Ego*, p. 176. (Ed./Tr.)]

following manner: 'Real man is only - the un-man'.²⁶ Again, 'I, the egoist, have not at heart the welfare of this "human society", I sacrifice nothing to it, I only utilize it; but to be able to utilize it completely I transform it rather into my property and my creature; that is, I annihilate it, and form in its place the *Union of Egoists* [*Verein von Egoisten*].'²⁷

Unique one, you are certainly an original and amusing celebrity! But I would have preferred to have seen your 'Union of Egoists' exist only on paper. Now, if it is not permitted of me, then I must allow myself to characterize the real ideas of your 'Union of Egoists'.

Our whole history up to now has been nothing but the history of egotistical unions, whose fruits are known to all of us - ancient slavery, Roman bondage, and our modern principled and universal serfdom. And now, after the circular course of this egotistical union is completed and has died out. Egoism-in its despairing confusion-is proposing all sorts of combinations of already historically obsolete forms of egotistical associations. In these days this despair has already brought many foolish thoughts into the world. But no one would have even allowed himself to dream that it would take a fancy to the most brutal form of Egoism - *fierce savagery* - and then desire to introduce this into the world. But it is precisely this thought which dominates the 'Unique One'. In all seriousness, Stirner desires to see once again the establishment of the most fundamental form of egotistical intercourse - totally direct murder and robbery!

'Stirner wants that?' Well, you have reason not to believe that the 'Unique One' wants that and so I must take back my words. Stirner wants, in general, nothing. He is only making boastful noises.

Now, it is possible to consider the 'Unique One' excused on the ground that he himself does not know what he wants. He is of a

26 [The *Ego*, p. 177; *Helms*, p. 121. (Ed./Tr.)]

27 [The *Ego*, p. 179; not in *Helms*. (Ed./Tr.)]

mind to struggle against the 'Critic', but he is merely the *slave* of the 'Critic'. He wants to annihilate the continuity of the 'State' but remains standing constantly upon *this* ground. He sings the praises, in all keys, of a return to the world of the beast, but in the last analysis he simply intends to return to being a *peaceful vegetable*.

'The last and most decided opposition, that of unique against unique, is at bottom beyond what is called opposition, but without having sunk back into "unity" and unison. As unique you have nothing in common with the other any longer, and therefore nothing divisive or hostile either;... The opposition vanishes in complete - *severance* or singleness [*Einzigkeit*].'²⁸

Certainly it vanishes - as light to the blind man, as a mistake in the face of stupidity, as life before death! And thus to evade every collision, every life-struggle, he finally returns back to the womb of the earth, and there - vegetates! The grand braggadocio of brutality has simply coursed back but yet again to the *peaceful* insensitivity of the 'Solitary'!

Is there yet anything more to Stirner's struggle against Bauer? Is Stirner fully the practical Egoist he imagines himself to be? Is he such a stubborn sinner as he thinks?

As he is set against every 'calling', every 'determination', one could believe that he himself must be beyond every 'determination' and 'calling'. This is far from being the case, for he is constantly surveyed by *the secret police of his own critical conscience*. His lack of constraint is a lie, his toughness an affectation. He has not forgotten that 'the program of the critic will allow no stability to any part of our possessions, and would only cast aside our welfare'. He always remains behind the back of his egotistical 'Ideal'. The Egoist continually calls forth his critical consciousness out of his mind, and allows nothing to be of such interest to him as that he would give himself totally over to it. He is as Luther, and must call out 'Here I stand, I cannot do

28 [The *Ego*, p. 208; *Helms*, pp. 135-6. (Ed./Tr.)]

otherwise! and that is the fundamental maxim of the possessed.’²⁹ Yes, ‘anxiety’ would likely ‘fix’ something in him, and leave this prematurely old child of nature not a moment of peace! He can never fulfill his ‘determination’ as an Egoist. He must question himself every time - ‘Do I follow myself, my own determination’³⁰ if I give myself completely over to this or to that?

We have already seen in the introduction that Stirner agrees with the philosophers in principle: the single person is the species. We have further seen that Bauer is as much an Egoist as Stirner, and that Stirner is as much an Idealist as Bauer. Again, that Stirner, with all of his brutal talk, simply intends to be a peaceful vegetable, and that in the last instance he cannot free himself from the surveillance of the ‘critical’ secret police. What then is finally the distinction between the egotistical ‘Unique One’ and the critical ‘Solitary’?

The ‘Solitary’ is an Egoist with grey hair, a childish old man; the ‘Unique One’ is a precocious child. The ‘Solitary’ is a *slave on the throne*; the ‘Unique One’ is a *slave who has broken his bonds*. Bauer has set up a foolish *theoretical* Egoism in his head; Stirner a foolish *practical* Egoism. As in our case, and that of their philosophical representative Feuerbach, they would of necessity have to unite in order to engage in a further advance, and one might even have the hope to see them sometime resurrected as Socialists - after they have expiated their inner contradictions. But as they are *separated*, they remain alone, lonely, without life, without death, and are unable to rise up into existence. They are, and remain - philosophers.

Translated by Lawrence S. Stepelevich, 1983.

29 [The Ego, p. 61; Helms, p. 57. (Ed./Tr.)]

30 [The Ego, p. 169; Helms, p. 118. (Ed./Tr.)]