

*Essay finishes Onto Essay of all worlds, & Running on Maximum Stirner Universe... Onto the
Death? No Way!*

Norl L'Orb

The phenomenology of being a student – deaf, dumb, blind, mute – youth; crammed, forced, fucked. Fertilization, violent death and rebirth or boredom – children of the board; we are the monotonies; liberty of the ass.

To exist as programmed automatons in the sallow darkness of skyscrapers, factories and nuclear weapons – it seems incomprehensible that an insignificant individual, a self-proclaimed drop in the bucket, from the 19th century can provide a drain for the tub overflowing with the filthy water of self-abasement which has come to congeal within industrial civilization. Nevertheless, Max Stirner's polemic against authority, *The Ego and Its Own*, explores the possibility of reclaiming fun in a world that drills, diets, pushes, prods, molds, and cripples. Perhaps not writing to anyone, Stirner – the great vagabond – suggests that he can relish himself in an inexorably macabre domain by discovering what he enjoys and securing it; he triumphantly proclaims that the only authority holding him back from his *joie de vivre*, beauty and creation is himself by his own weakness. Defiantly, Stirner asserts that he can measure things by how much enjoyment and fun they bring him – he seeks to create to enjoy against a background of impending doom, hatred and death. Though Stirner does not suggest any type of normative plan, his lesson is not lost. I too posit that to enjoy myself, a claim to judgement and valuation must be laid – to enjoy myself is to guide myself by my own unique fluctuating laws. Only when the ability to judge self-enjoyment is returned to me – only when I can evaluate whether or not things are to my benefit and push them away – can I come to have an enjoyable life – and to have an enjoyable life is unmistakably *my* goal.

In a world where every ontological and metaphysical judgement seems given or provided, if not forced upon us by parent, police, priest, soldier, teacher, and a host of other fart stealing poo pipers – it seems difficult for any individual to assert themselves and their *ownness*, their unique worldview, ontology and metaphysical ideas. Things are placed, labelled and situated without our permission and we are forced to accept relations to objects from without – to lose ourselves and adopt a persona – never to see things in the way that we choose. All is set up in neat plastic packages that are not supposed to be fondled. Indeed, the zeitgeist of our time is enforced upon us from birth – sacred and untouchable. Yet I, like Stirner, do not want to live for the general as a generality (Stirner 274). I want to live my own life – for myself, as myself and take pleasure in myself. As Stirner suggests,

From the moment when one catches sight of the light of the world one seeks to find out themselves and get hold of themselves out of its confusion, in which one, with everything else, is tossed about in motley mixture [...] Accordingly, because each thing cares for itself and at the same time comes into constant collision with other things, the combat of self-assertion is unavoidable. Victory or defeat - between the two alternatives the fate of the combat wavers (Stirner 13).

Problema – we are born into an existence brimming with metaphysical and ontological truths, everywhere one is told what to do and how to use things – a realm of essences full of spooky spectral properties and rules one is to accept recklessly. *Howling, I seek to create my own.*

The media, organized religion, the state and corporations – all composed of individuals in a state of manic frenzy, individuals who have become locked into worshipping fixed ideals – present a host of value judgements that we are to thoughtlessly accept – often with the accompanied threat of force or imprisonment. Do we critically consider what is bestowed by these bullies that sew the tares of self-contempt and reverence to a god? Are we to see ourselves and others as criminals and feel guilty for being such? As Stirner suggests, religion and politics attempt to educate the individual and turn them into a “true Man”, “true citizen”, “true believer”, while positing the un-man, criminal and heretic

as enemy (Stirner 215). To enjoy myself – these imposed fixed essences must not take hold because they marginalize and deny my existence and preference. To become them is to become something fixed, a creature confined to a prison with walls it did not define – to only judge good from bad to a fixed standard. Yes, on our *lovely* world “everything is sung according to concepts, and the real individual, I, am compelled to live according to these conceptual laws” (Stirner- 87). We are bred to follow one specific *modus operandi* – to become a specific type of Man, a specific type of individual – we are never given the freedom to choose for ourselves. We are never given the freedom to choose ourselves. This choice is something we must *take* – for our butcherous stable-masters will not grant it to us and we live as cattle led to the slaughterhouse – why do we choose to enter without a fight? Why do we force others in? What untold suffering do we foolishly inflict upon ourselves?

An article from a local paper proclaimed “Do you scold naughty children? I do” – a middle aged citizen of good intent perpetuating discipline and punishment for the *evil ones* – a naughty child is a bad child after all. “Yes, yes, children must early be made to practice piety, godliness, and propriety; a person of good breeding is one into whom “good maxims” have been instilled and impressed, poured in through a funnel, thrashed in and preached in” (Stirner 75). *A joke*. The world in which Stirner breathed and our own are not much different – beaten and confined since we emerge, the almighty still want to use us to their ends. We must become the *ideal* citizen, employee, *person*; prim, proper, docile, useful – a statistic, monitoring all else for immorality.

So it is that every interaction in modern society is plagued by a battle of self-assertion, in which my judgement or that of another is taken as the ontological and metaphysical basis on which decisions are constructed. A battle over what is good and what is bad – what is and what is not. Sometimes opinions coincide, yet the trend of our times is self-renunciation, renunciation of one's values and one's view of the world – one is to exist not to seek their own benefit but rather the benefit of something greater (Stirner 56-57). To renounce oneself and what one wants in favour of something one is told they should do and be – duty to state, God, parents, friends, family, lovers, and one *should!* Always a *should*, a *dangerous* *should* – for what do these despise of me that seek the renunciation of myself know about me – as in Stirner's time, they merely want to call the police on me for behaving immorally (Stirner 215). Certainly, they want to control me or break in my head. They seek to enfeeble the I beyond language – the me that can laugh, cry and *enjoy itself*. This ego cast as a blackguard for selfishly asserting itself towards its own enjoyment.

Thus, an important question to every command that I do not give myself – *says who, to what end?* Professor, pastor, police, if I become a “proper person” will my enjoyment be furthered? Will life be worth living; will it be worth shouting about from the highest height or will there be suffering? *Approximating Stirner* – to question whether an action suits me or does not, whether it is hostile or friendly (Stirner 214) – to proclaim that what is good and bad is best known by me. I do not need judgements from without to understand myself – my interest is to construct and live with my own self. As such, it is up to me to find what is required and how things should be used for myself in the name of myself. Eternal proper persons, *homo economicus*, zoon politicon, Man, Woman, the good citizen, etc. can only judge in one way and act in one way – and this is always a prescribed way from without. On the other hand, I have a *unique* ever shifting understanding of reality. Stirner is correct in proposing that

Every one has a relation to objects, and more, every one is differently related to them. Let us choose as an example that book to which millions of men had a relation for two thousand years, the Bible. What is it, what was it, to each? Absolutely, only what he made out of it! (Stirner 296)

Must I therefore deny my own relations to objects for another and make a mockery of myself? What drudgery, what slavery, what vile self-renunciation from which all self-hatred springs. The citizen looks upon things as a citizen, the Woman looks upon things as Woman, the Man looks upon things as a Man, the Christian as a Christian – *I want to look upon them as me*. As Stirner suggests, to enjoy one must

act as it pleases them, not as others proselytize – we have our own laws within us, and a complex unregulated burdened set of laws at that (Stirner 146). To come to know myself and to know what is best for me, I want to love myself, to create and secure enjoyment for myself in my *own way* – and others expect me to turn and perform my duty to *their ideals*!

Well, it has become the time to turn to myself to enjoy myself before it is too late, to enjoy myself before my death. Thus the question runs – “do I will what my opponent wills? ‘No!’ Now then, there may fight for him a thousand devils or gods, I go at him all the same!” (Stirner 173) I will secure what enjoyment is needed and no longer ask it from without – I will do as it pleases me.

But we are nothing but other cries the heard – there is no *ownness*. Very well, I say, “culture makes us more powerful and gives us the ability to subdue our appetites, pleasures, emotions, etc. yet we should not give up or give away anything to it” (Stirner 294-295). However, I am more than culture. Though influenced by my surrounding, by this so called “other”, I must add that “I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything (Stirner 7).” Not only do I know how best to label and describe things for myself, but I know how best to create ontological and metaphysical valuation. To judge right from wrong, to judge enjoyment from the void; “I, this nothing, shall put forth my creations from myself” (Stirner 209). I, this nothing, shall judge of the world as I see fit – for my enjoyment, pleasure, *joie de vivre*. Stirner, has helped me to understand that

Whether I am in the right or not there is no judge but myself. Others can judge only whether they endorse my right, and whether it exists as right for them too [...] No one has any business to command my actions, to say what course I shall pursue and set up a code to govern it. I must put up with it that he treats me as his enemy, but never that he makes free with me as his creature, and that he makes his reason, or even unreason, my plumb-line (Stirner 166-174).

I am the thing that can best assert what is good and bad for me. Now the most enjoyable life is sought by my standard – in this bleak world I am to find my own enjoyment and enjoy.

But, am I to live as Stirner's poor beings who could live so happily if they might skip according to their own mind, am I to dance to the pipe of schoolmasters and bear-leaders, in order to perform tricks that I myself would never use myself for (Stirner 288)? Like these beaten creatures, am I to mechanically recite to myself the question that is recited to me: “What am I called to? What ought I to do?” (Stirner 288) I too sympathise with the bohemian and feel myself “called” to nothing, and have no “calling,” no “destiny,” as little as a plant or an animal has a “calling” (Stirner 288). Living to enjoy myself and creating value for myself in the world – I do whatever I do with joy and do not do that which does not bring me enjoyment, and what better standard is there to judge my life!

To live a life worth living for me – to live in the world enjoying it with a free cheer – only entitling myself to do what I do with a free cheer – to seek out and secure enjoyment, to have enjoyment set as my goal.

If it is right for me, it is right. Possibly this may not suffice to make it right for the rest; that is their care, not mine: let them defend themselves. And if for the whole world something were not right, but it were right for me, that is, I wanted it, then I would ask nothing about the whole world. So every one does who knows how to value themselves, every one in the degree that they are an egoist; for might goes before right, and that - with perfect right (Stirner 170).

I grasp out to assert myself and though I am not always successful – the attempt is better than mental subjugation. Like Stirner I will wage an insurrection against all who fart from their faces. I will take what I require by my own might for my own enjoyment. This time salvation comes no longer from the giver but from the taker (Stirner 274); and, though I am the feeblest taker, I will take what I am competent for.

Yes, to drink and dance, to poo ya' pants, to live as one wants. The joy of asserting oneself again in a world that seems prefabricated. The joy of following what wants – what a joy to enjoy – what a reason to live – to survive, to create, to have *fun*. Have we forgotten this three letter word? Or has it been replaced with *but*. A heavy should is enforced upon us and enjoyment is to live anew – to love

again, to seek excitement again, to exist in a cold world yet without despair that one has squandered one's life. Like Stirner before me, I will grasp this enjoyment before death – for I exist onto the death and can see no better reason to exist than to enjoy. With no church and no master and no state, I can control what I create. *There was once a person who was told they could not be what they wanted nor do what they needed to; they died cold and alone and never followed their dreams. Another child was born and the cycle was complete – never good enough. Life became a simulation – a simulation of just waiting to die. Crumb bum poo poo pee pee – they are so fashionable – the hip fashion crew. Fuckers in top hats that give you the “treatment”, you know, they are so many people in the world, but some of them are alone, because they didn't find their halves yet, as it is so hard. If you are alone and want to find your love, alone and looking, who will give love and care? Who knows, maybe we can fill up our lonely hearts with love. “I have forgotten my umbrella.”*

Farce.

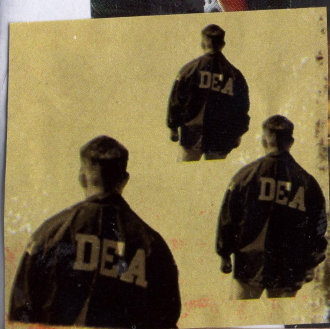
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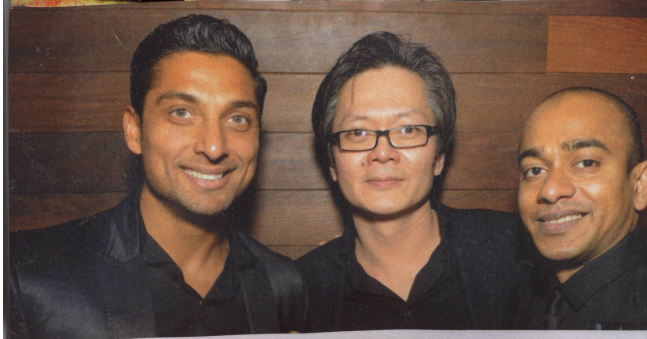
LOL

**FEEL MORE
WANT MORE
GET MORE**



LIE

The new owner plans to keep everything, down to the Eames chair and the elaborately framed take by a local artist on a Banksy. The custom sofa is from the Lifestyle Shop.



Breach of Contract Last and Final Notice



Tenant/s: [REDACTED]

Address : [REDACTED] Fraser Street, Vancouver B.C. [REDACTED]

I have continuously been receiving noise complaints from the neighbors around you with regards to unreasonable noise after 11 PM at night and going into early hours of the morning. I have given you several verbal notices with regards to the noise that you've been creating after hours. And you've also had your neighbors ask you to keep the after-hours noise down. I have no choice but to give you this letter as your last and final notice for disturbing your neighbors at unreasonable hours past 11 PM. The next time I received a noise complaint about your suite I'll instruct the family or families which you are disturbing in the neighborhood to call the police and file a complaint, and I will also drive from Delta at that time to serve you with a notice to end your tenancy. I sincerely hope it doesn't come to this.

Your suite is very busy with people coming and going from your house you have a lease agreement for three people I'll be monitoring your suite closely and if you're housing more than a maximum of three people in your suite with regards to your lease agreement stating you're only allowed three I will also have to take action.

When I viewed your suite a couple of days ago it was in an absolute filthy condition and if we end up having any rodents of any kind within the building it will be your responsibility to pay for the pest control. Please take some time and do a thorough cleaning of your living space.

Thank you very much for looking after these problems immediately.

Date: December 1, 2011 Signed: [REDACTED]

Landlord
Manager

[REDACTED]
name

Phone: [REDACTED]

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

☐ handed to tenant in person

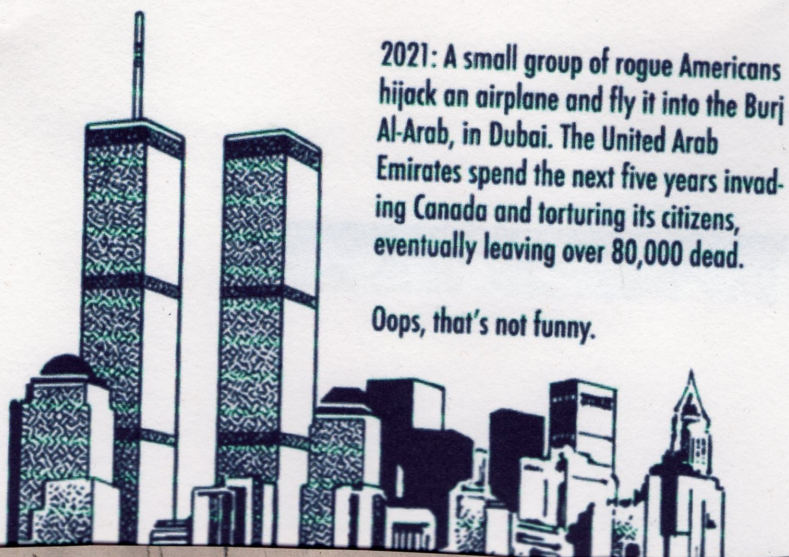
☐ taped over main entrance door lock

Date: _____, Time _____



A HAT NAB NOUT ARCHY?

Canadian cities are rapidly evolving into a fusion of cultures, religions, sexual orientations, experiences and values. While this mix is vibrant, some question whether social inequalities are putting this asset at risk.



2021: A small group of rogue Americans hijack an airplane and fly it into the Burj Al-Arab, in Dubai. The United Arab Emirates spend the next five years invading Canada and torturing its citizens, eventually leaving over 80,000 dead.

Oops, that's not funny.

GREENPEIE

mail this now. **pay us later.**



Laid off, for longer

Do you scold naughty children? I do

Parenting. It can be such a joy — and a pain in the behind. The scolding part for instance. Don't enjoy it, but it has to be done when the need arises. But what do you do when you see other people's children misbehaving?

I've come to the conclusion it's a balancing act, but I wish more adults would speak up when they witness bad behaviour or hear foul language in the public domain. Though I'm loath to use the "kids today" excuse, children seem less concerned now about using bad language or behaving badly when their parents aren't around. It's as if the other grown-ups in the vicinity are invisible.

Sometimes, the problems are easy to solve. For example a few years back, when some older kids (they were all of 10 or 11 years old) were swearing as if they were in a Quentin Tarantino movie at a playground, I asked them to tone it down in a toned-down voice. "Hi there. Can you guys stop swearing? There are lots of little kids here and I don't want my children to hear these words and start repeating them." (What I really wanted to say was, "Look you little #@%&%. Can you stop with the vulgar potty mouth." Didn't think that would be very smart, though.

They were momentarily stunned that I deigned to speak to them, but they acquiesced. Some even looked embarrassed, but they were probably the ones not swearing. Mentioning the effect their language had on the younger kids seemed to carry more weight than if it upset me or any of the other parents. In this case, it was mostly grandmothers who spoke little if any English. Perhaps that's why they thought they could curse an unfettered blue streak.

More recently, friends were over for dinner with their two children, who are the same age as my two kids. Early on in the evening, my charming but sometimes too smart alecky-for-his-own-good son blurted to his kiddie classmate, "You're such a loser."

You're mortified, aren't you? I certainly was.

Without missing a beat, the boy's dad turned to my son and in a stern voice said: "Hey, that wasn't nice. You don't say things like that."

After getting over the shock of hearing my son speak these unkind words and wondering where he'd heard them, I applauded Bob for immediately speaking up and giving my son what for. In fact, I've given my friends the liberty to rein my son in anytime he steps out of line. It's good for him to hear it from other non-family grown-ups.

My son was crestfallen to hear Bob speak so strictly to him. He wasn't off the hook yet, though. I took my little charmer aside to ask why he would say such a mean thing to his friend and told him to apologize immediately. I'm not quite sure he understood the weight of the word loser, but he wasn't getting off.

Later, when I asked where he'd even heard those words, my daughter, who is almost three years older, piped up and said a cartoon.

I let my kids watch Saturday morning cartoons, the same ones I watched as a kid (*Bugs Bunny*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Batman*, *Spiderman*, *The Flintstones*), the Knowledge Network or occasionally YTV. I'd better pay closer attention, especially with YTV and what my son hears. He's too much of a mimic and will often repeat verbatim what he hears on the radio or TV. While some of what he repeats is funny (he nails the Fortis BC ad about gas smells), he obviously hears things that get a reaction and feels a need to try them out for himself. Mimicking strikes me as more prevalent among boys. My daughter just seems to know not to say mean things — except to her brother.

Recently, after an indoor soccer practice, the team was told not to climb onto the gym equipment. My son did and I grabbed him right off and said, "Didn't you just hear what the coach said?" (I have a low tolerance for outright disobedience.) To a teammate, who is prone to scrapping with the other boys, and was also not listening, I said: "Sweetie, you're not supposed to do that." He replied, with a surprising amount of venom, "You're not my mother."

"No," I replied, "I am not. But I am a grown-up and if I see you doing naughty things, I'm going to tell you to stop."

I was worried I had crossed the line. But his mother backed me up.

As adults, shouldn't we be less fearful about speaking up when a child is out of line? Every situation is different and battles and words should be chosen



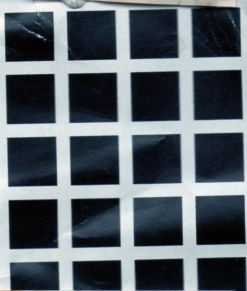
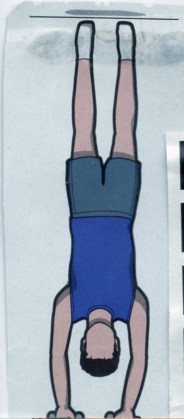


Hunger has no boundaries

When
perfection
is terror

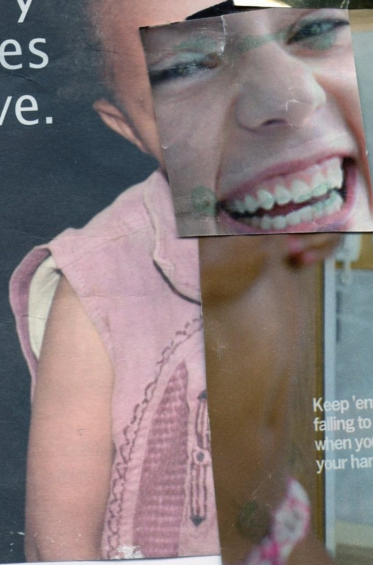
My two-week
water diet

Water cooler
chats can raise
productivity



Later is
a luxury
she does
not have.

DISTILLED, AGED AND BOTTLED UNDER CANADIAN GOVERNMENT SUPERVISION
VIEILLI ET EMBOUTEILLÉ SOUS LA SURVEILLANCE DU GOUVERNEMENT



Keep 'em from
falling to the floor
when you let
your hands go.

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The Adventures of Emma and Max

In Life

Jannel Robertson

As I write this piece, I am sitting in a community centre café sipping my coffee sweetened with honey and smoothed with cream. In such, there is an inherent privilege to me enjoying this combination; I am consuming what others have produced. Every sip is removed from the experiences associated with each component of the hot beverage. My point I don't remember, so let's begin: Disclaimer: All characters are fictionally represented. They are constructions of my interpretations, imagination, misconceptions, misinformation, and wealth/lack of information.

In 1869, Emma Goldman was born in a Jewish ghetto in Russia, growing up in Popelan. After the assigination of Alexander II, the intense political repression and pogroms upon Jewish communities caused Goldman's family to move to St Petersburg in 1882. There Goldman attended school for six months, having to drop out in order to work in a factory to help support her poor family. She was a rebel from the start. In an attempt to pacify and domesticize her, her father whipped her and tried to marry her off at fifteen. When she refused and begged to return to school she was sent to America to live with a half-sister in Rochester, earning her living as a seamstress and gaining an education from the slums and sweatshops. After moving to New York, she wrote for anarchist journals, lectured about anarchism, and met her lover Alexander Berkman. They rejected jealousy as a form of possession, living in a polyamorous relationship with artist Modest Stein (Marshall, 2010).

In 1892, the two lovers planned the assassination of the businessman Henry Clay Frick, but Berkman only managed to wound him. Berkman was sentenced to 22 years in prison for attempted murder, while Goldman publicly tried to explain the motives behind the act. In 1893, Goldman was arrested and served a year in prison for urging unemployed persons to

take bread. After the release of Berkman in 1906, Goldman began publishing the monthly journal *Mother Earth* while continuing her lectures. Despite attempts to silence her, in 1910 Goldman's *Anarchism and Other Essays* was released, followed by a tour where "she spoke 120 times in 37 cities to 25,000 listeners". Her second detention was for distributing birth control literature, while her longest sentence was due to organizing No-Conscription Leagues and anti-World War I rallies. Goldman and Berkman were given two years in prison for conspiracy to obstruct the draft in 1917. Upon their release, their American citizenships were revoked and they were deported to Russia along with other 'Reds' (Marshall, 2010).

After the Kronstadt rebellion was crushed by Trotsky and the Red Army, Goldman and Berkman felt that the revolution had been defeated by the Bolshevik State and that they could not safely remain in Russia. In 1921, Goldman left for England and Berkman France. Rumors arose of her potential deportation in 1925, so James Colton offered to marry her in order for her to attain British citizenship; she accepted his gesture of solidarity. After Berkman's suicide in 1936 and during the rise of fascism, she went to Barcelona to join in the Spanish Revolution. She worked with the CNT-FAI (Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo and the Federacion Anarquista Iberica), editing the English version of their Bulletin and publicizing their message throughout England (Marshall, 2010). She died in 1940 in Toronto, three months after a stroke. Emma Goldman produced numerous publications throughout her life; her larger works are *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1910), *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama* (1914), *My Disillusionment in Russia* (1923), *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* (1924), and her autobiography *Living my Life* (1931). But there's a twist in Emma Goldman's story, another facet of her life ended before the above began...

Max Stirner was the penname for Johann Kaspar Schmidt who was born in Bayreuth, Bavaria in 1806. His family was poor and after his father died, his mother re-married and they lived all over Germany before resettling in Bayreuth. Schmidt studied philosophy and attended Hegel's lectures at the University of Berlin from 1826 to 1828, then briefly attended two other universities prior to returning to Berlin to attain his teaching certificate. He married his landlady's daughter in 1837, but a few months later during childbirth she died. According to Marshall (2010), he had a "lonely childhood, unsuccessful career, and bad luck" until he landed a position at Madame Gropius's academy for young girls in Berlin for five years (p. 221). During this time, Schmidt was part of the Young Hegelians, mixing with thinkers such as Bruno and Edgar Bauer, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels. They called themselves *Die Freien* (the Free Ones, otherwise known as the Left Hegelians), debating, drinking, and fist fighting at Hippel's Weinstube on Friedrichstrasse (Marshall, 2010).

According to history, here he met Marie Dahnhardt who he married in 1843 (Carus, 1911). After 3 years of marriage, spending all of his wife's money and failing at a dairy shop co-operative, Marie Dahnhardt left him (Marshall, 2010 & Carus, 1911). The rest of his life was obscure, he was in debtor's prison twice and then he died suddenly on June 25th, 1856 from a poisonous bug bite (Carus, 1911). But that is not entirely true...

During Emma Goldman's imprisonment for conspiracy to obstruct the draft, she was taken to a military base for questioning. They poked and prodded at her, trying to extract any information they could about her activities, the identities of her comrades, and their whereabouts. She refused to cooperate. She gave names of bourgeois business men and politicians as persons to be detained indefinitely, or elaborate stories that had no grounding in reality, just to irritate authority. At one point during an interrogation she was asked for an account of a free society, to which she replied:

"I am really too much of an anarchist to work out a programme for the members of that society; in fact, I do not bother about such trifling details, all I want is freedom, perfect, unrestricted liberty for myself and others" (as cited by Marshall, 2010). "I believe that Anarchism cannot consistently impose an iron-clad program or method on the future... Anarchism, at least as I understand it, leaves posterity free to develop its own particular systems, in harmony with its needs. Our most vivid imagination cannot foresee the potentialities of a race set free from external restraints" (Goldman, 1917).

Since after extended periods of time in a cell she knew the guard's routines and schedules, during the shift switch in the middle of the night, Emma was able to pick the lock on her cell door in thirty seconds (a trick she had mastered over the years), leaving approximately 29 and a half minutes to be as far away as possible before the next guard's round discovered the pillows under the sheets were not her.

She slinked through the halls. Ducking into dark corners and under tables as officers obliviously wandered past. An alarm sounded. She slid in to a dark room. Above the entrance: 'RESTRICTED'. Some daft scientist had left the door unsealed.

Searching for a place to hide, Emma found herself in an English police call box that was far larger inside than anyone could have imagined, very much so, with strange control boards and entire rooms. In her scrambling she knocked over an object that resembled a screw driver (a magic screw driver perhaps?). It buzzed and hissed and whirled. She fell to the ground. As she fell she watched herself. One part taken with the call box, and the other left on the floor of the military base, unconscious, soon to be found and returned to her cell by the jackets.

An Emma, just as real and Emma-esque as the one that lived as historical accounts report, found herself in 1843 Germany, in an alley outside the bar Hippel's Weinstube on Friedrichstrasse. Feeling quite perplexed and disoriented, trying to comprehend where she found herself relative to where she thought she ought to be. She thought a drink may help her headache. After replacing her prison gown with more suitable clothing found in one of the many rooms, she stepped out of the machina. Upon entering the establishment, she saw a group drunkenly debating philosophy in between punches. She instantly felt drawn to them as something she recognized. When she tried to introduce herself to one of them, another proclaimed loudly, and flailing as though very intoxicated:

"Why that be Saint Max!"

"The Unique One!" exclaimed Friedrich to Karl as they both tumbled laughing.

Emma immediately realized who she was speaking to. They began to converse:

"If one awakens in men the idea of freedom then the free men will incessantly go on to free themselves; if on the contrary, one only *educates* them, then they will at all times accommodate themselves to circumstances in the *most highly educated and elegant manner* and degenerate into subservient cringing souls. What are our gifted and educated subjects for the most part? Scornful, smiling slave-owners and themselves slaves" (Stirner, 1967).

Discussing topics for hours and hours:

"The State is the altar of political freedom and, like the religious altar, it is maintained for the purpose of human sacrifice" (Goldman, 1911, p. 7).

"*People* is the name of the body, *State* of the spirit, of that *ruling person* that has hitherto suppressed me" (Stirner, 1907, p. 125).

"Religion, the dominion of the human mind; Property, the dominion of human needs; and Government, the dominion of human conduct, represent the stronghold of man's enslavement and all the horrors it entails" (Goldman, 1911, p. 5).

"Because the egoist is to himself the warder of the human, and has nothing to say to the State except: "Get out of my sunshine!"' (Stirner, 1907, p. 121).

They both laughed, clinked glasses, and carried on:

"Crime is naught but misdirected energy. So long as every institution of today, economic, political, social, and moral, conspires to misdirect human energy into wrong channels; so long as most people are out of place doing the things they hate to do, living a life they loathe to live, crime will be inevitable, and all the laws on the statutes can only increase, but never do away with, crime" (Goldman, 1911, p. 8). "Every society has the criminals it deserves" (Ellis as cited by Goldman, 1911, p. 34)

"The State's behavior is violence, and it calls its violence "law"; that of the individual, "crime"" (Stirner, 1907, p. 105).

"It is organized violence at the top which creates individual violence at the bottom" (Goldman

“When we can't dream any longer we die” – Emma Goldman

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All I'm thinking at the moment is, "I can't wait for school to be done with." The norm for essays in philosophy is to pretend that your audience isn't what it actually is. You're supposed to pretend that your audience consists of lazy people (who won't bother to try to understand you unless you're perfectly clear and straightforward) who haven't read the book/article/relevant sparknotes page that you're writing about. This audience is also well-educated and filled with sentiment against plagiarism, for some reason. Anyway, my point is that the real audience has always been a professor or a TA. Now, for the first time, my audience is you people¹, and not those people (you're also not supposed to use the second-person, in normal circumstances). Now, then, I get to write about what I've always secretly been writing about; I get to write about myself. I want to somehow express, in this paper, the vague and violent frustration and resentment I always harbour within me whenever I have to do anything. I will do this² by telling the story of my life. Then I will relate *the story of my life* to Stirner; finally, I will contrast and compare Stirner with 'Buddhism.' By 'Buddhism' I mean some of the ideas in one book by Lama Yeshe, entitled *Becoming Your Own Therapist*. I've only read two books on Buddhism, and this is my least favourite of the two. However, I've forgotten what the other one is called³, and I have *Becoming Your Own Therapist* near at hand in any case. By 'Stirner' I mean some of Stirner's ideas⁴. By

1 - On a serious note: I wonder, when I imagined my audience in the past, whether they were all male. I'm almost certain they were all white.

2 - Notice that I'm still following the standard format for philosophy papers. I tell you what I will write about (and how I will write about it) and then I write about it. That is the end of this footnote; or, you can continue to read these irrelevant words.

3 - No I haven't.

4 - This figure of speech is known as synecdoche.

the story of my life I don't mean the actual story of my life.

When I was a kid I hated school and authority of any kind; I was also anxious to do very well in school and to please whatever authority figure I found myself under. Retrospectively, I can describe my state of mind then as follows. I resented systems, because I didn't seem to be a system so much as a ... person. I mean, by 'system,' any network of human relations, but especially those with formalized ways of succeeding within them. At the same time I recognized, or thought I did, that from (for example) the school system's perspective, one kid complaining that the classroom is a hellhole of arbitrary assignments and quite a bit of fear wouldn't be saying anything important. This is because (so I thought) the kids that usually complain are also the kids that aren't doing well. So the teacher says, 'of course you hate school, you're bad at it,' and the complaint does nothing. More generally, unless you've succeeded within a given system, those that have can always rebuff your criticisms of the system with the words, 'you don't understand the intricacies of the system.' Importantly for my young self, I felt that I could never be sure if, in fact, I just didn't understand. The only way to be sure was to excel in school; so I excelled, for a while.

In excelling, however, I became dependent on school for my sense of self-worth. I needed, really *needed* to do well. If I didn't, I would feel worthless. This bad feeling had two aspects. First, there was the quantified sense of my worthlessness, that came from inside the system: the letter grade. It felt objective and certain and final. Second, I felt meta-worthless, which is to say, I noticed that all of my self-worth was wrapped up in school (and so school was what I was really putting effort into) and then felt bad because (as I mentioned) I hated school, yet I didn't have anything else going on. I call this meta-worthlessness because it is a feeling that came from a perspective outside or above the system.

I want to paint a small picture of who I was at the time, so you can get a feel for (and not just a conceptual understanding of) what I was feeling. On a typical weekday, I would wake up and realize once again that I had to go to school. So I'd stay in bed. My parents would pull me out of bed, but I'd lie on the floor in a nest of blankets. They'd wrench the blankets from me, but I'd curl up in my own body heat. They'd put ice on my face, and I'd grimace and get up (at each step in the process I would or would not be screaming cruelly at my parents). Then I'd go to school. I would drag my feet and frown on my way, because I'd be overwhelmed with shame on account of how late I was. Once in class, however, I'd be attentive, studious and quiet. I really didn't want to show off, I rarely raised my hand. When school was done, I'd go home and do anything except my homework. At around ten or eleven in the evening, depending on how much stress I felt, I'd do my homework (if it was due the next day). Repeat.

Eventually, the homework became time-consuming enough that my extreme procrastination started to affect my grades. I began to get used to the occasional 70-75%, the way I imagine a prisoner in Guantanamo gets used to sleepless nights listening to Marilyn Manson at 120 dB. The result was an anguished apathy. Also, in twelfth grade, I never showed up to school before noon. My attitude at present is roughly the same. I've been in a state of periodic conundrum for the last five years, more or less. I mean that I'm fascinated by much of what I'm supposed to study, and furthermore I feel like if I weren't in school I wouldn't read half of it; at the same time, I actively don't study. It's still too much effort to get out of bed sometimes. So ends the *story of my life*⁵.

There seem to me to be a number of isomorphisms⁶ between my story and some of Stirner's ideas. I said earlier that I would connect Stirner to me, then connect Buddhism with all of it somehow. Instead, I want to first talk a little bit about Buddhism. "The human mind instinctively seeks happiness" (5), says Lama Yeshe, "[b]ut if your search for happiness causes you to grasp emotionally at the sense

5 - That wasn't the story of my life, and whatever it was it didn't end.

6 - *I know this word! If you do too, I respect you without good reason.* If you don't, don't worry, it's unimportant; I mean that there are connections to be drawn between my story and Stirner's ideas.

world, it can be very dangerous. You have no control” (ibid.). The solution is to study your own mind, and “to develop a deep understanding of yourself and all other phenomena” (6). I see Buddhism as seeing humans as beings who want to be happy, but have no idea how to be happy. Life is suffering, says Buddhism, but this doesn’t exactly mean what I thought it meant when I first heard it. The idea is that “the dissatisfied nature of the mind itself is suffering. No matter how much of something you get, it never satisfies your desire for better or more. This unceasing desire is suffering; its nature is emotional frustration” (7). There is a lot more to say, but this paper just *has* to be about Stirner. It says so in the syllabus. I will segue to Stirner by talking about myself a little more. Buddhist ideas as I’ve just presented them are very abstract. I’ve thought about it for a long time, but I still don’t know what I think about life being suffering. I do, however, want to understand myself. Furthermore I want to be in control of myself. I’m currently *not* in control of myself as much as I’d like to be. If I were a Buddhist, I would look at *the story of my life* and say, “you (my name here⁷) didn’t understand what you were doing. You wanted to do well in school, yet you didn’t put any effort into it. Maybe the truth is that you didn’t want to do well in school. Maybe you had no idea *what* you wanted, so you just followed the obvious route in order that other people could tell you you were doing a good job. Maybe some part of you knew this, which is why you didn’t try. You wanted happiness but tried to find it in school, instead of in yourself.” I’d say something like that, if I were Buddhist. The interesting thing at this point is that I’d say something similar if I were Stirner.

“From the moment when [an individual] catches sight of the light of the world, [they seek] to find out [*themselves*] and get hold of [*themselves*] out of its confusion, in which [they], with everything else, [are] tossed about in motley mixture” (13), says Stirner. What does this mean, that people want to “get hold of [*themselves*]?” It’s a ... paradox⁸. I, the individual, am clearly *not* anything else. But this isn’t so clear after all. Can you imagine what it was like when you were a baby? You might know you have a body, but what is all the stuff happening around you? A “motley mixture” being “tossed about,” and you’re a part of it. So you look for yourself (yourself being something that will respond to you positively), that you might cling to yourself in security. “But everything that comes in contact with the child defends itself in turn against [its] attacks, and asserts its own persistence” (ibid.). Why are you, the baby, attacking anything? Stirner calls it the inevitable “*combat* of self-assertion” (ibid.). I can only understand this (at the moment) in the following way. From my perspective, for example, another baby is “attacking” me when it takes one of my toys to play with. This is an attack because the toy is mine. The other baby, however, intends me no harm⁹. So I see the “*combat* of self-assertion” as tragic; as such, it’s not unlike the Buddhist view of the suffering life. In either case I don’t know how true I think it is. That being said, it resonates with me.

As I mentioned, I hated school. But why did I hate it? I think purely because I had to do it. My parents told me to do it, they were exercising their “*supremacy* and ‘rights of supremacy’” (13) over me (from my perspective) and I instinctively understood this. My refusal to get out of bed makes sense in this context. Stirner says, “when ... we have got at the fact that the rod is too weak against our obduracy, then we no longer fear it” (ibid.). I was testing my own resistance against what, every morning, I recognized as an outside will trying to get me to do something. I was discovering my own “obduracy.” Stirner can very easily explain that aspect of *the story of my life*.

What about the other aspects? I will make them explicit first. So the easiest to fit within Stirner’s ideas is my resentment at having to do what was expected of me. The other side of that, however, is that I really wanted to fulfill those expectations. Then, there is my feeling of worthlessness

7 - You’re not supposed to know who I am, reader.

8 - Replace the ellipsis (ie. the “...”) with “freakin’” to hear what I actually want to say.

9 - Initially, I mean. That is to say, I don’t want to hurt anybody instinctively until they’ve asserted themselves against me. Eventually, after a number of power struggles, “both remain *enemies* ... they watch for each other’s *weaknesses*” (13).

at not fulfilling those expectations. Next, there is the fact that my feeling worthless caused me to altogether stop fulfilling any expectations. Finally, here I am now, analyzing my own self. Can Stirner help me in this?

Let me go to “Art and Religion.” “[A]s soon as [someone] suspects that [they have] another side of [themselves] within [themselves], and that [they are] not enough in [their] mere natural state, then [they are] driven to divide [themselves] into that which [they] actually [are], and that which [they] should become” (2). Then the individual “strives after and longs for the second other [person] of the future” (ibid.). I feel a straightforward connection to these words. The other side of myself was (and, I guess, still is) the one who always does everything that everyone expects of him. I didn’t have religion, but I had school. Its Ideal is the perfect student, and I could get a glimpse of myself as just that. Actually, the *Art and Religion* Stirner can explain a great deal about me, I think. According to Stirner, people “fall down—in adoration” when they see the Ideal they have longed for (ibid.). Their “inward confusions are resolved” and life makes sense (ibid.). I can see my child-self not understanding what the point of life is, and then my parent’s say to me, “go to school,” and everything starts to make sense.

The story continues, however. The Ideal (the perfect student, in my case), “[t]his Other is [me myself] and yet not [me]” (2). “It is the inward God, but it is set without.” Earlier, I noticed how my resentment at having to go to school could be explained by Stirner’s account of childhood (as a combat of self-assertion). Now, Stirner can explain even more. The Ideal is both myself and not myself, which is a “disunion” wherein “lie all the sufferings and struggles of the centuries, for it is fearful to be *outside of oneself*, having yourself as an Object, without being able to unite with it” (ibid.). In the same way that, for Stirner, “[t]he religious world lives in the joys and sorrow which it experiences from the Object” (ibid.), so I lived in the joys and sorrows of *my* object (the perfect student).

That accounts (mostly) for both my desire to do well in school as well as my feeling awful at not doing well. I think it especially accounts for the latter feeling. Failing to live up to an Ideal feels terrible. I have more to say, as usual, but I don’t want to say it here. I just want to end with a paragraph about Stirner, me, and *REASON* (and Buddhism, I guess). Then I will summarize (or not).

I want Stirner to help me understand what I’m doing *right now*, in thinking about myself. He says “Reason, the spirit of philosophy, concerns itself only with itself, and troubles over no Object” (7); by “Object” he seems to be talking about an Ideal. The idea is that reason just operates reasonably, only cares about what is (I’m interpolating my own ideas now) *consistent*, I suppose. For example, here I am, thinking about myself and trying to understand who I was. I want to be *honest*, but the only thing I have to guide me is ... reason. Well, reason and feeling; however, it is reason, and not feeling, that I am using to actually right. It is the tool or the method, while the topic is feeling. This helps me understand why, when I write, I am different than at all other times. As I am, I’m concerned with Objects or Ideals or maybe not but I think I am ... but as I am when I write, I’m sitting and thinking and mostly reasonable. In any case, it *feels* like I’m guided by some “free” rationality that “places its pulverizing hand upon all the business of making Objects as well as the whole of objectivity itself” (ibid.). Beyond this, my understanding of Buddhism is that it advocates just this, the use of some disinterested free faculty to explore oneself, and eventually control oneself. Stirner may be saying something similar, but I’m not sure.

To sum up, instead of summing up I’d like to criticize this paper preemptively. The section on Buddhism is awkwardly connected to the rest of the essay. I’d have liked to explore those ideas more, but I didn’t. I barely included any of *The Ego and Its Own*, even though there are many ideas in there that are relevant here. Most damningly, I didn’t explore what I think is the most interesting connection between Buddhism and Stirner: the former ostensibly advocates the dismantling of the ego, while the latter advocates something that sounds like the opposite of that. Are they actually very different? I didn’t even start to tackle this question. Also no title.

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Think 2 think, walk 2 walk

Anonymous

Stirner argues against 'fixed ideas' because they hold people back from their ownness. Thoughts are framed by and thus determined by fixed ideas which are used, in effect, as a reference place from which to situate and to judge the relevance of new information. Stirner seems to be arguing against the ontology forming aspect of fixed ideas. An idea fixed implies that this one particular idea is an unmovable. A natural occurrence of the world. Like the mountains or gravity. But ideas are not mountains and fixed ideas can only become fixed ideas through constantly reinforcing them and then calling them fixed, because that is their nature. Stirner writes, "Crimes spring from *fixed ideas*. The sacredness of marriage is a fixed idea. From the sacredness it follows that infidelity is a *crime*" (p105) He is implying that fixed ideas incite value judgments onto other thoughts through their ontological nature.

He recognizes and defines the concept of freedom only as an idea, in it's European ideological form (Christianity and the 3 types of liberalism) He states, (p 83) "Freedom only lives in the realm of dreams" but why do dreams have to be a separate realm in the first place? Because he is taking on the ontology of Cartesian Eurocentric universalizing "objective" ontologies which place themselves as the ultimate holder of "knowledge" or "truth" (as opposed to, say, unique individuals' knowledges or truths). Would not any kinds of freedom span through the realm of dreams and imagination? Isn't that a sense of freedom, specifically of self expression? What out dreams what would have any want or need of freedom for? Not for dividing and conquering our OWN minds...

He is arguing that concepts like 'humanity', are liberal spooks. They may be a spook, sure, but that it is can be a feeling does not make it less real, and does not make it a fixed idea. Listening to our dreams is freedom if dreams are the place where we have it, especially if we can gain a greater sense of freedom / ownness from the imaginative realm. What what might be repressed because they fall under the fixed idea of "spook".

Ownness as personal empowerment, the way he defines it, or a sense of (personal) freedom as I would say, is the human spirit, invoked against the suppression of state powers. But it can also play an important role on a spiritual level, which he tends to dismiss outrightly because it is associated with something else he does not like which falls under the same category, therefore having a fixed idea that anything that falls under the category of religious or spiritual is hierarchically opposed to egoism or ownness. This follows the cartesian ontology of mind and reason as separate from body, inward as opposed to outward. His conception of ownness, contrarily, is basically a sense of emotional, corporeal, spiritual, intellectual sense of freedom deriving from personal empowerment (for which ownness is

basically a synonym for).

Max Stirner's framing of spirituality (p100) seems to be hierarchically opposing his own idea of egoism. But maybe the fixed idea, the binary, reason/ the mind/the head/fragments 'ownness', the way at home is less obvious outside. The scales are divided. Us, them, our hearts versus our minds, me versus you, egoism versus religiosity. the taboo against actual spirituality rather than religiosity for it's own sake.

By denouncing “spooks” it seems like he is denouncing the role of imagination in ownness OR freedom, and worse, making an ontological divide between imagination and reality. By saying that “spooks” are bad, referring negatively to “ghosts,” he is implicitly deeming imaginative things as somehow worse. By adopting to typical framing of such issues as binaries like religion vs science he ignores this larger ontological framework because they are fixed ideas, the binaries that he maintains. One spook that he holds to the distinction between 'inwardly' and 'outwardly'. He incites a Cartesian philosophical ontology to describe: "But "intrinsically free" is not "really free," and "inwardly" is not "outwardly." “I was own, on the other hand, my own, altogether, inwardly and outwardly.” (pg 83) Many people internalize outside rules or openly express ownness which they may not “actually have.” And that is what I would call a 'sense of freedom of the self'. But he does not consider this split as a fixed idea or an ontological formation. By denouncing forms of spirituality as unworthy of being considered seriously because they are defined under the ontological category [fixed idea] of 'religion,' and wrong because of that, he is demonstrating his adoption of the ontological split between spirituality or selflessness and egoism which is unnecessary. People can talk about the same thing in many different ways, and that he is splitting some otherwise important and relevant concepts because they fall under the category, the of 'religiousness'.

When somebody feels free then they can feel their ownness. Freedom is completely tied to ownness in that it is exercising of ownness that is freedom and freedom is feeling a sense of freedom to BE your own. Stirner implies that it works the other way around. Stirner acknowledges this when he says that there is a certain 'free'ness that comes with ownness. He argues that freedom is not ownness because the word 'freedom' is basically 'owned' by something else (namely christianity, the state, fixed ideas etc). Appropriation of language is a strategy to co-op concepts and ideas for other purposes, so one word can have opposite connotations depending on a person's embodied experience. Since fixed ideas are made that way by constant reinforcement, you have to constantly take back words to make them your OWN as long as someone is willing to take your words. For example, many of the Occupy protestors have pointed to the glaring hypocrisy that “freedom” must come from elsewhere besides one own individual. “We want you to be silent, to protect your freedom of speech” (Huffington Post) “being able to record police violates the privacy and protection of police and civilians” (Huffington Post) State powers are necessarily opposed to the interests of people, since they depend on the public's obedience and exploitation to maintain social dominance.

Freedom can be a feeling, beyond a fixed idea it is a conception, and can redeem as its own ontology. However, he does not accept the ontological dimensions of freedom as itself but categorizes it as something that happens only after ownness is present. Freedom that has integrity paradoxically redirects any ideals of freedom outside of its feeling in the present moment, spontaneously, “free” as a way of acting. Freedom is a more important concept because, for me, it is the feeling that precedes ownness. To be able to let your true self out you must first feel free to. Fixed ideas are what stops people from feeling free. If ownness is based on unique personhood then that freedom to express personhood is expressed if a fixed idea is not overpowering them.

Is Max Stirner adopting the politically ideologies of his time or is he framing them specifically for a group of people? He was speaking in germany, presumably for a german audience; his non universalizing of his concept in this way has integrity in line with his idea of ownness. Stirner still follows this european ontology but without recognizing it. Does this then count as him sticking to what he knows, his ownness, or is it a fixed idea? Or are these categories of distinction meaningless at the

core because at the depths they philosophize about the same philosophical issues, but in ways that speak to and are informed by the context in which they come from. How much is universality possible, and how would any of us as geographically temporally embodied beings supposed to know any better? He's telling people to trust themselves instead of any individual who embodies a fixed idea by living by it.

In defining history as "history" meaning different ages, it can be argued that he was using separate fixed ideas about histories to inform his studies of other things. He comes to his philosophy through the ontology of what was (presumably) familiar. But maybe his purpose was to affect a specifically German audience in a way that was meaningful to them. However, a totally new ontology should have done the trick itself. Perhaps his fixed idea of "philosophy" repressed a whole new ontology because he was trying to live up to the ideal, the spook that is Western 'philosophy'. Also does his idea of might as right conform to imperialist Western ideology? Or is he appropriating the idea to further his own. It would seem that he was doing the latter since it is the point of his book but because he does not mention it, it allows one to take the fixed idea or ideology for granted.

Stirner, while trying to address the context he was in, does not seem to make much break with the ontology that he argues against. He jumps around with what he says, from idea to idea to example to speaking from another point of view, but he never mentions emotional processes, or even addresses them as something to influence ideas or be considered. He uses logical, philosophical methodologies. Unless the explanations marks quotes are that time's version of being radically or vulgarly emotional, then he seems to be adopting some version of philosophy of the time, which implies itself to be universal on the basis of this "rationality."

Conceiving of 'freedom' in terms of freedom to or freedom from is an ontology itself that hypocritically enough limits the word freedom. Symbolic of the way 'fixed ideas' limit thoughts. Stirner says, "One can get *rid* of a great many things, one yet does not get rid of all; one becomes free from much, not from everything." (p 83) Instead of recognizing the concepts as coming from within an ontological framework, he accepts them by utilizing them to explain his own concept. He could have had a whole new language or cult. At least an own ontological framework.

Ultimately, Stirner argues against how a fixed idea can begin as a beautiful concept but be perverted by trying to label it and therefore repress anything that does not fit into that label. Just another same old idea, but with a different name. Appropriated for another purpose. Freedom as a word does not have to be appropriated by Christianity or the State. How about owning freedom by defining it for yourself? Freedom is ownness. Which Max almost did but with the word ownness. Instead of redefining it to suit what he means by ownness, he accepts the definition given and just proposes another one, namely the concept of ownness. Instead of really arguing with the way Freedom gets portrayed in the ontology of Christianity and society at large, he accepts it as legitimate by denouncing it as part OF THAT, AND in talking about ownness he only says freedom is ok if it is under the definition of ownness. He does not get to the heart of why ontologically placing freedom as such is problematic; he accepts the ontology to argue against it, rather than making his own ontology where he takes back the word. One could argue that he does do this, but say he just prioritizes the feeling of 'ownness' above freedom. This is a fixed idea however, and hierarchical.

An alternative to a fixed idea is an idea of constant movement an idea which by its definition is subject to the movements of the world. The simple observation, that life, if nothing else, is full of movement should be enough to let us know that The fixed idea is contradictory because it is constantly re-formulated itself as a fixed idea to the movements which are happening: hypocritically, it is only through this constant change and updating for the surrounding context that Christianity comes to be seen as "fixed." Fixed ideas could be ontologies, ideologies, or any concept to which the idea of stability frames the idea as in-arguable in nature.

An idea that has openness is an idea that has integrity because ideas always change, and learning implies that you cannot know everything from the beginning. Catholicism implies that it is and

was the final word, as do most religions. An idea which is more of a constant practice, which recognizes itself as a constant practice, and does not shirk itself by being closed off to growth and change through new ideas is not a fixed idea because it embraces openness; not authoritativeness. This is why the western tradition is criticized for blinding people and repressing people more than it historically opens them. Even many of those who believe in Christianity note that what they really feel is important is a so called "personal relationship" with "god." Basically, people can feel a sense of freedom or ownness but call it something else.

Time is the only thing in the world that has integrity by its nature. The only way you can know of it and experience and feel it and really really learn something about it are through it. Its never hypocritical but its fixed but its not an idea. Its not an ideology except when it is framed through other ideologies. All of nature and all people, and all civilizations and all stupid ideas exist in and through time. Everybody's nature has integrity by being itself through itself, and thats what ownness is. Its other ideas, outside ideologies and foreign seeming ontologies that take us away from having integrity, from being the creator, creating, as the creation. finishing a cycle. not that this paper has a conclusion or anything.

p.83

What a difference between freedom and ownness! One can get *rid* of a great many things, one yet does not get rid of all; one becomes free from much, not from everything. Inwardly one may be free in spite of the condition of slavery, although, too, it is again only from all sorts of things, not from everything; but from the whip, the domineering temper, of the master, one does not as slave become *free*. "Freedom lives only in the realm of dreams!" Ownness, on the contrary, is my whole being and existence, it is I myself. I am free from what I am *rid* of, owner of what I have in my *power* or what I *control*. My own* I am at all times and under all circumstances, if I know how to have myself and do not throw myself away on others. To be free is something that I cannot truly *will*, because I cannot make it, cannot create it: I can only wish it and -- aspire toward it, for it remains an ideal, a spook. The fetters of reality cut the sharpest welts in my flesh every moment. But *my own* I remain. Given up as serf to a master, I think only of myself and my advantage; his blows strike me indeed, I am not *free* from them; but I endure them only for *my benefit*, perhaps in order to deceive him and make him secure by the semblance of patience, or, again, not to draw worse upon myself by contumacy. But, as I keep my eye on myself and my selfishness, I take by the forelock the first good opportunity to trample the slaveholder into the dust. That I then become *free* from him and his whip is only the consequence of my antecedent egoism. Here one perhaps says I was "free" even in the condition of slavery -- to wit, "intrinsically" or "inwardly." But "intrinsically free" is not "really free," and "inwardly" is not "outwardly." I was own, on the other hand, my own, altogether, inwardly and outwardly. Under the dominion of a cruel master my body is not "free" from torments and lashes; but it is *my* bones that moan under the torture, *my* fibres that quiver under the blows, and *I* moan because *my* body moans. That *I* sigh and shiver proves that I have not yet lost *myself*, that I am still my own. My leg is not "free" from the master's stick, but it is my leg and is inseparable. Let him tear it off me and look and see if he still has my leg! He retains in his hand nothing but the -- corpse of my leg, which is as little my leg as a dead dog is still a dog: a dog has a pulsating heart, a so-called dead dog has none and is therefore no longer a dog.

Resistance

Caroline Filler

I face it in myself. Actually, more often than not, I refuse to face it in myself. Instead, I choose to partake in an ultimate vicious cycle, resisting the very state of resistance. My experience of resistance is one of building walls- shutting my eyes and using my brute force, as in the action of lifting a heavy object, or attempting to push open a door that so stubbornly wants to stay closed. Horses resist by digging their hooves into the earth and pushing against it, throwing all their weight into the opposite direction. If I am to mirror this action, what the opposite direction might be would be irrelevant, for when I am in this state of resistance, I am not acting for myself. I am reacting against the forces of the world.

I have faced resistance on a conscious and subconscious level throughout my relationship with Max Stirner. I was interested in getting to know him, yet tentative, hesitant in pursuing a relationship with him. However, when the time came, when the class began, I created a window, a space I saw in my day, in my life, for learning about his ideas. I became intrigued as I realized that he had ideas about topics I too wanted to explore. I saw Max as a aqueduct, flowing ideas to the city of my mind. My first exploration into his mind, through *Art and Religion*, offered me viable explanations for confusions with which I'd been wrestling. So I continued to pursue his experiences, looking for explanations, verifications, perhaps even solutions. Yet as I tried to engage in his text, I created blocks against his words. Thus began my unconscious resistance.

Increasingly, his words wandered right out of my head as soon as I tried to bring them in. So I slowed my reading, picking out bits and pieces, but unable to comprehend his entire monologue. Then I decided to stop reading entirely, my conscious resistance. My rationale for that choice consisted of a collection of intermingling ideas, mostly inspired by Stirner's ideas, or at least interpretations of Stirner's ideas, and I took pleasure in the irony of Stirner himself convincing me to no longer read his work. As I understood, the message from Stirner was to follow the needs, wishes, and truths of the self, and to act accordingly to feed the self. To take part in any activity that is for any purpose beyond my own selfish striving would be to deny and suppress the self of what it is. As I thought that Max Stirner's words were no longer serving me, I no longer felt any need to give any of my time and energy to understanding him.

Then I wondered if perhaps I was simply making excuses for my own shortcomings, my own fears. I noticed myself resisting ideas. Mainly this occurred in the form of other beings presenting their understandings, and I refusing to explore, certain that what I knew at that time to be true was indeed, and that all other ideas were simple, the people forming them had not explored the way I had, and their ideas were not valid. I took on a dogmatic attitude in convincing myself that I was right, that I had the answers. I used the aspects of various teachings I'd encountered, teachings that the self holds the truth, the inner wisdom, and the self always knows what is right. Ideas that seemed to me to also align with what Max Stirner must have been talking about. I only used, however, the parts that were convenient for me at the time. The words that allowed me to hide behind my ego, for fear of facing the vast unknowns and uncertainties. Yet these uncertainties are the gift of being human. The words and opinions of others are the perspectives that I am asking for in my explorations, new lights to shed on timeless questions. To ignore these gifts is to allow the self to remain closed, stagnant.

My conscious mind believes at this time that to be wobbling in uncertainty is a very nourishing place to find oneself. To wobble is to allow oneself to enter a place that is uncomfortable, stretching into new boundaries, awkward positions, and unsettled explorations. It is to allow myself to be vulnerable, and to trust that the teachings will arise. In spite of this, fear came up, tempting me with its sweet desire for security, to crawl back into the cave I create in myself in which only I exist in the world and I may view it however I please. Because I have no relations with others, I have no effect, and

therefore they have no effect on me. Yet what can I really see in the darkness of that cave? I ask myself.

I see the walls of the cave. The walls upon which I have painted images that I want to see, what I desire the world to look like. I see myself as the ideal of humanity, that mankind would do well for itself to align with my ideas. Any conflicts arise out of misunderstanding by the other humans. The righteousness with which I build these walls is blinding me. So used to the darkness, I squint in the light. It pains me, to experience to sunlight in the world outside of my cave. In the immediacy of the moment, I associate pain with an impediment to my survival as a living being, and therefore, it must be avoided.

I trust that I will be true to myself in this life, that I will listen to my being, and with practice, understand how to nourish that being. I ask for the courage to look myself in the eye, to recognize what I am, and to be able to see that being. I resist, for I know there is ugliness, aspects of myself that horrify my conscious mind, defense mechanisms I have built up in tactics for survival. I can consciously understand the idea of creative destruction, and that they are necessary for each other to survive; yet I still fear the destruction that I cause simply by being alive. I fear my impact.

I returned to Max Stirner's words. I allowed myself to open the book at random, and see what jumped out at me. What I came across is this: "Every one of your traits is to be human; you yourself are to be so from top to toe, in the inward as in the outward; for humanity is your calling."¹⁰ What insight Stirner gives to my fear of looking beyond my cave. For my struggles are part of my humanity, and by embracing them, accepting what they are, I am becoming more human. Further along he wrote, "But the forces of the flower and the bird are slight in comparison to those of a man, and a man who applies his forces will affect the world much more powerfully than flower and beast."¹¹ Though I may learn from flora and fauna, about the broader schema of life on Earth, and I may apply these observations to my journey, it would not serve me to attempt to escape my humanity by following the path of a plant or beast. I must learn to be human, and what that entails.

Stirner addresses the task of facing oneself specifically in the beginning of the part entitled 'Ownness.' He writes, "I have no objection to freedom, but I wish more than freedom for you: you should not merely *be rid* of what you do not want: you should not only be a 'freeman', you should be an 'owner', too."¹² This quotation is interesting to me, because although Stirner is bringing up an essential difference, he is also contradicting himself in his presentation. The contradiction lies in the way he is giving instructions on how to live. As Stirner is one who proclaims that his ultimate goal is to listen to his own being and not allow others to tell him what to do, I wonder why he himself is telling others how to live. Even to soften his intentions to a suggestion, I feel he would not appreciate suggestions or encouragements directed towards him, so then, how hypocritical to instruct. That being said, the point he is making about owning oneself is an important one, for that includes taking responsibility for one's entire being. As I have learned in various creative endeavors, to take out what you do not want does not provide you with what you do want; we must address the entirety of the work to be able to express any concept.

Further down, Stirner reiterates, "Just recognize yourselves again, just recognize what you really are, and let go of your hypocritical endeavors, your foolish mania to be something else than you are."¹³ Stirner here is pointing out an essential quest for the seeker of truth. In the cave I build for myself I am unable to see who I really am. I require the interactions with other humans to teach me about what I am in this world. Even with those interactions, I can still be hiding in my cave. To find out what I really am, I need to look with courage at what my interaction and experience in this world is truly reflecting. Yet the ego is a tricky pest, and revels in fooling itself into excuses and justifications.

10- Stirner, 287.

11- Stirner, 289.

12- Stirner, 142.

13- Stirner, 149.

Myself is my universe. Without myself, nothing else exists or matters, to me. In Stirner's words, "Nothing is more to me than myself!"¹⁴ My entire lifetime is an experience of myself, and thus must be explored, in order to find where the sweet berries grow, what monsters dwell within, how flow the rivers, and how rainbows are made. I am everything and I am nothing, "the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything."¹⁵ I can create my world, yet I cannot do it ignorantly. I cannot sing if I do not know that song comes from my voice. I cannot sculpt if I do not know how to soften the clay in my hands. And so, in order to create everything, I must also learn what I am, so I know what I need to create for myself. Resisting myself hinders me from learning of what I am becoming.

As Stirner wrote, "Accordingly, because each thing *cares for itself* and at the same time comes into constant collision with other things, the *combat* of self-assertion is unavoidable."¹⁶ Combat is an intense word choice, giving this statement the feeling that interactions between humans are battles, each vying for realization of the self and throwing all of what that is at another human in order to receive the reaction. This seems to me to explain the defenses I witness, in myself and others, that we have constructed in order to partake in the inevitable human combat, the battle to discover our identities. What better defense (modern technology notwithstanding) than towering castle walls, separating moats, closable doors, and large armies exist to protect humans against each other? These are the walls of resistance.

When I stopped resisting Max Stirner, I began to learn from him. When I allowed his ideas to circulate in my mind, I was able to form opinions about them. So then what made me resist him? Perhaps I could say his rampant proclamations that so often seem only to contain long-winded assumptions and opinions. Yet perhaps these are simply my own assumptions and opinions, blocking me from truly listening to him. I do not wish to argue with Max Stirner, or wear his button on my chest. I write merely to thank him, for offering me an opportunity to include another perspective in my hall of mirrors, for providing a chance to face an aspect of myself I have been ignoring. Of the many words Stirner has to say, some have caused me to question the way I am living, and that is a gift. So I, in turn, ask you, to ask yourselves, what are you resisting these days, and why?



A Haunted World, A Haunted Mind: Ownness or the Ego

Adam Smith

Professor Rappos, Servant of the Man

In his book *The Ego and Its Own*, Max Stirner argues for a self-emancipation from the foreign thought-entities that rule the minds of men. He argues that rather than living for wholly psychical beings such as God or the State, man liberate himself and pursue his own egoistic interest unfettered from the phantasmal world of thought. In his book *Practicing the Power of Now*, Eckhart Tolle identifies these mental spirits as the psychical food by which the ego, the true thought entity, feeds. A being wholly existing on the mental plane, the mind-spawned ego latches upon external pillars of identity to cement who it is. It makes its host believe that the incessant mental noise, continual desire for fleeting gratification, as well as the constant recollections and projections to the past and future are actually how the mind is supposed to function. In actuality, this compulsive thinking prevents man

14 - Stirner, 7.

15 - Stirner, 7.

16 - Stirner, 13.

from accessing the one true perpetual moment. It is in this present moment where man can absorb the full scope of his own physical being and thereby access the infinite pleasure of his own body and the external world. Understood in these terms, Stirner's call to shirk off the fetters of foreign spiritual control extend to the very core of who we mistakenly take ourselves to be. Put plainly, to be truly egoistic man must transcend the ego.

In his book *Practicing the Power of Now*, spiritualist and author Eckhart Tolle explains that true liberation can only be achieved once one ceases identifying with the mind. Tolle describes the mind as both a superb instrument when used rightly and incredibly destructive when used wrongly. However, it isn't so much that people use their mind wrongly; so much as they don't use it at all. It uses them. Most people cannot cease all thought for more than a couple of moments, yet because everyone is afflicted with this incessant mental noise it is accepted as normal. What's more, because people identify with the mind, they take their thoughts to be reflections of how they truly feel. In actuality however, the doubts, fears, judgments, and other mental constellations are just the byproduct of a thinking system running rampant. Truly ask yourself, how much of your mental energies are spent mulling over the past or projecting your fantasies into the future? How often are you taken away from whatever you are doing because you slip into the spirit world of erotic daydreams, superfluous mental distractions, or past recollections filled with repeating sequences and what-ifs? How often do your eyes arrive at the bottom of a page only to realize that your thoughts were completely elsewhere? If a machine performed this inadequately you would immediately question what was wrong, yet because you identify with your mind, because you don't see it as an instrument but rather as who you are, you simply accept that that's the way "you" are. The instrument has taken you over. As Eckhart Tolle writes, "it's almost as if you are possessed without knowing it, and so you take the possessing entity as yourself" (12). The mind creates an opaque looking glass by which it sees the world through a screen of words, labels, images, concepts, definitions and judgments. It transforms the physical world into a world of mental constellations, into a world of spirit. It uses words to destroy everything real about a thing, to implant it with an essence, and to fit it into a tiny box that it can understand.

Touch anything near you with eyes closed and mind clear. Feel it without mentally visualizing yourself touching it, resist the urge to understand what you feel, simply experience the undefined sensations of your being coming in contact with something else's. Once stripped of their mental representation, things take on so much more depth and uniqueness. You understand them not by thinking of a noise and picture inside your mind, but by looking deeply into them and by feeling the sensations caused when your beings touch. The experience is indescribable, and that is what all life actually is, a single, indescribable experience.

The mind makes labels for everything so it can understand everything. Yet it doesn't truly understand things, rather it only understands its labels for things. Your mind impregnates every thing around you with an essence that destroys what that thing actually is and in its place erects a hollow picture. To use Stirner's words in my own context, "Spirit has to do with absolutely nothing unspiritual, with no thing, but only with the essence which exists behind and above those things, with thoughts" (Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, 23) The thoughts the mind implants in everything has nothing to do with the thing itself, only with the hollow representations belonging to the mind made spirit world. Everything is given a classification and an explanation. Nothing is new, nothing is special, everything is catalogued. Imagine a world without labels, where every field of radiant grass, soft pelt of moss, and harmonious birdsong would be unique. Yet for most people these things aren't unique, they aren't even noticed. Most people move through the world surrounded by comfortable, horrible, hollow words, their eyes looking but not seeing, their minds filled with thoughts of the no longer or never will be. They live in the spirit world.

This spirit world penetrates to the very core of who we mistakenly believe ourselves to be. As Stirner himself explains:

From the moment when he catches sight of the light of the world, man seeks to find out himself

and get a hold of himself out of its confusion, in which he, with everything else, is tossed about in motley mixture (Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, 13).

Rather than accept the universe for the “motley mixture” that it is, the mind clamors for classification and codification, not only of the outside world but also of you. It forms your mental image based on personal and cultural conditioning, and it latches onto external pillars of identification to construct an idea of who you are. This idea, this phantom self, this spirit being, is the ego. Consisting of mind activity, the ego can only find reality by deceiving you into identifying with it, into thinking that it is who you are. As it has no real reality, it relies on external things for its derived sense of self. The most common ego identifications have to do with possessions, occupation, social status and recognition, knowledge and education, physical appearance, special abilities, relationships, personal and family history, belief systems, and often also political, nationalistic, racial, religious, and other collective identifications (Tolle, *The Power of Now*, 33). None of these is you. If any or all of these things changed or disappeared, would you somehow no longer be you? Were all of these things the same for you ten years ago? Will they be the same ten years from now? Although who you are can (and will) change, you still remain. Yet if you fail to realize this, your ego self will also remain, constantly beckoning you to the spiritual realms of the past and future that it uses you to create. The ego needs the past to be kept alive, because without it, who are you? It constantly projects itself into the future to imagine some release or fulfillment there. It says that “one day, when this, that, or the other happens, I am going to be okay, happy, at peace” (Tolle, *Practicing the Power of Now*, 32). This stems from the ego’s intrinsic incompleteness as a shade spawned of mind. This incompleteness manifests as feelings of lack, craving, wanting, and needing. This causes people to strive after money, success, power, recognition, or relationships to satiate what they don’t realize are the ego’s desires. Yet even in attaining these things, new needs are created or the old ones still remain. The hole is bottomless because nothing can make the ego anything more than a phantom self clawing at external identifications in an attempt to make itself real. The only way it can in some way become real is through you, and so it beckons you to recollect the past and imagine the future to play what-if. You create the scenario, either one that has already happened or that might happen, and you see yourself immersed in the pleasures of fantasy. Yet who you are seeing isn’t you, you are real, you don’t exist in the mindscape. As stated earlier, the spiritual “has to do with absolutely nothing unspiritual, with no thing” (23). Who you are seeing isn’t you, it is your ego. It is the mental entity that is living inside of you, using you as a host to create an imaginary world that it can live in and enjoy all the pleasures that you can imagine for it. Everything you think you are isn’t who you are, it is a parasite posing as you, living inside of you to feed off your thoughts and making you construct phantom worlds where it can achieve the things that you want to achieve, become the person you want to become, and fuck the people that you want to fuck. “Your head is haunted”.

Stirner explains that it “lies in the nature of the case that if the spirit is to exist as pure spirit ... it must be an outer-worldly one, for, since I am not it, it follows it can only be outside of me” (Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, 33). Yet if we can understand the spiritual nature of the mind and ego in Tollean terms, then the purest spirit resides within. All other spirits, God, State, Lineage, they are all merely the psychical pillars through which the ego founds its quivering identity. “God must be real” - “The state must be just” - “My lineage must be important. If they weren’t, then I lose my place in the world, I lose myself”. Yet these are the worries of the ego whispered into our ears, and because we think that we are that voice we hold on to our beliefs and empty identities, even willing to sacrifice everything for them. Our egos would rather have us die in reality than face its own death on the mental plane. Although both ego and host truly die, at least they die with their “identity” affirmed. “What I believe must be true, I’m willing to die for it, aren’t I?”

Continuing the Tollean reading, those supposed voluntary egoists who believe themselves to be “an abyss of lawless and unregulated impulses, desires, wishes, [and] passions” (146) are more involuntary than the actual involuntary egoists. Although they are mistaken in who they are actually

serving, the involuntary egoist is at least cognizant that their actions serve another. At least the god-fearing designate the hushed voice in their head as something foreign and not of themselves. At least they recognize that there is an internal seducer, while the voluntary egoist believes that the impulses and desires of the ego actually belong to them. They believe that they are pursuing their own wants when what they are actually doing is furthering their identification with the ego and playing into the never-ending cycle of want and have, lack and excess, pleasure and pain, sadness and happiness, all of which clouds them to the world beyond the mental screens of judgment and label, desire and impulse.

To realize that past and future are inventions and to accept the present moment as the only thing there ever really was, is, or will be is to close the portals to the spirit world. To divorce from thought and to realize that the voice telling you to self-doubt and judge is a stranger is to revoke the ego's power. To dis-identify with the mind and strip the world of all its codifications and labels is to open yourself to the indescribable beauty of each and every thing. To bathe in the sounds of the surrounding world without separating what you hear is to listen to a symphony playing at every moment. To feel the rhythmic undulations of the heart, the deep warmth of the body, and the aliveness of every cell is to access a world of infinite pleasure and depth. To realize that no matter what happens in your life you always have access to the bottomless ocean of exquisite bliss that is your own body is to realize that no matter what happens to you, no matter who you become, and no matter what you gain or lose, you are the source of your happiness. Not the things you do, not your dreams, not your friends, not your family, not your lover. You.

If you cannot divorce from mind/ego identification, then you will be forever separated from the sprawling dimensions of pleasure that exist within the one, true world. If all you are does not flow from out of the fundamental understanding that you are the master of your own happiness, then you consign yourself to a life of future hopes and fleeting pleasures. You will always live for external people and things, but most chiefly for the internal ego. You will never achieve oneness.

To use Stirner's words for the last time, "if it ever became clear to you that God, the commandments, and so on only harm you, that they reduce you and ruin you, to a certainty you would throw them from you" (147). Throw your ego from you as you would the commandments. Tear down all the labels that you attach to the world and see it anew. Open yourself to all forms of knowledge, even those you once thought ridiculous. Begin observing the thoughts of your mind without judgment and find yourself chuckling at the ridiculous things you used to believe so strongly. Cultivate yourself more so than your job or your relationships. Find the infinite joy that exists inside of you so that you can love others not from a feeling of lack, but from abundance. Pursue self-mastery, come to know thyself, become the owner.



Legitimacy in (Self-) Governance

Esteban Berman

A possible interpretation of Max Stirner's objective in his works *Art and Religion* and *The Ego and Its Own* is that he was seeking to dispel all illegitimate ties that the individual had bound to his or herself, that is, Stirner was seeking to find these forced 'foreign influences' that the individual experienced so that when the individual sees how much of a prisoner they are, they will want to take their own individual power into their hands. Stirner's search for legitimacy stretches into a political debate, where he takes a radical egoist and anarchist perspective. This essay will consider Stirner's search for legitimacy as compared to Jean Jacques-Rousseau's republican thinking, illustrated in *The Social Contract*. This essay will consider such issues as the creation of ideals, liberty and self-governance, the use of Game Theory in the creation of a society and will finish off by arguing that the

individual does not need to be forced to renounce any of their liberty for the purpose of living in a society.

It seems that a common task for political philosophers is to look for a way to create the most legitimate political system, and up until recently, most of the answers provided required the individual to give up some of their freedom of action. For example, when allowing the government to define what punishment and crime are (as opposed to the toleration of individual retribution). Writers like Rousseau see this renouncing of some natural liberty as part of enacting a 'social contract'. Rousseau says, "what man loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to everything he tries to get and succeeds in getting; what he gains is civil liberty and the proprietorship to all he possesses"¹⁷. In civil society the individual is free from having to constantly worry about their safety, since the state takes it upon itself to make sure that common rules of safety are enforced. This is why someone like Rousseau sees his type of social contract government to be legitimate; at the end of the day it keeps you safe.

Stirner, however, has a completely different view on the subject. Max Stirner would see government as a form of art, and the citizens as its religious followers. Stirner's definition of art is of interest when considering it as a rebuttal to someone like Rousseau's bargain for legitimacy. Stirner says, "Art has created the ideal for man"¹⁸. This means that the 'artist' (whoever that may be) creates a work of art (which can be anything from an actual painting to an idea), and when people are inspired by it and incorporate some interpretation of it into their lives, they become 'religious' followers of it: "as long as you believe in the truth, you do not believe in yourself, and you are a – servant, a –religious man"¹⁹.

This interpretation of art can be used when thinking about government. In fact, many facets of government are 'works of art'²⁰. The bureaucracy can be interpreted as such. A bureaucracy is essentially the system that runs government; it is the mechanism of law that determines how many rights individuals have, their punishments when they break others' rights, and so on. Almost every citizen knows part of the artwork that is the bureaucracy (even if they don't know exactly what it is) and incorporates it into their lives. An example of this is people not murdering others: the law that they know condemns doing it, and as such they expect a punishment to balance out their crime. When a citizen lives and abides by every law they will be the optimal citizen, the perfect religious follower. Stirner asserts, "The commonality is nothing else than the thought that the state is all in all, *the true man*, and that the individual's human value consists in being a citizen of the state"²¹

This is where Stirner sees legitimacy disappear. In *Art and Religion* he says, "Art creates disunion, in that it sets the ideal over and against man". In government, man is not Man by his own accord. Whether they realize it or not, to Stirner, man is a religious follower. To Stirner, a system will never be legitimate unless every individual owns himself or herself. A 'religious' man is not a free man, not an own man. Stirner says, "my concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc. but solely what is mine, and it is not a general one but is - unique, as I am unique"²². Stirner sees ghosts, spirits, fabrications, and pieces of art everywhere in life. It seems as if the only way to legitimacy is for every individual to be the artist of his or her own lives.

In *The Ego and Its Own*, Stirner develops his attack on the legitimacy philosophers like Rousseau that promote the trading of part of one's 'ownness' to something or someone else. But what if

17 - Rousseau, *The Social Contract* pg. 195

18 - Stirner, *Art and Religion*, pg. 5

19 - Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, pg. 312

20 - A point which is also echoed by Rousseau when he says, "the constitution of man is the work of nature; that of the state the work of art" (*The Social Contract* pg. 257)

21 - Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own* pg. 90

22 - Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own* pg. 7

an individual legitimately wants to give some of their 'ownness' away? If it's an unforced, well-informed, rational decision, then isn't this 'renouncing' legitimate? Stirner's argument for legitimacy rests on this principle of 'ownness', but it still seems to force people into acting in a certain way. In fact, he almost echoes Rousseau when he declared "whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body... he will be forced to be free"²³. If ownness is "my whole being and existence"²⁴, isn't it mine to use up, *dispose of*, as I will? "As own you are really rid of everything; and what clings to you, you have accepted"²⁵.

Even still, Stirner gives a good argument against Rousseau's idea of legitimacy. Rousseau is fully aware "man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains"²⁶ but never seems to question the 'chains' in the way Stirner does. Stirner sees the state of perfect freedom as probable, and it is only in this state that there is legitimate governance: legitimate *self*-governance. When on the subject of political liberty Stirner says, "the polis, the state is free... it does not mean my liberty, but the liberty of a power that rules and subjugates me"²⁷. The State, our religion, seems to be the only thing that is fully in power of itself. To Stirner the state an egoist just like many other things.

Like every other egoist, the state will fully use its powers to get itself to the best possible situation it can imagine. Stirner believes "the state has always had the sole purpose to limit, tame, subordinate the individual – to make him subject to some generality"²⁸. Because of this subordination, which makes sure that individuals are not fully their own, any form of government to Stirner is illegitimate. To Stirner government is an enemy of the individual (the egoist). Concerning the state Stirner says, "It lasts only so long as the individual is not all in all, and it is only the clearly marked restriction of me, my limitation, my slavery"²⁹. What the state does is put the people ahead of the individual, but Stirner sees the concept of 'the people' as being a work of art as well, a fictitious spook. Stirner declares, "The common weal of is not my weal, but only the furthest extremity of self-renunciation... a liberty of the people is not my liberty"³⁰. This is why the state and the egoist are in a constant battle, "a people cannot be free otherwise than at the individual's expense... the freer the people, the more bound the individual"³¹.

This is Stirner's critique of Rousseau's ideal republic. Rousseau argues that the sovereign body of the republic will be the people as guided by the general will. In essence, each citizen renounces part of their ownness and agrees to be guided by the general will, "each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will"³². Rousseau argues that this is a legitimate form of government because "under this system, each necessarily submits to the conditions he imposes on others"³³. Because of this, it is possible to think of Rousseau as using Game ===== There are three possible outcomes in game theory. If there is cooperation between players the results achieved are moderate. If one of the players takes advantage, they do better than if they cooperate, but at the expense of the other player. If both players attempt to take advantage of their situation, the results are even worse.

Rousseau might have believed that life without government (which is "an intermediate body set

23 - Rousseau, *The Social Contract* pg. 194

24 - Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own* pg. 143

25 - Ibid; pg. 148

26 - Rousseau, *The Social Contract* pg. 181

27 - Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own* pg. 97

28 - Ibid; pg. 201

29 - Ibid; pg. 201

30 - Ibid; pg. 190

31 - Ibid; pg 190

32 - Rousseau, *The Social Contract* pg. 191

33 - Ibid; pg. 205

up between the subjects and the Sovereign, to secure their mutual correspondence, charged with the execution of laws and the maintenance of liberty, both civil and political”³⁴) would be essentially like being constantly in the prisoner’s dilemma; by forcing everyone to cooperate (therefore choosing to not take advantage of one another) it avoids the problem extreme inequality.

But here is exactly where Stirner has a problem. The fact that the government might provide safety from other egoists (for egoists) is not enough to offset the gross offense committed by the state when it forces us, it’s citizens, to cooperate with one another. Even if the individual is better off in such a situation, they are not wholly their own, and so they are in a far worse condition. However, there is a way to work around this problem.

“Each thing cares for itself”³⁵ and by itself will decide what it wants to do. The whole process for the thing or the egoist to decide what it will devote its energy towards does not (and should not) matter to anyone aside from the thing or the egoist. But in caring for itself and choosing its own course of action, there is no logical reason why it will be either violent, hostile or a danger. Maybe there is a possibility for an egoist to decide that they want to live peacefully in cooperation with others. This need not be a maxim (Stirner is against maxims), just a freely chosen form of conduct. I believe this can be expanded to many egoists, because many people can feel the same way about this issue. If a society of people who legitimately want to live in is created and formed, we can’t declare that this form of society is unjust to the individual. If each member of this union (or society) is perfectly willing to alter their conduct for the sake of the peace and cooperation with the others, then Stirner cannot declare this union to be a gross insult. The key lies in the people of the society themselves, a point he himself recognizes (“the character of a society is determined by the character of its members”³⁶). In such a society every member is still fully in control of his or her own self-development and creation. So when Stirner says “if you let yourself be made out in the right by another, you must no less let yourself be made out in the wrong by him”³⁷ we can agree and show him that no one in this society is made out in the wrong, unless it is by their own accord.

The problem with this type of (self) governance, even though it is legitimate, is that there is no assurance of safety. People constantly gamble their lives with a lot more actions because there is no telling how others will react to anything that they do. So this leads me to ask, is the result that we see at the end of the search for legitimacy in governance truly worth it?

Stirner’s search for legitimacy is of importance because he goes to such a radical extreme that makes the reader consider just how much of their liberty and freedom they are willing to trade for safety. Stirner’s concepts of ownness, egoism, self-creation, art and religion can be adapted to our thinking on government. Just how willing are we to be ‘religious’ followers? The religion of the state declares it will provide heaven for its citizens, but Stirner declares that heaven actually is in every person. The question then becomes do *you*, the egoist, want to go through the task of creating, securing and perfecting your own heaven, or would you rather live in the state’s fabricated heaven by giving up part of yourself? The answer lies in you, and you alone.

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Egoism & the Everyday

Surly Prolix

The phone's shrill ring penetrated sharply through the phantasmagorical fog, unceremoniously dissipating the blurry contours of my dreamscape. Dazed, I wiped the string of drool from my chin and groped towards the cacophony. My ensuing blind jabbing of buttons had the undesired effect of unleashing my mother's grating voice amplified into speakerphone, jolting me out of my drowsiness.

"Darling? Are you there? Can you hear me? I haven't heard a peep from you in weeks; I was starting to get worried! I suppose it's easy to forget about your boring old mom when you move away to a big flashy city..."

I had hardly begun to murmur a non-committal response when she cut me off, abruptly launching into the ardent wheedling which constituted the motive behind her call.

"So I've heard that Trent hasn't been able to reach you yet! I was afraid you may have lost your phone, or that something may have happened to you! Have you not been receiving his calls or messages? You *are* going to get in touch with him, aren't you, honey? It would be *such* a shame not to take him up on his generous offer. Wouldn't you prefer to have a better job than stocking shelves or washing dishes? You don't want to waste your time doing icky grunt work like that! It would be great career experience for you to work in a corporate environment!"

She kept babbling, zealously extolling the glamorous lifestyle which accoutred the privileged position of secretary at Xtraction Inc and why I should consider this to be the germination of all my most pathetically cradled dreams and prayers. Yeah, I knew I should be kissing up all the mink oil off this Trent character's freshly greased leather loafers while orgasming with gratitude that he would ever so much as consider little old *me* with my short hair and A-cup breasts for this prestigious position amongst the godly echelon of corporate fat cats, but somehow I wasn't in the mood to wax obsequious over this dubious honour. On the contrary, the scenario was making me feel violently ill. Of all the corporate teats to suck, the milk of this one was especially soured by its egregiously exploitative and environmentally destructive mining practices. I could never debase myself by consenting to become a cog in this nefarious machine; it was all too disgusting.

"So, you gonna finally give him a call today or *what*, babe? How do you feel?" my mother demanded, attempting unsuccessfully to cloak her peevishness in motivational fervour.

"Gosh, it's like I just won a beauty contest," I responded, my voice dripping with irony. She relentlessly blew my sarcasm aside by erupting into an aggressive geyser of enthusiasm. My eyes glazed over as she lectured me on how a ladylike presentation was indispensable in such a work environment, exhorting me not to squander this invaluable opportunity by going to the interview dressed like a construction worker (read: dyke) in steel toe boots and a lumberjack shirt. Before hanging up, she managed to finagle a reluctant and insincere promise that I would contact her friend's son and avail myself of his business contacts, so that I could breathlessly embark upon my ascent up the social ladder. Once I reached my dizzyingly high destination, I would hopefully secure a respectable husband who would cement my rung in the privileged class – my ticket to suburbia and mini-vans, maternity clothes and mortgages! Wasn't that exactly what every young woman aspired to?

For a moment I felt the spectre of my mother's ambitions seize me, penetrating into my ego with an alien chill. I saw myself through her gaze: a pitiful nobody despite all the advantages I had been given, eking out a living performing unskilled labour and pouring my energies into the futile creation of useless art which very few people ever saw, let alone appreciated. A ragamuffin without a credit card or a driver's license, boasting only a tattered wardrobe devoid of high heels or designer brand names. A misguided miscreant whose "rebellious phase" had proved uncomfortably enduring, and whose

window of youthful potential was contracting further with each newly elapsed day. My inadequate real self was counterpoised with the seductive beacon of the generic young woman who embodied ideal femininity; whose life was consecrated to a career, a family, a husband, the refinement of her womanly charms; whose hobbies consisted of shopping, preening, dieting and exercising. A miserable carbon copy of my mother, and a million others before and after her, enticed into exchanging their ownness for a cookie cutter existence engulfed in the suffocating shadows of hegemony.

A hiatus from further conversations with my mother seemed in order. Maybe one day I would find the strength to articulate to her that as much as she considered my vagabond lifestyle to be immature and ignominious, I considered hers a barren and artless wasteland of mind-numbing conformity where I would have to kill everything unique about myself in order to survive. No, I didn't anticipate contacting Trent anytime soon.

I can't say I've ever had a job that I liked, but this one is preferable to most, even if it is a stretch to pay the bills. Some bills I can afford to leave unpaid. Like food, for example – I may have to frequent copious religious edifices and radical protests to procure a hearty meal, and wear a bulky jacket and running shoes on my trips to the supermarket, and prowl alleys so as to scope out dumpsters, but it's a worthy trade-off for being able to work at home without a boss.

I appreciate that my work is a flamboyant parody of social dynamics, whose naked excessiveness highlights its farcical nature in a way that does not permit it to cloak itself in pompous postulations. Most calls I do on autopilot, my mind soaring freely above the mundane list of body parts and secretions that I'm to reiterate endlessly until my shift ends, liberally interspersed with moans and panting. *Oh baby, oh baby, I'm rubbing myself! I want your cock so bad!!* I robotically repeat a handful of phrases at regular intervals until I can stand it no longer or run out of household chores to perform simultaneously, and then I stop. The salacious content of these interchanges no longer affords them any particular pre-eminence within my attention span, and most of the time I tune out the reedy voice on the other end and mechanically fit my rote interjections into the pauses. It's gotten to the point where talking dirty is as banal to me as discussing sports or horoscopes or anything else; just another script I rattle off mindlessly in order to placate my interlocutor whilst my mind roams elsewhere. Even if the caller is elucidating the most perverse of fetishes, I remain unfazed and unengaged, simply inserting a ubiquitous moan every so often.

However, one notable caller does demand a more creative participation from me in our verbal intercourse.

His slick baritone voice was familiar, its bloated self-indulgence oozing from the receiver like a slow drip of molasses. "Hey babe... I bet most of the guys you talk to all day are real fucking pathetic losers who can't get laid, aren't they? I bet you never get the privilege of talking to a guy who's as successful as me... this is probably the only chance you'll ever get to know what a real man *sounds* like in your whole peon existence. What does a real man sound like, you're wondering, aren't you babe? What exactly *does* success sound like? 200 k a year, excluding bonuses and stock options? A brand new BMW, and a condo with ocean views sans mortgage? A vacation home and a jet ski in the Bahamas? Of *course*, babe, of *course*. It sounds like all these things and so much *more*, babe. Trust me."

"Ugh," I groaned, not bothering to cloak my disgust in feigned sexual arousal. "You are so fucking intolerably boring. Why did you even bother to call me just to gloat over your empty materialist achievements, your corporate drone suit-wearing? Why not just jerk off in front of a mirror onto your silk tie collection or something? Congratulations on accepting consumerism as your lord and savior; you have ascended to the exalted realm of status quo success. Now you can fuck off and die, because as far as I'm concerned you're the scum of the earth, and I'm no apostle of yours or anybody else's."

A pregnant pause ensued, followed by chortles of delightedly disbelieving laughter. "Oh *babe!*"

he moaned. “Mmm, you have *no* idea how much you just made my day. I’m more turned on than ever. Tell me more. I’m such a piece of shit, oh, tell me *more*... I want to hear it all! Tell me about how dirty all my money is, tell me about how it comes from raping the earth - tell me about what a greedy fuck I am for living off the backs of your fellow peons! Tell me about *your* shitbox life, and why scraping together pennies at your *phone sex* career makes you such a more worthwhile person than me. Make me laugh or better yet, make me feel *guilty*! Nothing gets me harder than guilt. How much do you get paid per minute?”

“Forty cents,” I responded. “And I truly can’t think of a more pleasant way to earn it than by further articulating why you are a sterile, conformist dirtbag whose self-masturbatory monologues do not inspire any of the intended jealousy in me, but rather reaffirm my own aversions to the hollow monotony of your life’s status-seeking purpose.”

“Ah,” he sighed contentedly. “*Magical*. You’ve really got a way with words, babe. Don’t stop. I want you to keep telling me how deplorable I am, it really gets me off. I’m in heaven right now.”

It didn’t come as much of a surprise to me when the caller proceeded to introduce himself as Trent. I could have ended the call, but in its current configuration our interchange was almost palatable.

PHILOSOPHIC SKETCH :

How Stirnerean Egoism Pertains to this Fictional Short Story

The Narrator, who will henceforth be referred to as N, is a female egoist from a bourgeois family who seeks to free herself from the repressive constraints of the hegemonic ideology which society holds as its fixed ideal(s). This ideology has deeply gendered implications for N as it seeks to mould her into a deferential patriarchal tool through enforced heteronormativity culminating in marriage and a family, pervasively articulating an ideal femininity which she is expected to invest all her time and energy into striving towards. Hegemony also dictates that she exalt capitalism and measure her and others’ self-worth by their purchasing power and material possessions. N’s egoism compels her to fiercely resist relinquishing her ownness in favor of a stultifying pre-packaged “ideal” life. Her personal ethics decry unethical consumption, environmental destruction, and exploitation, which causes her to reject the predatory nature of big corporations and capitalism more broadly. N’s only interaction with the other characters in the story occurs through the phone, which represents the primacy of her own Self as sovereign and unassailable to these disembodied spooks aiming to inseminate her mind with their fixed ideals.

N’s mother is a preacher, expounding the fixed ideals which she seeks to inculcate into her daughter to in order to “save” her from a “profane” existence. She wants to rectify her daughter’s heretical flouting of hegemonic morality and ideology, doggedly policing N’s failure to strive towards the ideals promoted by the patriarchal, capitalist system. She prioritizes conversion over her daughter’s personal preference, conceiving of N’s individuality as something that must be ironed out for her own good. The hierarchy of their relationship is represented through their dialogue – the mother dominates the conversation with proselytization, while N only makes one facetious remark whose sentiment is swiftly marginalized. N senses the futility of trying to justify herself before her mother, as the latter has become reduced to a mere vessel for hegemonic specters after a lifetime of docile submission, and these have become too deeply rooted for her to even conceive of interrogating (much less denouncing) them. N’s mother sees only her daughter’s essence, that is the potential for her daughter to achieve “success” within socially approved channels such as having a career and a husband – her daughter’s uniqueness is an embarrassment to her rather than something to be cherished.

Trent represents the powerful patriarchal benefactor: in all his well-endowed magnanimity, he is willing to consider bequeathing a desk job to a hapless young girl new to the city as a favour to his mother. Trent’s mother is only capable of exercising her power (philanthropy) via her son, symbolizing her relative impotence compared to him within the patriarchal nexus of power. Trent's position of

power is symbolized by his being the only character given a name. Whether or not Trent is an egoist is somewhat of an open question, perhaps reflecting unresolved tensions within Stirner's conception of the term. He is clearly an adherent of status quo ideology as he exalts himself for having succeeded in society by accruing wealth and property, but he also seems to relish using people for his own advantage and does not subscribe to hegemonic morality (he boasts that for him guilt is synonymous with sexual arousal, therefore not really guilt at all). The question arises: Does this indicate that it is possible for Stirnerian egoism to dovetail harmoniously with the essence of "rational self-interest" and individual prosperity that underpins capitalism, or if an individual subscribes to any socially endorsed fixed ideal does that automatically preclude the title of egoism from applying to them in any way?

N's mother's comments about being properly coiffed for the interview indicate that N's securing the secretarial job is contingent on her appearing attractive and sexually available (heterosexual) before the omnipotent Trent – this is his "price" for desiring her services. N illustrates the subordination that she would experience as a woman and as an employee in this unequal work relationship through sardonic commentary about licking mink oil off Trent's leather loafers in gratitude. This servile gesture has sexual connotations, and Trent's domination of the situation is further highlighted by his use of animal products (subordinating other species to him). N is referring merely to the institutional power which his gender and position as her boss would afford Trent over her in this scenario, without any real knowledge of his personal characteristics. These are only revealed later as being especially repugnant: Trent has a pronounced superiority complex and derives his gratification from flaunting his wealth before those with less, whom he refers to as peons. He validates himself by debasing others, but also relishes being attacked by one of his presumed underlings because he is such a firm convert to the hegemonic gospel that he is incapable of interpreting N's denunciation as emanating from any more substantive rationale than jealousy of his "success."

Trent and N are enemies in the proverbial "war of all against all" because he seeks to subordinate her, while she seeks to avoid subordination. However, they do engage in an uneasy relationship of mutual benefit when Trent unknowingly solicits her phone sex services for his own brand of erotic humiliation/ego-stroking, beseeching her to insult him and make him feel "guilty" over his obscene concentration of wealth and power. This is a markedly different relationship than being directly employed under him, and for a variety of reasons N finds it more tolerable and feels that she can better preserve her ownness through it.

- 1) Though their relationship is still asymmetric, N has more power in that she is not beholden to Trent – she is her own boss, and can avoid or end their interaction at her discretion, since she works from home and is paid per minute of conversation.
- 2) Knowing his identity while she remains anonymous gives her the upper hand
- 3) She has enough control, distance and anonymity in the situation that he does not pose a threat to her autonomy
- 4) She does not have to compromise her own ethics with regards to environmental and labour practices

Because of all of these points, but especially the last one, the narrator considers the more stigmatized and "shameful" job of phone sex operator to be less degrading and despicable than the societally respectable "legitimate" job of secretary at Xtraction Inc. She prioritizes preserving her freedom and ownness over an enhanced salary, even if this means she can't afford to buy food. This compromise may not appeal to everyone, but it is a testament to her uniqueness that this is her preference. She is not beholden to the hegemonic morality which regards phone sex work as immoral and shameful while sanctifying secretarial work as respectable and proper. The phone sex work that she does inhabits a niche within patriarchy and capitalism, but she values that it blatantly lays bare the relations which elsewhere in society are scrupulously concealed, and thereby prevents her from taking it too seriously

and allows her to have more freedom. For example, if she had worked as Trent's secretary the same dynamics between them would have still been percolating under the surface, but it is improbable that they would have been expressed so unabashedly. As his employee she would doubtless have had to show him utmost respect and deference. However, the nature of his proclivities allows her to honestly express her disgust with everything he represents, which is consistent with her preserving her ownness because she does not have to disguise her true feelings. She is still using Trent to a lesser extent to furnish some of her material needs, but she does not have to compromise her ethical beliefs in order to do so.

Arguably this interaction with Trent approximates a Union of Egoists – they each derive mutual benefit and increase their power through this union, but both are free to leave at any time without justification or repercussion. N can terminate their relationship without sacrificing her stream of income, as she would if Trent was her boss rather than her client. This would seem to fit the way that Stirner articulates the Union of Egoists as opposed to the state, the latter of which I would argue could easily be substituted for corporation: “The Union will assuredly offer a greater measure of liberty [but] nevertheless it will still contain enough of unfreedom and involuntariness. For its object is not this – liberty[,] but only *ownness*. Referred to this, the difference between the state and union is great enough. The former is an enemy and murderer of ownness, the latter a son and coworker of it (273).” In order to work in a corporate environment, N would have had to dress and act in a particular prescriptive manner, whereas as a phone sex operator she is not bound to any such restrictions and can choose whether or not to freely express her thoughts, as she does with Trent.

N's choice to work as a phone sex operator rather than a corporate secretary is an insurrectionary act as opposed to a revolutionary one. Stirner describes why insurrection is egoistic but revolution is not thusly: “As my object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose or deed are not a political or social but (as directed toward myself and my ownness alone) an *egoistic* purpose and deed (280).” N does not attempt any goal so lofty as the radical overthrow of capitalism or patriarchy, but rather elevates herself outside of Trent's sphere of domination so as to derive advantage from him in a way still consistent with the preservation of her ownness. For the most part she engages herself only superficially in the conversations – she does not generally put herself into them and keeps her mind elevated above them. Phone sex is a means for her to secure survival, but it is not a calling unto itself – she can consume it and dispose of it at her will, she owns it and not the converse.



On Max Stirner's Unique One, Self-Enjoyment, and Creative Nothing

Dustin Harrison

“But I, when I criticize, do not even have myself before my eyes, but am only doing myself a pleasure, amusing myself according to my taste; according to my several needs I chew the thing up or only inhale its odour.”

– Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 311.

Max Stirner certainly knows what he is *against*. The majority of his magnum opus *The Ego and Its Own* is filled with polemic directed towards the various enemies, opponents, and things he just does not like. He is *against* the Ancients, the Moderns, and his liberal contemporaries; he is *against* religion, morality, and other fixed ideas; he is *against* any foreign concept of right or law; he is *against* state and society; and he is against living for the sake of a 'true life'. For the most part, what exactly Stirner is *for* is only ever spelled out in its relation to what he is *against*, in the sense of pointing to what he is

against and saying “Not that.” He is *against* human history thus far, and so *for* an egoistic future; he is *against* fixed ideas of any kind whatsoever, so *for* oneness and being the creative nothing; he is *against* any foreign concept of right or law, so *for* his own power and self-ownership; he is *against* state and society, so *for* anarchy and the union of egoists; and he is *against* 'true' living, so *for* the enjoyment of living.

And Stirner would likely see no problem with being taken as never offering a stand-alone, positive account of his beliefs; the work itself ends with him proclaiming that, as the unique one, “no *concept* expresses [him], nothing that is designated as [his] essence exhausts [him]; they are only names” (324). However, over the course of *The Ego and Its Own*, Stirner does offer a thorough positive philosophical program, including metaphysical, ontological and epistemological foundations through to elaborating political, ethical and aesthetic outcomes. And while Stirner himself may not of thought it worthwhile to more fully explicate and understand this program of his, this essay sets out to complete at least one portion of the project of collating and analyzing the positive, rather than polemic, side of *The Ego and Its Own*. In particular, this essay will focus on examining the nature of Stirner's central positive contributions of understanding the self in terms of uniqueness, self-enjoyment, and the creative nothing, leaving concerns over his more basic philosophical foundations and his more elaborated philosophical outcomes for elsewhere. This essay will show how a developed existential account of human experience, drawing on the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus, can aid in shedding light on Stirner's understanding of self as 'the unique one'.

In a sure sign of Stirner's penchant for turning language, logic, and linear thinking on their heads, to grasp his most concise and unequivocal account of the self we must put last things first and begin at the end – the very last paragraph of the book, to be precise: “I am *owner* of my might, and I am so when I know myself as *unique*. In the *unique one* the owner himself returns to his creative nothing, of which he is born” (324). But, it is not as if the preceding pages of the book were only fluff, unrelated to this final climax and conclusion of the self as unique one and egoist. As editor David Leopold points out, “[c]ertain subjects, such as Christianity and egoism, occur on virtually every page of *The Ego and Its Own*” (377). So, summarizing and understanding Stirner's thoughts on the self and human nature in *The Ego and Its Own* is less a task of paint-by-numbers, and more-so one of wrangling philosophical cats, gathering up Stirner's scattered thoughts on the subject and trying to evince a method from the madness.

Let us begin with Stirner's notion of the 'creative nothing': “I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything”, says Stirner (7). As the creator of *everything*, one may take Stirner as suggesting that he, as the creative nothing, is some manner of all powerful being, that the universe and everything in it is his doing, and that there is nothing outside of him. But this idea of being the creator of all things is more hyperbolic and figurative than it is literal. Stirner admits of things that he did not create existing outside of him, and how “[e]very one has a relation to [such] objects” (296). His account of human life begins with the immediacy after birth of our coming into contact and constant collision with these things (foreign, external, separate things), and the unavoidable combat of self-assertion between oneself and these other things, which are not oneself (13). Stirner's notion of the creative nothing at play here is not one of literally creating all things, but instead one of being the creator of the meanings, notions, values, or truths of all things: “For how we toss things about is the affair of our *choice*, our *free will*; . . . every judgement which I pass upon an object is the *creature* of my will; and [this] discernment again leads me to . . . remaining the *creator*, the judger, who is ever creating anew. All predicates of objects are my statements, my judgements, my – creatures” (297-298). The creative nothing is not the creator of all things in the sense *that* they are, but instead in the sense of *what* they are.

For Stirner, the 'nothing' aspect of being the creative nothing, and not just simply 'the creator', comes from the lack of there being any inherent or intrinsic purpose, direction or calling to this creative being: “A man is 'called' to nothing, and has no 'calling', no 'destiny', as little as a plant or beast has a

'calling'. . . . Now, as this rose is a true rose to begin with, this nightingale always a true nightingale, so I am . . . a 'true man' from the start. . . . Whatever and whoever I may be, . . . I am it, I am the true man" (288-289). This formulation of 'nothingness' precedes by almost exactly one century Jean-Paul Sartre's famous formulation of the same, that "man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing" (Sartre, 315). But whereas Sartre believes that we can indeed define ourselves afterwards, Stirner believes that we are to forever remain a 'nothing', and in this sense his analysis is more in-line with that of Albert Camus and absurdism rather than Sartre and bare existentialism. I will return to this connection between Stirner and Camus later.

By way of conceiving the self as the creative nothing and all things as 'creatures' of such a creator Stirner also introduces notions of property, ownership and 'ownness'. Because all things are ultimately 'creatures' of the creative nothing, all things are thereby one's potential property to dispose of as one sees fit, and the extent of one's property is the extent of one's creative nothingness, that is, the extent of one's self. Put another way, "My power is *my* property. My power *gives* me property. My power *am* I myself, and through it I am my property" (166). Here, then, Stirner's notion of ownness and self-ownership is the extent to which the unique one, as the creative nothing, achieves this determining of all things as its 'creatures'. Egoism generally is the more evaluative or normative claim that the unique one ought to promote their ownness to its fullest extent and accept nothing less than everything as its property.

Although according to Stirner "[u]nconsciously and involuntarily we all strive toward ownness" (316), he readily admits that we may only end up actualizing our ownness and self-ownership to a greater or lesser extent: "I secure my freedom with regard to the world in the degree that I make the world my own, 'gain it and take possession of it' for myself, by whatever might [I have], . . . for the means that I use for it are determined by what I am. If I am weak, I have only weak means" (149-150). What's more, not only can one's striving toward ownness be thwarted by weakness and inability, it can be abandoned altogether in favour of self-renunciation and submission to those 'other things' which we are in constant collision with. In fact, regarding such 'unselfishness' Stirner feels that ". . . nothing is more ordinary! One may even call it an article of fashion in the civilized world" (58). For him, this abandoning of ownness happens "[r]ight where an end ceases to be our end and our property, which we, as owners, can dispose of at pleasure; where it becomes a fixed end or a - fixed idea" (58).

At this point a few more parallels and insights may be drawn from Sartre's existentialism, as well as from Simone de Beauvoir's also. First is trying to understand just why 'unselfishness' and selfrenunciation are such 'articles of fashion' in Stirner's 'civilized world'. We can use Sartre to explain this by utilizing his notion of 'bad faith'. According to Sartre, once we become aware of our existential position (that of being something of a creative nothing), we at the same time become aware of the tremendous amount of responsibility that comes along with it – determining life's purpose and meaning is all up to us, and only us, and we know it (315-316). Because of this, we react with anguish/angst (at the weightiness of the task before us), forlornness/abandonment (for the loss of being able to appeal to God or some other source for objective answers to what we should do), and despair (at having to confine ourselves to reckoning only with what directly depends on our will), which all results in an impetus to try and escape our existential condition and the responsibility that comes with it (316-321). This attempt to deny one's existential status is seen as living in bad faith, contrasted with accepting one's position, which is seen as living authentically. de Beauvoir, too, sees there being great negative affect intrinsically bound up with the realization of one's existential status as a creative nothing of sorts, and elaborates and expands on this idea from Sartre. She describes those living in bad faith as 'sub-man' and falling into four categories, the most relevant for our purposes being the 'serious man', or the person who renounces their true subjective condition in favour of attempting to return to an objective, unconditioned, 'serious' world (338-346). On this framework of Sartre and de Beauvoir's, the propensity for self-renunciation Stirner sees so prevalent around him can be explained in terms of the

tremendous sense of responsibility and negative affect that is associated with acknowledging oneself as the unique one, or creative nothing, which results in a impetus for people to live in 'bad faith' as a 'subman', most prominently by being a 'serious man' seeking comfort and solace in the objective world of 'fixed ideas'.

Another way in which the existentialist account mirrors and elaborates upon Stirner's is in terms of the extent of one's freedom and ownness. To recall from above, Stirner posits both that we have a intrinsic drive for ownness within us, but that this drive can be both thwarted by limitation and abandoned altogether, and so is a capacity that needs to be developed and intentionally exercised. de Beauvoir sees something similar happening with human freedom in the existential account. By virtue of the existential condition human beings find themselves in, they already have, in a sense, total and complete freedom (335-338). But, because we are subject to constraints from the external world, our freedom is similarly a capacity that needs to be developed and the conditions for its application ensured (346-348). The main thrust of her *Ethics of Ambiguity* is an attempt to resolve this ambiguity of complete human freedom existing in an unfree, constraining world, and to develop a normativity that calls for the full development and application of our intrinsic freedom. This directly correlates to Stirner's own egoistic normativity that calls for the full development and application of one's ownness. The question may now be raised of Stirner's account: why be the unique one, engage in one's creative nothingness, and strive to promote one's ownness at all? If there is such negative affect associated with doing so and people are so readily able to *not* do so by escaping to fixed ideas, why not opt to live in bad faith? On the existential account, both Sartre and de Beauvoir assert that living in bad faith is unsustainable over the long run because one's subjective, existential position is fundamentally inescapable (Sartre, 326-327; de Beauvoir, 346). Stirner seems to answer this question in a like manner, suggesting that fundamentally our status as the creative nothing is inescapable. This can be seen most clearly in Stirner's discussion of human 'force', understood in terms of creative nothingness and ownness, and the rejection of the possibility of establishing the imperative of 'use your force' as the human calling. Stirner rejects such an imperative as "superfluous and senseless", on the grounds that "each one really uses his force without first looking upon this as his calling: at all times every one uses as much force as he possesses [because] . . . [such] forces always of themselves show themselves operative" (289). Furthermore, even if one were to try to reject and push away one's status as the creative nothing, "[e]verything is my own, therefore I bring back to myself what wants to withdraw from me; but above all I always bring myself back when I have slipped away from myself to any willingness to serve [a fixed idea]. But this too is not my calling, but my natural act" (290). One's creative nothingness is fundamentally inescapable; it's just something that we do and cannot do otherwise, by virtue of what we are.

If we grant Stirner this, that we are fundamentally and inescapably creative nothings, the further question may be asked: as the creator of all things, how are we to direct our creative human 'force'? Or as Stirner himself puts it: "But how does one use life?" (283). To which he replies: "In using it up, like the candle, which one uses in burning it up. One uses life, and consequently himself the living one, in *consuming* it and himself. *Enjoyment of life* is using life up" (283). But this seems to only push the goal-posts back a bit. The question remains largely the same but instead now becomes: how does one go about consuming one's life as a creative nothing? What is it that the creative nothing enjoys?

One indication from Stirner on this is his suggesting that "we all show ourselves arbitrary in the handling of objects, that is, do with them as we *like* best, at our *liking*" (297). In saying this, Stirner seems to be proposing some manner of preference hedonism, where whatever we prefer is what brings us the most enjoyment. But this seems problematic at worst and vacuous at best. If what we enjoy is simply that-which-we-like-best, then a dilemma arises in understanding how exactly our preferences and enjoyment are connected, a dilemma similar to that faced by the titular character in Plato's *Euthyphro* in saying that piety is what is pleasing to the gods. Namely, do we prefer that-which-we-like-best because we enjoy it the most, or do we enjoy it the most simply because it is that-which-we-like-

best? If we answer in the former, that our preferences follow our enjoyment, then we are committed to the view that our enjoyment is based on something other than merely our preferences. And if we answer in the latter, that our enjoyment follows our preferences, then our enjoyment in this regard is utterly arbitrary and vacuous; our enjoyment of a thing actually has nothing to do with that particular thing because we could have just as easily gotten enjoyment out of some other thing simply by preferring that thing instead.

I believe Stirner in the end settles on falling on the first horn of this dilemma, that of there being some other basis for our enjoyment than empty preference. This can be seen in the fact that what seems most important to Stirner is *not* mere enjoyment, pleasure for pleasure's sake, but rather that the unique one lives *for its own sake*. *The Ego and Its Own* is in fact bookended by this message. In the beginning: "I am the creative nothing . . . [a]way, then, with every concern that is altogether not my concern! . . . I myself am my concern, . . . [m]y concern is . . . solely what is mine, . . . as I am unique. Nothing is more to me than myself!" (7). From the end: "If I concern myself for myself, the unique one, then my concern rests on its transitory, mortal creator, who consumes himself and I may say: All things are nothing to me" (324). The *alpha* and *omega* for Stirner, then, is not simply enjoyment, hedonistic pleasure, but rather that the creative nothing lives to promote and maintain itself and its nothingness. And this is achieved by consuming and burning up everything in life, preventing it from ever becoming a 'fixed idea'. *This* is enjoyment for the creative nothing, that which it concerns itself with. I concern myself – as the creative nothing, for myself – my creative nothingness.

We may now finish by returning to Albert Camus and his connection to Stirner and *The Ego and Its Own*. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus lays out the central tenet of his philosophy of absurdism. For Camus, "[t]he absurd is born of the confrontation between the human need [for meaning] and the unreasonable silence of the world" (31-32), "these two certainties – my appetite for the absolute and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle – I also know that I cannot reconcile them" (51). The absurdity of the human position, then, is that we are forever saddled with an inextricable yearning for meaning, but at the same time we will never be able to satisfy that yearning. The absurd hero for Camus is the Greek mythological figure Sisyphus, whom "[t]he gods had condemned . . . to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight" (107). A similar sort of Sisyphean task takes place in *The Ego and Its Own*. Whereas for Camus the boulder being ever-ceaselessly pushed up the mountain and rolling back down, never to rest, is the search for meaning, for Stirner it is the ever-ceaseless project of creation undertaken by the creative nothing never to rest and have its creations become fixed ideas. In this regard, Stirner is more in-line with the absurdism of Camus than the existentialism of Sartre and de Beauvoir, as he denies that we can ever define ourselves and create meaning. Instead, we are forever stuck in the Sisyphean position of concerning ourselves for ourselves, of perpetuating our own creative nothingness.

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Stirner Seminar Essay 1

Igal Sterin

How do we define concepts? Who is responsible for coming up with ideas and who for implementing them? Who has power over whom? Why, where does this power come from? These seem like questions that one can ponder for a long time, but by the very act of pondering one has answered the question. The end all and be all of everything is Me, I, the Ego, Ownness. Yet what does this mean? How do we define Ownness, oneself, the ego? Is it the idea of you in terms of others, how you relate to them, why you relate to them. Is it what you own, who you consort with, why you consort with them, where you live, who you defer to? Ownness is a concept introduced by Max Stirner in his attack and subsequent redefining of every major form of social fabric seen since the Egyptians, The Ego and Its Own. Basically, Stirner thinks every society and system of belief holds one prisoner, and the only way to escape is by becoming the egoist, an embodiment of selfishness, doing everything to satisfy oneself. All interactions are based on this idea. Stirner first dissects each system of belief, from monarchy, religion, liberalism, democracy and even the family, showing how each pretends to offer freedom in ways while actually throwing one into a prison. This deconstruction of all other systems is worth a deeper investigation

Stirner proposes a view of oneself as supreme, the ultimate power: "The divine is God's concern; the human, man's. My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is *mine*, and it is not a general one, but is—*unique*, as I am unique." (page 6). Stirner sees this concern as a never-ending struggle against every force one encounters. Because one cares for only oneself and "comes into constant collision with other things, the *combat* of self-assertion is unavoidable." Each new entity is a starting point of a fight for that which is one's, and that which one does for himself. Every system set in place causes one to subjugate one's true self to an higher power. One can say all sacrifice themselves and thus all are free. Stirner counters with polemic, for the Sultan or monarch loves his people, and strives unselfishly to help them. Although, "show yourself not as his (the Sultan's), but as your own; for breaking away from his egoism you will take a trip to jail. The Sultan has set his cause on nothing but himself; he is to himself all in all, he is to himself the only one, and tolerates nobody who would dare not to be one of "his people."

If one does not do as one wishes, Stirner asserts they are a fool, and pities them (55). Even those who live in a "free" society, a democracy or republic, are slaves to Ideals. Many do not assert themselves instead being caught in Ideals. Ideals hold one prisoner. Every system of beliefs, of Ideals, seeks to subjugate people to the will the Higher, ideals held up as undeniable truth. It starts with morality: why is one moral? Is one moral for oneself, or moral for an ideal? Morality for what reason is the true question. Why does one not murder? It is wrong one says. But what defines right and wrong. This is the most interesting part of Stirner's philosophy: the nullification of morality. Right and wrong are defined by the society one is in. It is right to believe in God and blasphemy is immoral and wrong. It is wrong to believe in God, Science and philosophy and rational thought rule. There is only one way to view the world, and it is through a moral framework. One must only think in this way, one must always obey father, one has a duty to the fatherland, to this to that. One has an inborn duty, a moral obligation to ones family for bringing them into the world, and all life is sacred. All of these ideas are anathema to Stirner. One is not obliged to do anything one does not want. And thus springs the central

dichotomy of the egoist and those in the system. There is only the law – abiding citizen, the moral man, the good father, the good citizen, the dutiful worshiper and the other, the criminal, the unman. This is the essential truth of Stirner, the ironic central truth. One in the system owes everything to the system. If the system falls, if the power of the state fails, if the monarch is corrupted or desposed, if the church withholds salvation, one is ruined. One's fate is ultimately tied with this Ideal, this system, this thing that consumes all effort and bounds one's life to it, creating slaves of the machine. When one asserts oneself, one breaks these unwritten codes and escapes from the bounds of the system. One does things for oneself, for one's own power. No longer is the sacred overpowering in one's life. No longer does one think how this will affect others, because others are there for one. One is not obliged because one is separate, alone and most high. One is not bound to family, to God or other religious feelings, to the state, or even to a way of thinking. All is open for thought. One concerns oneself with feeling, the pure state of enjoyment, of power, of property. One is freed from the prison. This is egoism. Morality chains one to the ideal man, the essence of man as one should be, as one acts, as one relates, as one is forced to justify each action in terms of ideals and is not free to revel in the sensual, the obscene, the bizarre as one wishes. Religion shames one into behaving to an Ideal set by a God, the ultimate egoist who asks all to behave like him, worship him and praise him, all for his benefit, because he wants to. The state imprisons people, tying their livelihood to the states, imposing moral will, and taking possessions. Society imposes duty for what it gives one, and all work together for we all have a duty to one another. And those in the oppressed positions look at all this and "think they found the fault in society, and make it their task to discover the right society. This is only the old phenomenon - that one looks for the fault first in everything but himself, and consequently in the state, in the self-seeking of the rich, and so on, which yet have precisely our fault to thank for their existence" (Ego 155).

The point is it is up to oneself to free oneself. It is not the fault of the system, it is that one has subjugated oneself to it, accepted its rules as the ones that guide one's behavior, accepted the normalizing influence of society instead of allowing experience, thought and acknowledging of one's own desires to let one's life flow into selfish happiness and egoism. This possession of oneself is continually in jeopardy, and one must constantly refresh one's thoughts, never allowing an idea to rule one. It is this constant refreshment, this constant acknowledgment of oneself, and one's own enjoyment and possession as paramount that is the basis of Stirner's world view. It defines how he views relationships, and how he views social contracts. This possession of oneself is enforced through might. That is the next step of Stirner. One protects oneself and asserts oneself, as one is always in constant combat. One takes what one can, and protects it with their might. One associates with others because it is pleasing to one, and by associating with others, claims them as ones, as they claim one as theirs. Yet both parties are happy, and mutually agree to be there. It is this agreement, and the ability to leave and protect oneself that allow interactions. Each person acknowledges the other person is an egoist, striving for the best for them, and that said person will use one however the person can to their advantage, just as one would use them to one's advantage. This reciprocity leads to the social vision Stirner has. Without morality, one assumes things would fall apart, but instead of violence being held as a monopoly of the state, it becomes the business of each individual to assert oneself as an individual. Just because an individual has might does not mean they are owed deference. Nobody, no thing, no Ideal is ever owed deference. Only oneself is the most high, and oneness is a description of that knowledge. Each individual's might stops them from being oppressed, and the weak are not looked upon with pity in Stirner's viewpoint. The reciprocity allows for a binding of egoists, a union set about with a common goal, more power. Thus the weak band together, and the threat, the might has to be respected. One cannot simply rule over them or subjugate a union of people to one's will, for each of them is subject only to their own will, and work together only for the benefit of them.

It seems callous, but the greatest part of this philosophy is the allowance for humanity, whatever that means in the general sense. In the practical sense, this philosophy abolishes the idea of earning, of slacking, of the duty to work. It makes me happy to keep the elderly alive, it makes me happy to feed

the poor without the feeling of guilt that society implies in feeding and helping those who do not contribute. It abolishes necessity, and allows one's own happiness, one's own thoughts and awareness to influence how the world works. Why not have those who are parasites, is there not enough plenty in the world? It makes me happy to help them, and it makes me happy to work for my ends. It makes the union of similar egoistic people I have joined happy to heal the sick, care for the maimed, and drink tons of alcohol. We provide a service that others are welcome to share in, and we protect ourselves with might, as the other service providers do. The idea of self-protection, or of protection of a willfully joined union allows for respect among equals, instead of a Me have Big Gun thought process. All can help one another, but no one is obligated to. No one is obligated to stop murderers, but if they are not, we do not feel safe. No one is obligated to stop theft, but I want my stuff to stay with me. And no one is obligated to stay in the union, no one is an un-man for leaving. One is free to do as one pleases, and associate with who one pleases, and if it displeases another, so be it, it is their prerogative to do something about it, not the communities. It is my choice to steal, beg, cajole, help, lie to, betray, stay loyal to, and I answer only to myself in terms of morality. If my choices affect others, it is their choice, their egoistic prerogative to do something about it or do nothing about it. The personal freedom comes from the lack of obligation, no duty, no country, no essential bonding to a family unit unless one chooses to. It lacks the central defined authority, but it is a sweet philosophy, because, knowing myself, I realize I no longer want to write this essay and can leave it mid....



A Lesson in Writing Philosophy Books:
Max Stirner's The Ego and Its Own

Anonymous

In this paper I will offer criticism of Max Stirner's magnum opus, The Ego and Its Own. Were I to write this paper in the same style as Stirner, I would find a point or two against him. I would then write these points on a bat, find a dead horse and proceed to go to town. Throughout this paper I will not only point out flaws in Stirner's method but also in what, if we are generous, appear to be his arguments. I believe it is more correct to call them pseudo-arguments. Stirner makes far too many assumptions, asserts them as fact and proceeds to repeat them for three hundred and twenty odd pages. His book is also plagued by contradictions. I will argue that Stirner's arguments deconstruct themselves. His extremely skeptical view forces him into a form of solipsism in which he cannot make proper judgements about others. Stirner would have been better off separating his existential claims of individualism from his political views. He makes some interesting points but they are twisted and lost in his ranting and raving. Other philosophers were able to deliver Stirner's points in a more fluid and argumentative manner.

The book delivers the main point, to be repeated ad nauseam, in the first chapter discussing the human life. For Stirner there are three stages to human development: childhood, youth and old age. These stages correspond to materialism, idealism/spiritualism and egotism, respectively. The child sets out to understand the world. They examine the world in hopes of uncovering the mystery that surrounds them, in hopes of feeling safe. Eventually, the child encounters reason and looks to ideals and thought. This is Stirner's second phase. The last stage is when the person places himself or herself in the foreground. One sees that they are the creator and created. They shun external ideals and empty concepts. Interestingly though, one who has dealt with children can attest to their levels of selfishness, lack of ideals and that they live in the moment without projecting forward. These are all things, which Stirner later attributes to the Egoist and the proper way of living. I digress...

Stirner will use this trichotomy multiple times with slight alterations. Sometimes, a category

may be split in two, such as the caucasian which contains two stages: a replacement of the spiritual and a dissolution of the spiritual. Later on the categories will be the ancients, the moderns and the egoists to come after, or the negroids, the mongoloids and the caucasians. We see a similar pattern in religion and state. The egoist is seen as the end. A superior way of living than the other modes which are said to enslave people and restrict their power.

This analysis of human life or the history of human civilization is very narrow. It is reminiscent of Marx and Engels view of history presented in the Communist Manifesto. It is far too simplistic to boil history down to limited categories. The claims that the end point is communism or egotism, not only come out of left field, but also do so to resolve an imaginary problem created by a narrow interpretation of human life. Could one not claim that history is simply the evolution of fashion, that humans had been best off when they were naked? It sounds ridiculous but someone could easily describe the history of man in such a way.

One may attempt to defend Stirner, claiming that this analysis of human life and history cannot be taken so seriously. It is meant only to show the enslavement of people to sacred ideals. The analysis wishes to show that egotism can break us free of these illusory binds to individual power. Nowhere, does Stirner attempt fully demonstrate why the egoist is better off than the religious human or the statesman. We are told that might equals right and that acting entirely out of one's own will is superior to given up some of one's power of will. These claims are not defended! They are asserted and nowhere does Stirner fully flesh out how life will be after the rise of the Egoist and the unions of egoists. So what is the history of man? The history of races, of nations, of classes, etc. or is it the history of all those things which fall under man? In the beauty of a truism, the history of man is the history of man... anything else, say the history of class struggles, materialism, religion are subsections.

Of course, Stirner would claim that the history of man, and man itself are spooks, empty ideals. It is difficult to argue against Stirner on this point since he doesn't give much defense of the claim. Ideals are said to be empty because they do not refer to things in the real world. I see beauty everywhere I go, I see happiness, I see love, etc. Stirner says that if these do not come from myself then they are empty. Why is it that I alone can fill this ideal? Why is it that we humans tend to have similar concepts? When one sees the way a man lovingly looks at his wife, we could never mistake this look of love for a look of hatred. Any time people communicate about these so-called spooks, they refer to something outside of them. If all we had were our own personal truths, we would all talk around each other, never truly communicating. Stirner acknowledges that religion and state do exist. They are created by people and given power by people. Why then do the ideals that the people create not have power, why are they empty Stirner? You say that they are unattainable, but people see beauty, fall in love, act virtuously, etc. Your egoists, with their own truths, are the outliers, not the exemplars. One cannot disprove the existence of an external objective truth, thus Stirner simply states it.

I wish to examine the issue of communication of the Unique Egoist. In an essay by Martin Buber, he examines Kierkegaard's 'Single One' and discusses its similarities to Stirner's views of the egoist or 'Unique One'. Buber states "Kierkegaard has ceased to have common speech with men" (Buber, 77) and the "highest form of egoism is letting the earthly fall aside (Buber, 78). Stirner claims that the Egoist is still attached to the world, yet I believe he is no different than Kierkegaard's Single One. Stirner addresses a similar criticism in "Stirner's Critics". His main line of defense is to claim that his critics have misunderstood him. However, he misunderstands Feuerbach's criticism of isolation (Stirner's Critics, 33). The Egoist needs not isolate itself from society in a physical sense. It isolates itself because as Stirner states truth should come from the Egoists, not from an external source. Stirner says that truth must be your property, it is for you to do what you please; it must become 'your truth' ("Ego and Its Own, 312). If we do not accept external truths or ideals and we make everything our own, a danger arises.

One can easily fall into pure subjectivity. Stirner walks the thin line of solipsism and falls over it. This is supported by the claim that "to [Stirner] you are only what you are for me - namely, my

object; and, because my object, therefore my property."(*Ego and Its Own*,125). If Stirner is creating his own truths, and ideals, and sees others as property an objects, rather than people, having done away with ideas like man, then it is through him that everything exists. However, if these personal truths overlap with others personal truths, is it a coincidence or is it due to something external?

Stirner is a solipsist and therefore does isolate himself. He cannot communicate with people, there are none; there are only objects at his disposal. He is not isolated from society in a physical sense as he interprets Feuerbach's criticism. He is of course, surrounded by people. The difference is that for him they are not people and for him their ideas are not his and therefore empty. This is why Stirner must create a unique one, which is not human.

He failed to prove humanity was an empty ideal. As he himself states, that things have power if humans give them power, then as long as people allow themselves to be human beings, then the ideal of human beings exist since it has power over people. The ideal is not empty; it is a container for power. This of course contradicts the non-existence of ideals but what more could we expect from Stirner. How can Stirner even legitimately criticize others and their ideals? Since he is stuck in his own subjectivity, he is left only able to say there is no objectivity **for me**, those ideals discussed by these people... I mean my properties are empty ideals **for me**.

I picture Stirner as a man on a soapbox shouting about his uniqueness, that everyone else is a herd. As I watch him scream and yell, I can't help but think of how he looks like a different man who was here last week screaming about the same thing, with the same haircut... You see if Stirner traps himself in his subjectivity, then he is the only one who sees his uniqueness. He claims that uniqueness is an empty placeholder meant to describe an experience, yet he is the only one that experiences his uniqueness. This may satisfy the solipsist, but for human beings it isn't until others recognize us as unique that we truly are. Interestingly, as noted by Jean-Michel Rabaté, since the unique ego is empty, and yet everything and nothing, pure phenomena, it does not rest on anything discussable. It is unassailable position. (Rabaté, 228). This once again leads us to the point that Stirner has not offered us arguments, only assertions. His claim becomes religious in a sense. Like a person who claims god is everything or everything is one, Stirner has claimed the unique ego is everything while being nothing. Both these claims must come from experience, yet Stirner can judge religion as providing empty ideals. Do people turn to religion due to personal experiences or vice versa?

Had Stirner simply warned people of the dangers of conformity, he would have been making a solid point. The danger is the extreme to which he takes the point. For Stirner, to be an individual is to be an egoist. Any external compulsion means the person has lost some power and is therefore not fully exercising their will. Any unselfishness, if Stirner truly allows it to exist, is meant to be a lack of individualism. On page 38 of the *Ego and Its Own*, Stirner discusses the Involuntary Egoist. This is a person who believes they act for a sacred ideal but in actuality acts for themselves. This is not a falsifiable position if anyone but the person itself claims to be one. Does this not cause a logical fallacy for Stirner? If the person thinks they act for the ideal than no one externally has access to their truth. The person must be conscious, either they act for themselves or they act for the ideal. The involuntary egoist then can only exist in speech, but as discussed, speech between egoists is empty.

On page 58, Stirner discusses the unselfish. Anyone who acts for a sacred ideal, anything outside of himself or herself is not an individual and is weaker than the egoist. Near the end of the text he states " unconsciously and involuntarily we all strive towards ownness ". This would make it seem that he is discounting the possibility of unselfishness. Deep down we strive towards egoism; if this is his claim, then it is not falsifiable and thus a waste of my time. This again leads us against an undefended claim. Why is the life lived for oneself superior to the life lived for a sacred ideal? How can one judge whether the person who has lived their life for humanity was inferior to the one who lived their life for their own enjoyment? Once again I find myself wondering why the external cannot be superior. Man sent itself into space. Man harnessed the power of the atom. Man cures disease. If everything boils down to power for Stirner, how has he failed to see the power of the group? By giving

up some power, the person becomes a part of something more powerful. Stirner claims it is better to have a little which is all yours than a lot, which is shared. I'm begging you Stirner, tell me why! He says that "It is possible that I can make very little out of myself; but this little is everything, and it is better than what I allow to be made out of me by the might of others, by training of custom, religion, the laws, the state." (Ego and Its Own, 163). This is only backed up by reiteration of the claim that the individual acting egoistically is superior. In other words, we have a circular argument.

It is so difficult to argue against a person who does not argue but merely asserts. Stirner tries to pull you down to his level. Before looking at implications I just want to point out a few contradictions Stirner makes. I do this not only to show the weakness of his position but also to share my frustration of reading this book. This also segues into the discussion of the implications of his view.

Stirner discusses that rights are typically justified by 'empty' ideals. He says "Others cannot give us right, they cannot mete out right. He who has might, has right." (Ego and Its Own, 172). It seems to me that others can give and take rights then. One who is powerful can do as they please, they can give you the right to use their property and then they can take it away. You may claim as an egoist you do not recognize this right, but that does not stop them from acting.

Later on 316, Stirner gives us this hilarious line that he will not let someone take his property without his permission, but then acknowledges that someone stronger can beat him. Well Stirner, looks like they don't need your permissions afterall, eh?

Saul Newman has an interesting point in his essay 'Spectres of Stirner'. He says that: "The state's power is really based on our power. It is only because the individual has not recognized this power, because he humbles himself before authority, that the state continues to exist." (Newman, 16) This is his interpretation of the Ego and Its Own page 252. How does this connect to the two quotes demonstrating Stirner's contradictions? I argue that the state is not formed on the ignorance of the individuals who make it and give it power, though some may be ignorant of their place in the state. The weak create the state to increase their power by combining it. Stirner says that "against egoists, human society is wrecked" (Ego and Its Own, 160) and "every people, every state is unjust towards the egoist" (Ego and Its Own, 192). Stirner assumes people do not want societies and states; that they are ignorant of the power they give up. These people destroy the egoists because the egoist wishes to destroy that which protects them.

An interesting question must be asked, why would an egoist call for others to become egoists? Why has Stirner written this book, why does he care? It is because he is weak! He has stepped above seen for himself the absurdity of humanity and its ideals, has embraced egotism and has claimed the mighty may take what they want. Stirner is the fat, selfish child who cries when he cannot get his way while playing with other children, the child who is too slow to win the race but still wants the prize. The state is mightier than Stirner. Egoists exist in our world. There are rich businessmen, criminals, corrupt politicians, etc. These people do not let laws or ideals hinder their own self-enjoyment. Why then does Stirner complain? It is because he is too weak to overcome the states rules! Why has Stirner written this book? Surely it must be out of self-interest. If, somehow he could dissolve the state, then he has dissolved his mightiest opponent.

Stirner brings up the union of egoists, but he never goes into much detail. In many other political philosophy books we have hundreds and hundreds of pages arguing for forms of government and against others. Stirner feels he can do limit his political discussions to his one little point that selfishness wins out. This selfishness would mean no states, but what is a union of egoists? How do they communicate? How does one trust people knowing that they are all using you as an object? Can Stirner deal with a Nozickean thought experiment, which demonstrates that even an anarchist society will eventually move towards a libertarian society with a minimal state? How can an anarchist trust that people will not use them unfairly? What insures delivery of goods? Protection from robbery and killing? A person cannot protect their family twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. If someone wrongs you, how is the dispute resolved? Proponents of Anarchism argue that humans aren't

all bad. They aren't all good either. And if you follow Stirner's path can you even make such claims about other people? If egoists fall upon hard times, nothing stops them from taking what they want from others, if this occurs, there will be blood. The weak will always wish for protection from this type of outcome. They will once again band together and once again create rules so that they can live together. As soon as this happens, the state reappears.

The egoists has tried to convince you to be selfish, to abolish the state. Why would an egoist ever wish to convince you of anything other than because it is in its best interest. Stirner makes a good point that people should be aware of where ideas come from, yet he cannot show that an external idea is a lesser idea, he believes as soon as the idea is appropriated by you it is yours, but one can never make another's idea theirs. Others have made similar points about individualism, yet they delivered the ideas in a better manner. Kierkegaard investigated the paradox of individualism or a disconnect from the crowd. He never went so far as to claim one should always be disconnected or that individualism leads to the dissolution of a state. Nietzsche discussed an ubermensch, a person beyond human beings, yet he recognized that this ubermensch was formed by society and education and required communication with others. Sartre saw the issues of a divided consciousness but took it as a human essence. Stirner rejected human essence without realizing that there are things we have in common. One cannot point to an outlier to claim a rule does not exist. Humanity needs outliers just as much as it needs a herd. I leave you aspiring philosophers with these final words: do not follow Stirner's lead, nor mine.

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A Collection of Thoughts and Comments on Max Stirner and Karl Marx: More Asserted than Argued, A Hobbled Phoenix Rising Gingerly from the Ashes of Electronic Calamity

Dustin Harrison

"I am bored. I am bored. I'm bored, I'm bored! I'M bored. I'm boooooored. I'm boooooored. Why don't you answer meee?"

*"Because 'I'm bored' is a useless thing to say. I mean, you live in a great, big, VAST, world that you've seen **none** percent of. And, even the inside of your own mind is endless. It goes on forever, inwardly, do you understand? Being, the fact that you're alive is AMAZING. So **you don't get to be bored.**"*

- Louis C.K., *Louie*, S02E05, "Country Drive", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLxeYDl0H6Q>

No more keyboard. No more mouse. And then, finally, no more monitor. This is what happened to me when I sat down to finish my already-several-days-overdue essay. I tried all the immediate trouble-shooting and cord-jiggling solutions I could think of, but still nothing. I've constructed a Frankenputer out of my netbook and the peripherals so that I may still work, but all the work I had done so far is on the hard drive of the desktop, which I cannot access. So, I must begin anew. Back at square one. With a blank slate and a word-count of zero.

What's more, I've come to realize that the growing malaise I've been experiencing over the last two weeks is probably more than just the regular antipathy toward scholastics that comes about at the end of every school-year when you're burnt out, running on empty, and would rather be anywhere but a classroom. Maybe I'm sick, maybe I'm low in iron and vitamin B12 again, maybe it's the onset of another bout of stress, anxiety and depression, or maybe I'm just weak and lazy, looking for an out, but in denial about doing so. Whatever it is, I've gone from losing a few productive work-hours here and there to losing almost entire days.

The upshot of all this for you, dear reader, is that I'm not going to do what I had originally intended to for this paper. I promise you it was a serious academic and intellectual effort, but at this point I just don't have it in me to try and replicate what I had written so far and finish it off. And trying to do so would take far too much time. Like I said, 'already-several-days-overdue'. Instead, I am just going to have to sputter out a couple thousand words of whatever sort of relevant content I can manage. Just a collection of scattered thoughts and comments that relate to what we have been reading and discussing and is kind of, sort of, what I was going to write originally; except, ya know, it was to be worded properly with legitimate citations and the like. I apologize in advance for giving you short shrift and something somewhat mediocre instead of a real proper effort, but it is what it is.

First, let me at least try to briefly recapitulate what I had been working toward in my failed first effort. In essence my paper was going to be a compare-and-contrast between Max Stirner and Karl Marx. In particular, I was looking to analyze and understand the views of the two on the 'self' and its relation to/interaction with the 'not-self', hopefully elucidating just what their disagreement is and why Marx's loathing for 'Saint Max' runneth over in the sections of *The German Ideology* we read. Beyond that, I was going to argue that both Stirner and Marx make important contributions toward our understanding of the 'self', and that we ought to co-opt and combine these contributions into a more general understanding of the 'self' as 'agent'.

My statement of Stirner's view of the 'self' and 'not-self' was largely derivative of the work I had done in my first essay, and a rough-hewn version of it is as follows. The view of the 'self' Stirner develops in *Art and Religion* and *The Ego and Its Own* is that of the 'self' as a unique 'creative nothing'. Not literally the creator of all things, this creative nothing is instead the creator of the notions, values, or meanings of all things. Stirner readily admits of the independent existence of a realm of objects outside this 'self', as this is where life's combat of self-assertion comes from. That is, Stirner admits of a separately existing 'not-self', which the 'self' as creative nothing operates on by way of self-assertion and the creation of meaning. And as we recall, Stirner is vehemently against letting any of these 'creatures' of ours become 'fixed ideas', to which we bow down before in adoration and self-sacrifice. Also wrapped up in this rejection of fixed ideas is Stirner's notion of 'self-enjoyment'. Although Stirner at points seems to indicate that enjoyment for the creative nothing is some manner of preference hedonism (that enjoyment is derived from doing whatever one likes best), I found this notion a bit problematic and vacuous (Does enjoyment follow preference, or does preference follow enjoyment? If enjoyment is whatever one likes best, why can't one like 'fixed ideas' best?). Instead, I read enjoyment for the creative nothing as a kind of acknowledgement and fulfilment of its status as the creative nothing, which I think explains the emphasis Stirner puts on only concerning oneself with one's 'uniqueness', expanding one's 'ownness' and 'property' to their fullest extent, etc., and just exactly what is so bad about fixed ideas. I concern myself – as the creative nothing, for myself – my creative nothingness. To not do so, to concern myself with any sort of 'fixed idea' instead, amounts to a denial of

self and what one fundamentally is (a creative nothing). Basically, I take Stirner to be relying on some manner of notion where what's good (enjoyment) for the creative nothing is being a 'good' creative nothing, and what's bad for the creative nothing is being a 'bad' creative nothing (following fixed ideas).

Karl Marx wrote *a lot*. His body of work encompasses thousands of pages in roughly twenty works over the course of about fifty years. And going back and re-reading some of my Marx after having read Stirner I was surprised at just how much the two have in common. For this paper I was half-tempted to just write two- or three-thousand words on "Things That Marx Said That Stirner Said Also". Anyway, the point is that there is a lot of Marx that could be brought into this discussion, but certainly not enough wordspace or time for it all. Instead, I'll only try to give my rough-and-dirty version of some fundamental thoughts in Marx that I take to be relevant for reading Stirner and the third chapter of *The German Ideology*. And since we've already read part of *The German Ideology*, maybe the best point of entry for understanding Marx's view of the 'self' and 'not-self' is to come at it from a different part of that same work:

[Human beings] begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence[human beings] are indirectly producing their actual material life.

The way in which [human beings] produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.

This production only makes its appearance with the increase of population. In its turn this presupposes the intercourse [Verkehr] of individuals with one another. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production.³⁸

The point for Marx is that we are corporeal beings that are materially conditioned, and since we have the ability to consciously alter those very material conditions, we have the ability to alter what it means to be human to a large extent. But, in a nice snake-eating-its-own-tail sort of situation, our ability to alter those material conditions is *itself* conditioned by the material conditions we find ourselves in. Huh? What? Marx spent years developing this idea of human nature, both before and after *The German Ideology*, and I'm in no way an expert on it all, but I'll try to unpack it a little bit and give my take on it in terms of understanding the 'self' and 'not-self'.

For Marx, the 'self' is a natural being existing in a natural world, with certain natural needs, desires, drives, powers, etc. For example, we need to eat, hydrate, breathe, etc. But since satisfying these needs does not come from within us, but from interaction with the external, material world (eating food, drinking water, breathing air), to a large extent the 'self' is bound up and dependent on this external, material world, the 'not-self'. Another way Marx thinks of this is to say that nature is the 'inorganic body' of a person, since one's existence involves the use of materials from nature outside of one's 'organic' body. Of all these different drives and capacities of a human being, the most important to Marx is that of being a 'creative labourer'. The idea here is that whereas other animals simply interact with the external, material world to meet the immediate needs of their own existence, human beings go beyond this. Beyond working up the world to procure food to eat, water to drink, etc., human beings alter and work up the external material world in ways that have nothing to do with bare, physical

survival. And what's more, we have some choice in how we go about working up this world; we are free to a certain extent in this creative labouring.

So we are dependent on nature for our 'means of subsistence' both in the sense of needing it to provide us with food, water, etc., and also in the sense that it is the object of our 'life activity', our being 'creative labourers'. But since we can alter and work up the world how we see fit, we get to alter our very own means of subsistence, our 'species-being'. The 'self' is constituted by the 'not-self', which is in-turn constituted by the 'self', which is in-turn constituted by the 'not-self', which is in-turn . . . – you get the picture; the interaction between the 'self' and the 'not-self' we're getting from Marx is similar to that of a snake eating its own tail. The social aspect of Marx's thought comes from the fact that when we work up the world we not only affect the means of subsistence for ourselves, but for each other as well, and so there is a necessary intercourse between us in doing so. The communism and Marxist ideology that follows from this is motivated by the concern that a ruling elite controlling the means of subsistence alienates/estranges us all from our status as creative labourers, and so aims to bring about the conditions that will allow us to flourish as truly free creative labourers.

So then, there are many similarities between the two accounts of Stirner and Marx on the 'self' and 'not-self'. They both believe in there being such a distinction as 'self' and 'not-self', and that the 'self' as 'subject' works and operates on the 'not-self' as 'object'. For Stirner, this is the 'self' as creative nothing, for Marx, the 'self' as creative labourer. In both cases, they take strong normative stances that the 'self' should be enabled and empowered to the fullest extent possible in its operating on the 'notself', and are vehemently opposed to what they see getting in the way of this. For Stirner, this means getting rid of 'fixed ideas' and having the creative nothing be concerned only with its own creative nothingness. For Marx, this means getting rid of power structures, such as capitalism, that alienate the creative labourer from its labour. Similar to Stirner, for Marx what is good for the creative labourer is being a 'good' (free) creative labourer, and what is bad for the creative labourer is being a 'bad' (alienated/estranged) creative labourer. They both reject a static, universal and unchanging understanding of 'human nature' as not fully expressing all that we are. As Stirner clarifies and expands in *Stirner's Critics*, the concept 'human nature' can never fully express one's 'uniqueness'. For Marx, a static 'human nature' ignores our capacities to work up our own means of subsistence and affect our 'species-being'. The end goal or picture of society even looks similar between the two of them. Although Marx does think a period of 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is required, he thinks that ultimately politics and the state will 'wither away' in favour of a free, classless society of creative labourers. Stirner's egoistic future and union of egoists is essentially that of a free, classless society of creative nothings.

So then why does Marx foam at the mouth toward 'Saint Max' so fervently in *The German Ideology*? It comes down to Marx's critique of Stirner (and the rest of the 'German philosophers' following Hegel) as making a fundamental mistake in understanding how the 'self' interacts with the 'not-self'. To Marx, the post-Hegel 'German ideology' is to view the 'not-self' as 'object' in exclusively, or primarily, religious, mental, or ideal terms. That is, they ignore the distinctly material reality of the 'not-self'. For Marx, because the 'self' is a corporeal, material 'subject', the 'object' it operates on *must also* be corporeal and material. And although Stirner does talk about 'ownness', 'power', and 'property' in terms of material things, his focus certainly is on 'fixed ideas' and the role of the creative nothing as 'subject' operating on the values, meanings, and notions of things, that is, on the *ideas* behind the actual material things. Furthermore, in Stirner there is a sense that all that is required for the 'self' as 'creative nothing' to be a free 'subject' is to recognize ourselves as such and abandon all 'fixed ideas'. In Marx's picture mere recognition and self-awareness is not enough; for the 'self' as 'creative labourer' to be a free 'subject' the appropriate material conditions and means of subsistence must also exist to enable the free operation of creative labour.

What to make of all of this. Although it does seem like Stirner and Marx are clashing on something foundational to their views, I think to a certain extent they are focusing on different issues

and so can actually combine and buttress each other. From Stirner's side of things, I do think it is important to recognize our 'uniqueness' and the significance that this has, as well as the extent to which the values, meanings and notions of things are really just our own 'creatures' that we are not bound by. From Marx's side of things, I think it's important to recognize that our 'uniqueness' and ability to come up with the meaning and value of things does not appear out of nowhere, as if it fell out of the sky complete and ready-made. As corporeal beings, I think Marx is right in pointing out that we don't exist in a void, but instead are constituted in-part by our material reality, a material reality we can affect and change, but I don't think any sort of material determinism fully captures our nature as free, creative beings. Ultimately I see the contributions of Marx and Stirner as being mutually compatible portions of the larger overall picture of human beings as self-aware agents. From Marx I think we can take the importance our material reality plays on us, and the significance of our ability to change that material reality. From Stirner, the importance our conceptualization and understanding of things play on us, and the significance of our ability to change those conceptualizations and understandings. *Both* material reality and the 'ideas behind it' constitute us in important ways. But one does not wholly and completely determine and exclude the other, and our capacity to affect and change *both* are significant parts of our agency and important in understanding what it means to be human.

So there you have it, some words about Karl Marx and Max Stirner. Hopefully I was able to get across the gist of what I was going for in my original paper, just what Marx's contention with Stirner in *The German Ideology* is, how they both view the 'self' and 'not-self', and at least a glimmer or hint of how the two can be reconciled toward a deeper understanding of human beings as 'agents' more generally. Thanks for reading, have a great summer!

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I'm not saying shit about humyn nature, I swear

Anonymous

Free, free will. How will I shape my fate today? Every step you take is creating destiny
30,000 numbers. 2,000 words. Whats it say? It says the truth.

The annihilation of space by time. Time by space. Time, sponsored by Oakridge Mall. Tick-tock,
thanks so much.

i'm walking in the in between, in the what could be's and the what once was'. the path of nothingness
tends to everything when you're in it. it is a passing moment and it is The Moment. without it there
would be no nothing. i don't know what love is. but some moments i maybe feel it and its bigger than
my mom or family or my friends, and its bigger than me, because its bigger than time. and space.
Which I don't know and I can't see a thing

Like Max Stirner, Valerie Solanas takes the dominant idea, that of male oppression, and turns it
around. Stirner's project seems much more universalizing as it is strictly on a mental, personal level
that he approaches us. He tackles the entire concept of holding ANY idea hierarchically above all
others, so much that it is its own ontology, a "fixed idea." Solanas' Manifesto was refreshing as it
inverted and spoke to the power of the ontology/ideology/fixed idea of being a "woman" has on me, if
not millions of womyn as well. Violence is taken for granted in language and representations of
womyn, and shame is an encouraged feeling. In Stirner's Germany, the idea of denouncing religiously
held fixed ideas (which I would further argue are ideologies systematically propagated to induce self-
disempowerment) seems as taboo as anarchy still is today. His ultimate conclusion is basically to
remember your true self in a society that benefits from you forgetting.

Solanas, however, offers a concrete hard-lined solution conclusion. Her idea of a 'SCUM army'

set-up is vaguely similar to the much less extrapolation “union of egoists.” Solanas is arguing against a very specific fixed idea and does not go after others and sometimes even invokes other fixed ideas to get her point across (ie. By maintaining the human-animal/nature distinction where humans are superior). Stirner may make a similar argument to one I would make, which is that she does not destroy the binary but reinforces it from the opposing direction. It's the same can with another label. This literal perception of her work is not one I feel obliged to take, however. If I take her argument as an argument against a more broader hegemony of patriarchal imperialist capitalism-- instead of simply a humyn creature with male genitalia-- than she has done a swell job of naming fixed idea. As far as a solution', she invokes some ideological incarnation of Stirner's 'union of egoists', namely, SCUM.

Stirner does not get much into interactions with others, however. His mention of any sort of non-competitive interaction between people (that could be likened at all to solanas' flowery vision of a society of free, creative womyn) is in his basic point that everybody is a unique individual relating to other unique individuals, and by being a unique individual you can gain pleasure from other individuals whose 'uniqueness' you enjoy. According to me, this is where Stirner's point outdoes Solanas' because Solanas' clearly hypocritically holds to the same ideas which oppression for ANY group comes from. I understand Stirner and his main point to be that people as people, being themselves, have more to offer themselves and others by eradicating any fixed idea and relating as individuals (which Solanas' agrees with, but in the context of the fixed idea that womyn are hierarchically above men).

If Solanas' conception of male to more generally as damaging *masculinist and patriarchal ideologies*, and SCUM as a way of thought from the bottom-up, she has extremely valid and often insightful comments. Stirner's view, while his tendency to ignore his positioning is problematic sometimes, is also more open to all people because it is about fixed ideas which ANY individual person may take up and wrap themselves in. In sympathy with Solanas' argument on this point, I do think Stirner almost misses the mark by deeming his context irrelevant simply but leaving it invisible in his work. The issues which come from holding fixed ideas (which can include worldviews/ontologies and hegemonies) are institutional and societal, and therefore the responsibility to break them lies on more than a single individual. I am skeptical of that idea because it seem to jive too easily with neoliberal sense of competition and capitalistic, colonialist individualism.

In the '90s, for example, Bill Clinton used the arguments of “individual responsibility” to end welfare and call it workfare, making sure poor people could only get money if they worked in mostly low -wage service sector jobs which benefit the elite. I believe Stirner would argue against this idea of “responsibility” because it's an example of an institution being egoistic (i.e. trying to place responsibility elsewhere) while doling out spooks for individuals to accept and to live up to . . . all the while without realizing that it is a fixed idea that comes from without and has nothing to do with one's *own* will. This sort of 'individual responsibility' is also contained within the larger fixed idea of the capitalist economy itself. However, by not taking up self-reflexiveness in approaching his own ideas, it seems like he takes for granted the ontology he speaks from, that it is completely his own. But the individualism and arguments of power and assertion throughout the book, while valid in some respects, reek of an industrial capitalist society. That is, he is speaking in the context of 'industrial capitalism,' without ever acknowledging this, bound to leave the reader(or maybe just me) with the feeling that his *own* ideas are okay being permeated by this fixed conception of individualism. Or perhaps I myself am letting the fixed idea of 'Stirner era Germany' permeate and pervert his unique ideas. I am wont to say we're both right, however, and it fits this stupid idea of individualist, capitalistic competitiveness that we would be agreeing upon something but still arguing against each other. The main issue, maybe Stirner but probably not Solanas would agree upon, is that fixed ideas (like individualistic capitalism) separate people from each other, from nature, and at the core: from their own unique personal power. The problem is that individuals in the 'oppressor' category often accept their societally given role as 'oppressor', because they are being more conformist than critically self-reflexive. I'll give an extreme example from the internet. A woman, Lauren Nelson, wrote a blog on what rape culture was and gave

numerous examples from news reports, twitter, and other sources. Some made comments about “false accusations” being a significant counter to her argument that rape culture existed. In response, she posted this:

“All this means that people who tout false rape accusations as a critical element of establishing balance in rape culture discussions are equating the suffering of a statistically minuscule portion of the population to a (probably understated) massive population of rape victims.

Guess what? *THAT IS RAPE CULTURE.*

The idea that we must pepper discourse on the suffering of the marginalized by bemoaning comparatively insignificant harms suffered by the group that has historically had a cultural and institutional advantage in the legal system reeks of privilege.”

An example of Stirner and Solanas' agreeing, while arguing from different 'perspectives,' is Stirner's comment that politeness has become an “article of fashion.” Solanas directly addresses this and says it's particularly because of men and their supposed 'lacks' which has caused them to create and espouse this idea. I think they are both backlashing against the same thing: power over. Ideological, societal, normative, institutional: power over. Lack of the richness and unpredictability of creative uniqueness. Solanas' recognition of fixed ideas being inseminated into public consciousness *from* patriarchal authorities is an example of something personal, self reflexive, and non-universalizing tendency. The universalizing tendency is a marker of an oppressor, an oppressive idea, a fixed idea, and it's my one nagging criticism of Stirner, as much as the content of what he's saying is right on. For example, a young middle class white girl trying to speak on behalf of a black community in poverty, in the name of proclaiming their ownness is problematic. But saying nothing is worse. It takes honest and intense critical reflection on society and oneself to be able to break fixed ideas which permeate ontological worldviews. Like Carol Ehrlich, I agree that "Guilt leads to inaction. Only action, to *re-invent* the everyday and make it something else, will change social relations."

Do away with uncreative somethings. Yes, yes. Competition and power exist in human nature but so does cooperation and shared fun. People are wont to live with fixed ideas about nationalism, modernity, race, money, governments, humanity, nature itself. We can write our own histories and fill our lives with our own beautiful illusions instead of the illusion that humyn beings are completely rational and don't have imaginations which attach to 'rational ideas.' People don't have to be antagonistic to live.

People who believe in other spiritualities besides Christianity have often literally been “demonized.” That word even being in my god dang(!?) vocabulary reflects how Christianity is a fixed idea in our society. Witches, pagans, and others within Western countries, and indigenous cosmologies in places that have been colonized are systemically trivialized and falsified, deemed irrational or even childish in our society. Racism and sexism are huge, but not so huge that they make my heart say its ok. The creative nothing is the space and the time. I can feel myself breathing.

When we don't pay attention to the time it takes for trees to grow and for ecosystems to flourish, due to fixed ideas which are attached to capitalist practices like clearcutting forests and trawling marine ecosystems, humyns think that they can dominate ocean life instead of admiring it or feeling close to it. Just because we have might doesn't mean we necessarily have right---this idea has its merits definitely, but it has been fixed in society in a capitalistic, consumeristic and painfully imperialistic way. Fixed ideas separated us from each other and from nature and from ourselves through tools(and ideas) that other humans have devised. Fetishizing things by taking them away from their natural context and into stores--the fixed idea of 'stores'-- erases this real time, effort, and space it took to grow, produce. It is naturalized to be sitting on a shelf or in plastic packaging. Carol Ehrlich writes, “A Situationist analysis ties consumption of economic goods to consumption of *ideological* goods, and

then tells us to create situations (guerrilla actions on many levels) that will break that pattern of socialised acceptance of the world as it is.”

“Women's oppression is part of the over-all oppression of people by a capitalist economy” (Ehrlich) This is like seeing fetishized fruit--erased from the historical context, the people who grew it and the land it came from, the history of its domestication, the fruit's ancestors, invisible. The annihilation of space by time and time by space. i hope the internet doesn't ruin my brain, i hope religion does not ever touch my soul. i hope i don't make anyone feel bad for being themselves. we are all a bunch of individuals, egos, relating to other ones. in that we can feel strong but also humble. the earth has agency. the cat, the plants. and us. everybody or no one at all? it's neither and it's always both.

We've lost all hope and we're walking around as drones, or we're seriously, seriously deluded. That's what an activist from Guatemala said, in effect, about Canadian society, for not being more vocal in advocating justice. An indigenous person, whose ideas the Western world is encouraged to view as more silly than pertinent, was saying that he felt bad for our society for being in this situation. A situation which, societally we as 'citizens' or 'residents' are supposed to accept as 'modern', 'developed', *progressive*. Anyone who digs cooperation is weak. EXTREME COGNITIVE DISSONANCE WHAT SCHOOL TAUGHT ME. The ontology of competition, patriarchal dominant-submissive style of relating, separates and divides people because conquering minds easier this way. Why is conquering a word? I was talking to Adrian about being white once, and he told me that “white is a color, and you're not that.” neither is anyone. There is an alternative to neoliberalism. There are many. Like to keep feeling yourself breathing, crying, laughing, dancing, playing...

there is nothing new 'under the sun' because we are ancient and always have been. everything is new. my ideas are unique and so are yours. add that together and an idea emerges. is it new? has it been said? what does it matter if i live here and now. i am me and i will always be the context, creator, and purveyor. interacting with others of the same humyn stature. You are you and a we is possible with love, but that does not mean without dissent. humyn animals, creatures on earth, the sky is unpredictable and *impossible to know it all*. i'm ancient.

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FURTHER INTEREST

About rape culture, specifically the recent Steubenville case:

<<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/03/201332711439106890.html>>

For a disgusting example of rhetoric in favor of Clinton-esque workfare see here:

<<http://www.economist.com/node/7226120>>

For a critical dissection of the workfare program in the context of intensifying neoliberalism see

“Political Economies of Scale: Fast Policy, Interscalar Relations, and Neoliberal Workfare” (or other works by Jamie Peck)--(have to be on campus/ signed in CWL to access this one)

<<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/stable/4140813>>



Only I Am “Real”, Why Is That So Hard For You To Understand? (Or: A Joke That Undermines Itself by Ruben Tillman)

The following would be offered as a "reading" of Stirner if I were at all confident that my interpretation could be supported by a close reading of Stirner's writing. I'm not, so this isn't a "reading". I always need to 'make like a cow and ruminate', to paraphrase Nietzsche (7); but cows don't have deadlines³⁹. So I'm going to try very hard not to make any claims about Stirner's "real" intentions or the "real" meaning of his works or anything like that. That being said, I think it is very easy to misinterpret Stirner. It is easy, apparently, to characterize *The Ego and Its Own* as a rambling book that expresses one idea over and over again. Furthermore, this one idea appears to be basically the same idea we hear all the time from ... Buddhists⁴⁰ or whoever; that is: "actualize your self", "free your mind" etc. These kinds of ideas, however, usually come with an implicit qualification. So we seem to have in this case, "actualize your self [with Stirner]", "free your mind [with Stirner]" etc. Then it becomes easy to dismiss Stirner as some pseudo-spiritual, proto-new age would-be guru, without anything interesting to say from the point of view of philosophy. I don't necessarily agree that "spirituality" (or even "pseudo-spirituality") is philosophically uninteresting (what assumptions does this make about "philosophy"?), but this happens to be irrelevant for my purposes. My argument is as follows. Stirner may have "just" one idea, and maybe it may be summed up with these words:

I am *owner* of my might, and I am so when I know myself as *unique*. In the *unique one* the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, of which he is born. Every

39 - Except for the date on which the cow is scheduled to be put to death. But as far as I know the cow doesn't know of this "dead"-line in advance.

40 - I want, in saying “Buddhists” and then footnoting that very word, to both appear to paint an entire religion with one brush and appear as though I’m not actually doing that.

higher essence above me, be it God, be it man, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness, and pales only before the sun of this consciousness. If I concern myself for myself, the unique one, then my concern rests on its transitory, mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say:

All things are nothing to me. (*The Ego* 324)

But if the quoted text is a good characterization of Stirner's idea, it should also be more or less obvious that the quoted text is ambiguous, even mystical-seeming. What is this "creative nothing"? What are these "higher essence[s]"? How does "the unique one" "consume himself"? When he says "All things are nothing to me", do we take him literally? What does it mean to take him literally (ie. are literal "things" being denied existence? Does "literal" mean material or not? (Is "material" necessarily opposed to "mental"?)?) I'm going to give my interpretation of Stirner's views on language. I'm going to argue that, if we understand Stirner's language views the way I understand them, Stirner's idea doesn't have to be mystical or mysterious or spiritual or obscure or impossible to verify (in principle) or etc at all. As I understand Stirner, his idea *ought to be* uncontroversial. This "ought" could be a problem; but I don't mean anything more than that in the context in which I find myself I think most people who are more or less like me will find few reasons to reject Stirner's idea⁴¹, at least in principle.

Language

Man, your head is haunted; you have wheels in your head! You imagine great things, and depict to yourself a whole world of gods that has existence for you, a spirit-realm to which you suppose yourself to be called, an ideal that beckons you. You have a fixed idea [*fixe Idee*]! (ibid. 43)

What is this "spirit-realm" of "gods" that "beckons you" as "an ideal"? It is "the realm of essences" (40), says Stirner. Well, what are "essences"? "Behind the existing world [people] sought the 'thing in itself', the essence; behind the *thing* they sought the *un-thing*" (ibid.); which is to say, I think, that "essences" are abstractions from corporeal things. They are ... ideas. Stirner answers, emphatically, that the corporeal world comes first to the question "which came first: the world of ideas or the world of things?". "First", furthermore, in two senses: first in terms of experience. Each individual, at the beginning of their life, finds themselves immediately "tossed about in motley mixture" "with everything else" (13); this is a phenomenological claim (ie. it is in terms of sense-experience through time). The idea is that, in chronological order, first there are material things and then there are ideas. The second sense of "first" is in terms of being, or ontology. The only "real" things, says Stirner, are material things (actually, I think this second, ontological claim isn't so emphatically stated by Stirner: I will need to support my interpretation and I'll do that a little later). So people ("almost the whole world of men" (43)) who take the *thing* for the *un-thing*, who would call the "spirit-realm" the "real" realm, are "veritable fools, fools in a madhouse" (43). They are "possessed" by ideas like "'the good' ... virtue, morality, the law, or some 'principle' or other" (44); and "Possessed [*Besessene*] people are *set* [*versessen*] in their opinions" (ibid.). What is Stirner's claim here, in a word or so? Most people live believing in "some 'principle' or other" that restricts the range of their opinions, even though this "principle" (whatever it is) isn't "real", isn't corporeal, is "a spook".

Now, how does any of this connect to language? Well, the "spirit-realm" of essences is also the realm of concepts. "Concept" is in any case just another word for "essence" in Stirner's sense (someone asks, "what is the essence of humanity?" and is answered with an idea (that is, a concept)). Conceptual thinking is done with words, using language. We're thinking conceptually right now, you and me, writer and reader. We can't *talk* at all, about anything, without language. It seems to me, in light of

41 - "More or less like me" is also problematic. But I don't know what to do with this kind of problem except note it.

these considerations, that it is really a *trivial* claim that 'principles' restrict our opinions. It seems to me like a more or less obvious observation, to the effect that principles of morality, for example, filter our thoughts so that some are "good" and some are "bad". Furthermore, it seems like it is true that most people have some-or-other principle that guides their thinking, even if that 'principle' is just reason. However, there is more than one way to perceive the implications of this "observation".

If we notice that some principles seem less connected to the world of things than others (and we believe that the world of things is the "real" world), and if we take the "observation" above seriously, then we might want to do something like what Feuerbach and Bauer apparently do⁴². "Man is to man the supreme being" (11), Stirner says Feuerbach says. So we notice that many people believe in the idea of "God" and take the principles of Christian morality to be absolute. But "God" isn't a part of the world of things, and we believe in the reality of material things. But we need *some* principle to guide our thoughts, we need some idea to believe in. So we bring these crazy religious ideas "down to earth". "Liberalism [ie. as exemplified by the ideas of Feuerbach *et al*] simply brought other concepts on the carpet; human instead of divine, political instead of ecclesiastical, 'scientific' instead of doctrinal" and so on (88).

Alternatively, we might do what Stirner does. We (presumably) want to live in reality. And we (by hypothesis)⁴³ think that the world of things *is* reality. Then *all* principles are equally unreal, regardless of how "down to earth" they may seem. Stirner, then, objects to what I said above—"we need *some* principle to guide our thoughts, we need some idea to believe in". "No!" he yells at me. To the extent that we believe in an idea, to the extent we let 'principles' guide us, to that extent are we living disconnected from reality. To that extent, we live in a lie, and the lie is "truth".

"Truth" is a concept, a word, another idea; ideas are not real, so if we believe them to be real we are not perceiving them as they "really" are (what they "really" are is unreal). "Truths are phrases, ways of speaking, words; brought into connection, or into an articulate series, they form logic, science, philosophy" (307); or "Truth's are men's thoughts, set down in words and therefore just as extant as other things, although extant only for the mind or for thinking" (ibid.). "Truth" doesn't exist without language; language doesn't exist without the material world.

Importantly, however, the unreal world of ideas seems very real. As implied above, logic, science, philosophy, etc. would have no conceptual content and hence no meaning without ideas. The meaning of a word is given in words; likewise, the meaning of concepts is given in other concepts; every concept has connotations - which imply other concepts. For example, if I say, "human being", someone listening might think of "man" or "woman" or "body" or "rationality" or "stupidity" or "pink skin" or "black skin" and so on. Stirner writes, "Human being, spirit, the true individual, personality, etc. are expressions or attributes that are full to overflowing with content, phrases with the greatest wealth of ideas" (Critics 12). Ideas about ideas connected with other ideas implying more ideas: this seems to be the "spirit-realm".

There are different ways to navigate this realm; almost all of them involve 'principles' which, as noted above, restrict the flow of thought somehow. "Faith" might be an individual's guiding concept, or "reason" or whatever. Insofar as the thinker seeks coherence, they are a believer in "truth" of some sort. "To the believer, truths are a *settled* thing, a fact; to the freethinker, a thing that is still to be *settled*" (Ego 306). Yet the freethinker is still a thinker whose thoughts are ordered somehow: "[absolute thinking's] credulity has its limits, and there does remain a belief in the truth ... in the idea and its final victory" (ibid.). Again, however, ideas are not real. Hence Stirner says anybody who believes in ideas, who is interested in an idea for the idea's sake, is delusional.

Reality

42 - I've had no exposure to these men's opinions except through Stirner.

43 - ie. According to the assumptions "we've" made.

I have been misleading up until this point. I contrasted the unreality of concepts with the reality of, say, that blood-soaked cloth. But says Stirner, "I can as little renounce thinking as feeling, the spirit's activity as little as the activity of the senses. As feeling is our sense for things, so thinking is our sense for essences (thoughts)" (306); we have a "sixth sense" and it's thinking. Ultimately, for Stirner, the world of thoughts is just as real or unreal as the world of things. We have knowledge of both through our senses. Much of *The Ego* is spent describing the process by which people can come to believe this basic idea: that "all things are nothing to me". But this is just an observation. In terms of its truth-value, it might as well be "all things are indifferent to me" or "all things are the same to me".

... like Feuerbach, no one lives in any other world than his own, and like Feuerbach, everyone is the center of his own world. World is only what he himself is not, but what belongs to him, is in a relationship with him, exists for him.

Everything turns around you; you are the center of the outer world and of the thought world. Your world extends as far as your capacity, and what you grasp is your own simply because you grasp it. You, the unique, are "the unique" only together with "your property." (*Critics* 16)

Every individual is "the center of the outer world and of the thought world", but this is very obviously true. Only things (be they material or not) that I am aware of are "real" for me; if this is so, then "for me" is redundant, from my perspective. There is, always, what Kant called 'the given'⁴⁴. We are given knowledge of things through our senses, and knowledge of ideas by thinking. And that's all, except for ourselves. So who are we?

"We" do not exist from *my* perspective (or from yours); which is only to say that there is no such thing as "our" sense-perception or "our" private thoughts. I exist, however. I am "the unique one", the "creative nothing". These terms, I think, need some explanation.

Recall, if possible, that the content of a concept consists of ... other concepts. But in the case of "the unique one", what conceptual content is there? Stirner uses it in deliberate contrast with "human being" or "true individual", terms which, as noted above, "are overflowing with content" (*Critics* 12). This means that in calling someone a "human being", I am attributing something to them. But what is it I am attributing? "Does the attribute, 'human', fulfill the task of the attribute, which is to express the subject *completely*, or doesn't it, on the contrary, completely take subjectivity away from the subject, and doesn't it say what the subject is rather than saying who he is" (13)? So I say to you, "she is a human being". Already you begin to form an idea in your head of what "she" is like. "She" is like whatever it is to be a "human being" in *your* conceptual framework. In contrast, "unique one" (Stirner claims/stipulates) is devoid of conceptual baggage. "The sentence 'you are unique' means nothing but 'you are you', a sentence that logic calls nonsense, because it doesn't make judgments on anything, it doesn't say anything, because it is empty, a sentence that is not a sentence" (13-14); in fact, "logic" does not call "you are you" nonsense: "logic" calls that sentence "tautological", which is to say trivial, or redundant. However, Stirner continues (and clears things up considerably), "What the logician treats with contempt is undoubtedly illogical or merely '*formally*' logical" (14). Although his terminology is misleading (illogical is supposed to be the same as formally logical?), his point is correct: a tautology

44 - I don't want to *cite* Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, because then I have to go and find my copy (yes, I have a copy; no, I haven't read all of it) so I can make a proper citation. However, see the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's entry (especially section 2) on Kant for more information (or read Kant). I *will* cite that at the end of this paper, because otherwise how would anybody find it?

is “merely ‘formally’ logical”, is “empty”⁴⁵. It is worth it, I think, to quote an extended passage from *Stirner’s Critics*.

You — unique! What thought content is here, what sentence content? None! Whoever wants to deduce a precise thought-content of the Unique as if it were a concept, whoever thinks that with “unique” one has said about you *what* you are, would show that they believe in phrases, because they don’t recognize phrases as phrases and would also show that they seek *specific* content in phrases.

You, inconceivable and inexpressible, are the phrase content, the phrase owner, the phrase embodied; you are the who, the one of the phrase. (14)

“Unique” is not a concept because I, as *myself* (ie. not as a human being, not as a man, not as a brown-eyed person, etc), am not a concept. Recall the earlier talk about “essences”; well, every essence is a concept. So if someone tells me, “in essence you are human”, they are correct insofar as I am human, but incorrect insofar as they want the attribute “human” to exhaustively encompass *who I am*. I am human, but also irrational (which may or may not be in contradiction with someone’s conception of “human”); but I am more than “human and irrational” too. I am more than *x*, where *x* is any concept (any word) whatsoever. “Unique” is ... unique, but only by stipulation: Stirner tells us what he means to say when he uses it, as we’ve seen. It makes sense however: if I were to say “we are all unique”, I would be saying something true. Yet it makes no sense to infer from this that I am unique *in the same way* that you are unique. The property “uniqueness” is *not* a property at all, it tells us nothing. It plainly and straightforwardly refers to *me*: “the unique is the empty, unassuming and completely common phrase” (12).

If it’s just a “common phrase”, what’s all this fuss about? Why was that last paragraph so long? It’s just my opinion, but I think that understanding “the unique” is key to understanding Stirner’s ontology (ie. what he thinks is really “real”, or what things he takes to actually exist); both are deceptively simple. Both, as I said earlier, *ought to* be easy to accept. I want to remind my readers of my intentions before I continue, however. There was a lot of discussion in class about Stirner’s style: some complained that he has no discernible argument, that he contradicts himself, that he rambles, that etc. It is not my aim here to discuss Stirner’s style *per se*; my aim is to try to illuminate the theoretical foundations – or put less pedantically, the basic assumptions, that what I’m calling “Stirner’s idea” relies on for its coherence. I happen to think these basic assumptions are reasonable, more or less obvious, and whatever other words are synonymous with those ones.

By the way, obviously I haven’t said very much about what I think “Stirner’s idea” is. I’m not going to say much. Just this: I have my own idea about Stirner’s idea, and so do you, and so does she. I’m not concerned with Stirner’s “point” or the “meaning” of *The Ego*, or any kind of matter like that, at least not now. The reason is because I’ve only read the book once, and I read it superficially. I’m just trying to get one thing across here: what I think Stirner thinks is “‘really’ real”. And the answer is: “the unique one” and I am that (and so are you!).

45 - It might be argued that “you are unique” is not “empty” the way that “you are you” is; in other words, somebody might think that “you are unique” is *not* a tautology (“you” are not necessarily “unique”). Stirner’s stipulation however, is precisely that “unique” is to be understood as saying nothing at all. If I call you unique, then “you are merely *named*” but “*nothing* is said about you” (*Critics* 13). Stirner says, “Speculation was directed toward finding an attribute so *universal* that *everyone* would be understood by it” (ibid.); but as we’ve already seen, there is no such term: even “human” is conceptually “loaded”. Hence, the only term (other than your name, which in any case can belong to other people too) that can refer to you *as you are*, *without leaving anything out*, is an “empty” one. I’ll give Stirner the last word: “Since the content of the unique is not thought content, the unique cannot be thought or said; but since it cannot be said, it, this perfect phrase, is *not even a phrase*” (ibid.).

It's solipsism, sure, but what is solipsism? At the very least, it is consistent and coherent, I think. In any case there is no non-question begging response to it. Besides, it seems to me undeniably true that I am the centre of my world. Furthermore, ideas that I have not encountered yet are nonetheless "out there" somewhere, or people whom I haven't met ... in general: things I haven't experienced, none of these are "real", in as straightforward a sense of the term as I can imagine⁴⁶. Now, from the fact that I don't know about someone's existence, it is obviously false to infer that that person must not exist; however, it is *not* false to infer that that person *might* not exist. If we are talking about things that we know *for certain* to be real, there aren't multiple "things" at all. There is just me. As far as I can tell, that is Stirner's ontology.

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Spiritual Autolysis: Taste My Discarded Flesh

"An essay that has absolutely nothing to do with anything, and everything to do with absolute nothing"
– Dr. A. Smith, Professor of Self-Psycopathy

"I started reading expecting an essay involving something to do with the German Ideology, but there literally wasn't any Marx or Stirner anywhere in the paper. What the fuck is this?" - You

My eyes open and my day begins like all other days. I brief moment of consciousness as I

46 - See chapter 5 of J. L. Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia* for an interesting discussion about the use of the word "real". Austin argues, for instance, "that there are no criteria to be laid down in *general* for distinguishing the real from the not real" (76). So above, when I use real "in the most straightforward sense ... I can imagine", I take it that things I perceive with my senses are "real" and everything else isn't. Not to say, I should stress, that this distinction doesn't have problems; rather, I just want to point out that it's at least *plausible*. And don't worry, anxious, lazy and ignorant readers, I'll cite Austin.

suddenly become aware of the alarm – “Sun Is Shining” by Bob Marley and the Wailer’s - and then it begins to flood in.

Thought.

Long term and momentary; immediate and distant, Something pops and the universe explodes into being. What was once empty and infinite space becomes pregnant as proto-suns appear and explode into being. A newly birthed conceptual universe rich with star clusters of mental constellations, all seemingly so dense, yet composed of so little mass and almost no matter. It’s all just total bullshit.

My recent foray into the spiritual dimension has made me so painfully aware of how utterly insane I am. I talk to myself constantly, yet no one notices because I don’t open my mouth when I do it. I can’t fucking take it. Ignoring the voice inside my head screaming at me to go to back to sleep, I get up and my mind automatically begins cycling through all of my problems. All of them swirling inside my head, all of them so fucking pointless. In reality, the shit that bothers me doesn’t matter at all. Who gives a shit if I owe Platinum Athletic’s Club sixty dollars, but whatever is living inside of my head won’t except that. *They said that if we don’t pay soon they’re going to increase the amount and call collections. This might even negatively impact our credit score.* Like I honestly give a shit. Increase the fucking amount, take a shit on my credit score, call collections, it’s not like they’re going to come and break my legs. Even if they would, let them come. I have a splintered half hockey stick right next to my door. I keep a foot long kitchen knife stashed on the top of my fridge. I have a bo-staff hidden in bedroom, and if all that fails I’ve been training in the martial arts for 10 years and beneath all of the shit about discipline and control I talk about there’s a black and twisted part of me that just wants to viciously beat a motherfucker to death. Sometimes I feel like a caged animal who’s about to go berserk, but I don’t let it out because no matter what I would do the thing inside of my head won’t let me do anything without worrying about what everyone would think about me if I did. Fuck.

I walk into the bathroom and close the door. I like to shower in perfect darkness because I’m working on sensing objects rather than seeing them. I take a shower and my head is throbbing from all the thinking that I can’t stop. I step out and dry myself. I pick up my body cream, pop the cap, and for a brief space it all stops. I deeply experience the feeling of the cream on my hands and the sensations of it gliding across my body. It’s amazing.

This is my solace. When I realize that those thoughts are all just empty surface movements and that the reality of what’s happening in the present moment is the only thing that really matters. I massage my body, mind clear, enjoying the sensations, free. I finish my hygiene ritual and saunter to my room paying close attention to every step. I step past the door and make a slight bow. I had recently decided to make my room into sacred space. I grab my laptop and headphones and head back into the living room. I make my breakfast (a mug of vegetable powder, three ice cubes and some tap water) and slowly begin mixing, listening to the clink of the spoon and the ice. I sit down and put the headphones in my ears. I like to spend the mornings listening to Ganjagi, my spiritual mother. On a whim, I also turn on my audio morphine program. It’s basically a series of soundwaves that, once listened to, bathe the brain and cause you to feel the sensations of a pleasant amount of morphine. Your body shuts down, and if you’re lucky, so too does your mind. I enter the half lotus position and close my eyes.

I find myself walking on a dirt road surrounded by jungle. It’s dawn and I am completely naked. I feel completely and utterly free. I’ve never felt so content. I realize that I’m approaching a village and decide to put pants on. I enter and see people, as well as someone on a motorcycle driving away. I decide I too want a motorcycle, and so I create one. I take off incredibly fast, and yet the speed doesn’t

compare to the time when I didn't have the motorcycle, the clothes covering my body, or the need for either.

I wake up, understand where I was, and sigh. I was the dreamer, I was god, and yet I was still ashamed. Infinite power and my fingertips, incalculable freedom within a dream state of my own making, and I still felt the need to cover my body. God, I can't stand it.

I put on the black hoodie, sweat pants, and sandals that I've been wearing for a week now. I've become disillusioned with all of my normal clothes, so now I just wear the closest thing to rags that I have. I don't wear a shirt or underwear; just the hoodie zipped half way and sweatpants that could fall off at the slightest tug. I don't care how cold it is outside; I don't even know what cold is anymore. It's all sensation, experience, why is one bad and the other good? Why make distinctions?

I enter my class and sit down. I don't have any of my books with me; I barely have anything with me. I wouldn't even bring the key to my place if I didn't have to. Class begins: English 490: Medieval Literature Seminar. After the first hour, the professor (a kiwi with excellent hair) places a large medieval map on my desk and has everyone gather around to look at it. He then says that he wants to make a map of Vancouver and have everybody draw a landmark that's important to them. He traces the outline of the city and one-by-one the class begins adding things to it. Someone draws the border to the U.S.A., another person draws the Olympic rings, another draws a heart where her and her boyfriend had their first date. I have had no experiences in Vancouver that I can remember, so when my turn comes I go with the only important thing in recent memory. I walk up to the board, and with a red marker draw a small jagged chasm around where my dorm room is. I then make a dotted line to the beach, over the water, and then outside the circular line encompassing the map. The line keeps going until it breaks in the other direction. My line becomes a huge eyeball, transforming the map into its pupil.

My professor asks me to explain what this means and I look him right in the face and realize that there is nothing that I could say to him or anyone else in this room to make them understand where I'm actually coming from. I tell him it's complicated and sit down. Other people put things on the map, comments, inquiries, laughs, everyone sits down and the class resumes.

Yet I'm still staring at the board.

The eye I made is looking right at me. It's populated with all these images and representations, but outside of the eye everything is white. There's nothing. The class has moved on but I'm still looking at the humongous eye I made and it's still looking at me.

Who the fuck am I I keep asking over and over again. *Who am I really? What is the white space?* I can't stop staring at the eye, it's stabbing me in the heart over and over again, it's murdering me. I keep hitting a wall and I can't get over it. I turn around and look at everyone talking. I can't connect to them. They think that who they're dating or what they've done is who they are. They think they know things, when how could they. I realize I know nothing. Who I am, how old I am, what I am, who they are, where we are, nothing. Everything we think we know rests on criteria that we've created. The math, the language, all of it. Gravity doesn't explain anything, emotions are meaningless, thoughts are pointless, all of it is built upon the heath. Nothing underpins my existence, I'm drifting, I'm lost in nothing. I kick my sandals off, step out of the class and walk the hallways barefoot. I can't help noticing that people are noticing, my mind won't miss this chance to feed itself with the tiny morsels of insecurity that slips through the cracks of my not giving a fuck. I'm surrounded by aliens and yet a part

of me still gives a shit what they think. I head back to class and spend the next hour writhing at my desk .

“Are you alright Adam?” a sunny mother of two asks me as class ends. “I’m doing fantastic, thanks for asking” I say in my warmest voice. No matter what I’m going through, this woman could still have been my mother or my lover in another life, she and I could even be the part of the same intelligence. I can feel her heart; I would hug her and kiss her softly if our small lives didn’t infect us with the notion that other people are strangers. Or maybe they are, I just don’t know anymore. That was the way I used to think, but where I once saw connection I now feel isolation. I turn around and make my first step to the door, then immediately wheel around and ask her how she’s doing. I just can’t do, I can’t be unkind. She says something and I smile, then I turn around and walk as quickly as I can out the door without looking like I’m trying to escape even though I’m desperately trying to escape. I burst out of the room and pound down the stairs. I explode through the door and out the building. I am so fucking angry.

Angry not at anything, just angry. I’m enraged. I want to destroy everything. I’m striding through campus; everything about me feels viscous. I imagine myself ripping apart everything I see. I imagine slamming my fists into a parked van and crushing it completely. I see a building and imagine detonating it with my unbridled fury, I see a tree and I imagine tearing it out by the roots and hurling it into space. I see a large open space full of grass and I yearn to pound my fists into the ground, splitting it open, smashing my fists so hard that I penetrate the earth’s core, blowing up the entire fucking planet. I don’t want to hurt, I don’t want to kill, I want to destroy. I want to destroy myself by destroying the world. I stop at the bus loop and stand fuming in my craving for worldwide annihilation. I see a female with the makeup and the clothes and the boots. *I DON’T WANT THAT TO AFFECT ME* I scream inside my mind. I want to crush all existence in between my hands and have it take me with it.

I get on the bus and head home. The real fun begins.

Retrospectively I can’t help but laugh at the dramatic episode of my little character, but at the time I genuinely felt like I was slipping into insanity. I think I’m still there actually; I might have just gotten a little used to it. I haven’t come back to my senses; I still don’t know anything anymore, I’ve lost the ability to claim I ‘understand’ things. I can honestly tell you that I don’t know anything. That’s it. I can’t explain it any further. Where someone would ask you a question about some factoid about reality that you’re so gosh darn sure about, I have only emptiness. Don’t get me wrong, I can put on my sane human mask and answer basic trivia questions, but everything I say is hollow and completely without content. Wugiloo, bubilidibididi. Fsjknal, jfdaaifdia. It’s all so arbitrary, so fucking meaningless. I can still walk around and do things, but if I stop for a second reality just begins to collapse. I begin to realize that I have no idea where I am, even when I’m lying in my bed.

I don’t even believe in the existence of myself. Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror and the thing I see looking back at me is utterly terrifying. I don’t believe anything. I know nothing. I KNOW NOTHING. Even that doesn’t work. Who is this I that I’m referring to? What is knowing? And when I say nothing, nothingness is a something, something which I know nothing about, yet in knowing nothing about nothing, is that knowing it? No, I especially don’t know nothing. Do I? Don’t I? What?

What do I actually know? Really and truly, what can I believe, what can be proven? You might say that my position is an un-falsifiable dead end. We might as well turn back and trust our perceptions and the world around us, if we didn’t we couldn’t get anywhere. I know that’s what I used to say, but that isn’t the same I that’s talking to you right now. As the rest of the group departs this I is stuck looking at the wall. This I can’t turn around because the labyrinth has dissolved and the only surface

left to stand on is that wall whose existence is only kept real by the fact that if I really examine it I know that it will be revealed to be just as unreal as every other surface. My ship is wrecked and I'm clinging to the only piece of floating scrap left. The thing is, deep down I know the scrap isn't real. Only my terrified grip gives it reality. For all my talk about transcending the ego and the self in my last essay, in truth I'm too scared to let go. I'm too scared to sink.

The first step on my spiritual journey was to give up all my cemented beliefs and open myself to new ones. In so doing I've irrevocably destroyed all belief. I don't even see 3-dimensional space in the same way. I can't help but chuckle at the irony. I've been doing a lot of chuckling recently. There's just something funny about being and being in (for lack of a better word) nothing. Everything has absolutely no meaning, and that just tickles me pink.

In my unbridled spiritual rage I pounded my fists into the quaking soil of my own understanding until I penetrated the very core and found that it was hollow. I'm trapped there now; the roof has caved in on me. I'm stuck in a world of nothing of which I can't escape. My only option is to keep pounding, but right now this subterranean hollow has a pleasant allure. Something about the hopelessness and darkness of it just relaxes me.

Look, an earthworm

Epilogue

One day Gregor Samsa awoke to find himself transformed into a monstrous vermin
I too have gone through a similar metamorphoses
Do I disgust you?
Is my shape horrendous?
Are my many appendages frightening?
I know they frighten me

I now see things from the ground
I don't discriminate between wall or floor
I just don't see the difference
I don't see anything

If I probe the moment I shudder
When I see myself in the mirror, I scream
When you see yourself, you don't

There must be something wrong with you

•

Anonymous

The womb. In its warmth and comfort I lie. I am nourished by my carrier, fed oxygen, liquid and sustenance in a seemingly automatic transfer. My eyes are closed; there is no need for them to open. I am held, held in this body that protects me until I am ready to emerge into the world. My life is entirely dependent; I cannot survive without this guardianship. I do not make sound, but I receive the

drum of the heartbeat, the flow of bodily fluid, and a muffled experience of the outside world. I am contained, and I am safe, for I am far too vulnerable to be able to survive in the world without the protection of my mother.

Birth. I am being guided to explore the opening of the cave I am in. It is my time to emerge from this vault of warmth and security, to find out what exists outside the comforts of my only known space. I push my way through, curious of what lies ahead of me. I wish to find a way out of this chamber in which I am contained. I hear my mother screaming. Why? I know I am hurting her. I become hesitant to leave, but I also know I must continue. I have started this, and I feel I need to go on, to taste the outside world.

The air! How harsh and thin the air compared to the thick fluids of my encasement. And the light! What brightness relentlessly prods at my eyelids. This is a terrible place; I yearn to return to the warmth of my former dwelling, the stillness, and the darkness. And yet I know I cannot return...now that I have been exposed to this light. And thus I begin my experience as my own human.

There are two primary motives driving my existence: the curiosity encouraging me to poke my head out and explore, juxtaposed with the desire to climb back into my womb. The former drives me to engage in wonder, adventure, and play- aspects of my childlike nature. When my curiosity is greater than my desire for safety and protection, I am allowing myself to let down my guard and give way to the expressivity of my being. However, when I feel the need for safety and comfort, I create to my best ability a womb to protect me. The womb I create is unique to the needs of my experience- the threats that I need to shield myself from as well as the materials I am able to manifest in order to carry out my task. This construction can take place on a physical level, such as the common practice of building a fort, as well as on an emotional level. The emotional fort is of more interest to me, because as the fort can be quickly demolished, the emotional shields often become integrated into our patterns and are much trickier to unwind. By existing only in my emotional fort, I seal myself off from the outside world. I lose the ability to engage, with other living beings, as well as with my childlike nature.

Curiosity is the counter to my desire to remain in the womb. The curiosity to follow to the source an interesting sound, or smell; to stroke the threads of a fine looking fabric, to listen to the story of a stranger on the bus. My curiosity is the greatest indicator to myself as to what I am. Following my curiosity will lead me to anything and everything of interest to me. My desire to learn and grow comes from a curiosity to discover a broader, deeper world. My desire to live is basically a curiosity to actualize my potential, to observe and partake in a world beyond my current understanding and experience. Curiosity is the flame that keeps me interested in the world, and if that flame flickers out, I become a passive, fruitless, obsolete.

Curiosity encourages me to take risks- to leave places that are comfortable and safe in order to experience more, or at least something different. This is important, for in order for me to grow, I need to step into unfamiliar territory, or look with fresh eyes at very familiar territory. That may take place in the form of questions- formulating questions pertaining to the way I see the world, why I see it a certain way, and how it came to be that way. Must it continue in the same fashion? My curiosity lends the courage to try a new idea, to find out what would happen if a change were put in place. It allows the trial of new ideas without the enforcement that the idea in hand will be a certain way; I do not know the outcome of my actions, yet I take them regardless to see what will come out. The lack of expectations in curiosity is an essential aspect of the trait because it allows for the least constraint on the outcome.

Ayn Rand asserts that a robot can be distinguished from a human because it has no values, for it could not be affected by anything, and therefore has nothing to gain or lose. She claims that only a living organism can create goals.¹ Another challenge would be to program a robot with curiosity, for our curiosity, and what it pertains to, is quite unique to the individual. In this case, the robot would need a unique self in order to have a sense of curiosity. As a human creates the robot, the programming for the robot's curiosity is limited to the imagination of the human, or humans, and would therefore, to some extent, be repetitive of a curiosity, a being, that already exists. My combination of values and curiosity

give me my uniqueness, my spirit and expression. My desire to protect myself, to whatever extent that manifests, is a common struggle of humans.

In order for me to let my childlike nature of curiosity rule my being, I must come to understand my desires to crawl back into the womb and the patterns I have created to make myself feel safe. This means exploring my fears and my reactions to fear. Any time I am confronted with something that is poking, haunting, or attacking me, imposing over me rules and conformations, I am receiving challenges. I am being tested so I may try out the strength of my character. In these challenges I may recoil, pull the blanket over my head and continue to hide, or I may choose to take the given situation as an opportunity to see of what I am capable. By voicing myself, I learn. I learn what my voice needs to say. I learn about the materials that I have used to build my womb. And I learn how to kindly take down those walls.

Rand makes an important point about a difference between plant consciousness and the consciousness of a “higher organism,” such as man or animal. She claims that a “plant acts automatically to further its life, it cannot act for its own destruction.”ⁱ The organisms at lower level consciousnesses experience only sensation, without perception, and thus live automatically according to the principle of pleasure and pain. Though the next level of consciousness, animals have the ability to perceive, they are limited in that they do not have choice over the knowledge that they acquire in life, and merely pass it on from generation to generation, surely adapting at some rate over time. Rand then argues that man does not have an automatic code by which he lives, but he has will over creating and discovering his values. Humans take consciousness a step further in combining perceptions to form concepts.ⁱⁱ In this way, I cannot simply respond to the pain-pleasure principle, because it is not so black and white for me. Physical pain, yes, I am most likely similar to simpler creatures in that when I am experiencing physical pain, it is in my interest to find an end to the pain (this is pertaining to threatening and harmful pain, not routine exertions of fitness that accompany the building and stretching of muscles). Emotional pain is more complex, conceptual, and therefore confusing.

My emotional experience involving pain is more similar to that of the pains of fitness than that of life threatening bodily pains. In exercising my emotions, I discover points of weakness, stiffness, hyper-flexibility and strength. Because of my need to explore my emotions to understand what how my body and being have formed to protect me, I cannot simply avoid emotional pain the way I avoid physical pain in order to survive. It is impossible to live a life free of any pain or sadness if I want to experience their opposites. To love, I build tender bonds that may be broken or torn. By opening myself to allow for vulnerable experience, I create delicate threads much like a spider creates a web- strong, in that I, the spider, am fully supported by this thread, yet completely exposed, transparent and so delicate. So delicate, that it can be broken, by a swift wind or passing creature more magnificent than myself. I, the humble spider, may not fritter away my existence becoming attached to the web I build, fearing, and then mourning its destruction. Much stronger I could be if I were to develop a resiliency in order to create another web.

By developing my strength, I learn to take responsibility for myself. My fears disappear because I understand that fear is what my womb is made of, and to embrace myself, my individuality, and my expression, I must free myself of my fears, much like how a butterfly eats itself out of its cocoon and allows its wings to carry it. Freeing myself of the reign of my fears allows me to trust my intuition, knowing that I will guide myself through this life, and that all challenges I face are opportunities. My fear of death no longer exists because I know I will die; in the words of Sting, “The only certain thing in life is death.”ⁱⁱⁱ Life and death have a dual nature; if I fear one I also fear the other. By taking responsibility for myself I become a fully independent individual, for I do not blame anyone for any position I am in. I rid myself of any thoughts of entitlement or dependency and I am willing to work for my survival. If it so happens that I am dependent on others, by way of being a child or having a handicap, I take responsibility given the means I am allowed- that is to say, I am not expected to go beyond my physical or mental limitations. Nor am I to attempt to diminish rational fears, such as the

rational fear that jumping off a skyscraper will probably kill me, or running into traffic may cause me to be hit by a car. Here I am talking about clearing out my irrational fears, the fears of my voice, my expression, and myself. My fears of change, trying a different path, or an unfamiliar flavor of life, with a more insecure route, these are the fears that are inhibiting my spirit.

If I, the individual, can take full responsibility for my being, I am no longer living under the laws and regulations of others. Whether they are imposed or not, matters not, for I am free to make my decision that is most suited to me in any situation, no matter what any other party is doing. It may result in punishment, imprisonment, or life sentence, but these are all results of choices I have made. By taking responsibility, I am accepting that I can choose how to participate in the world. I can choose to be resilient, to maintain a venturesome attitude, and to speak my mind, understanding that I may not be right, but by speaking I have expressed myself, sharing this with myself and others, and providing myself (and those interacting with me) opportunities to learn.

Thomas Hobbes claims that an anarchic society would fail because there are limited resources contrasted by equal needs, and limited altruism contrasted by equal abilities.ⁱⁱⁱ That is to say, without a governing body to monitor the resources, their withdrawal will be abused. Well, currently, the governing body seems to be encouraging the over-indulgence on limited resources, and the corporations partaking in such activities have major control of the government (especially in the States). His point about limited altruism is countered by Rand's assertion that altruism will hinder the survival of civilization.^v This follows within the individualist school of thought, as well as the egoists, who all promote living for the self, instead of for the concern of others. Incidentally, living for myself is the most altruistic thing I can do, because it gives others freedom to do the same by not imposing myself, my ideas and my standards on upon anyone else.

As to Hobbes' claim, he is undermining human potential. That is to say, a form of anarchy is possible for human society if humans are willing to work. Rand speaks of a current state of subjectivist ethics, in which anyone can pick what they view as good or evil. She compares this to acting on a whim and asserts that such actions can be quite destructive. Rand argues in favor of objectivist ethics instead:

The Objectivist ethics proudly advocates and upholds *rational selfishness*...which means: the values required for *human* survival—not the values produced by the desires, the emotions, the “aspirations,” the feelings, the whims or the needs of irrational brutes... The Objectivist ethics holds that *human* good does not require human sacrifices and cannot be achieved by the sacrifice of anyone to anyone. It holds that the *rational* interests of men do not clash—that there is no conflict of interests among men who do not desire the unearned, who do not make sacrifices nor accept them, who deal with one another as *traders*, giving value for value.^{vi}

This describes a world in which humans do not take more than they need to live, in which people work for what they have and do not expect or think they deserve more. Rand's point that there is no conflict if men do not desire the unearned, is an essential component of a society that wishes to exist without laws, for it implies that humans must rid themselves of greed if they wish to rid themselves of laws.

Greed is a form of protection. It involves taking more than I need in order to live with more comfort, or a more secure future. Ironically, any time I am searching for security, I am driven by insecurities. When I manifest greed, I am succumbing to my insecurities, and allowing myself to be ruled by fear. Anytime I allow my weaknesses to guide me, I am missing an opportunity to strengthen and grow. In a study entitled “Ideal Illusions: How the U.S. Government Co-Opted Human Rights,” James Peck wrote, “In the history of human rights, the worst atrocities are always committed by somebody else, never us.”^{vii} Peck pointing out the tendency to blame some factor or party outside ourselves shows that it is happening in many places, in many ways. The awareness of this is a gift, for if I have observed it in the world, it exists in myself, and I can now work to rid myself of this tendency. Blame and greed are both ways of rebuilding the womb, recreating a security for myself that I don't need anymore: I have been born.

Notes

- i. “The Objectivist Ethics,” copyright [*The Virtue of Selfishness*](#) © 1961 by Ayn Rand, renewed © 1985, by Ayn Rand. Used by permission of Dutton Signet, a division of Penguin Group (USA), Inc.
- ii. Rand
- iii. Rand
- iv. Sting, Truth Hits Everybody
- v. Rand
- vi. Rand
- vii. Chomsky, Noam. ‘Somebody Else’s Atrocities.’ *In These Times*, June 6, 2012.

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Stirner Final “Paper”

Anonymous

ABSTRACT: In the follow I will attempt to apply Derridan deconstructionism to make sense of Einstein’s theory of relativity. In doing so I hope to expose the hermeneutic centrifuge which I claim is responsible for asserting the gender binary.

The air smelt of excrement, garbage, and grease. An anorexic beam of sunlight crept into the alley Max Stirner was sleeping in. It poked its way on to Stirner’s face, and startled him out of slumber. The urine, which had kept him temporarily warm as he passed out in the alley the night before, now left his trousers damp and cold. He grumbled as he arose from a pile of old leaves and wrappers. Then he farted. There was nothing Max Stirner loved more than the smell of his own farts; the sensation of his own metaphysical essence penetrating and consuming the world. He wandered out of the alley and onto the busy streets of Berlin, in search of the nearest river bank to bath in.

He stopped and checked his pocket watch. It was quarter to six in the morning, meaning he had roughly forty-five minutes to make himself appear civilized. No teacher at a respectable German girl’s school should arrive reeking of gin and pee.

As he walked along the city-street, and familiar looking shopkeeper greeted him, “Good morning Johann!” shouted the shopkeeper. Stirner smiled uncomfortably. Then he farted. He did not mind the shopkeeper see him in such a disheveled state; in fact Max was sure the shopkeeper had seen him in such a state everyone morning for the past few years. He hated being called by his birth name, “Johann Caspar Schmidt”. He wished desperately to rebrand himself, to go by his own name, and not the creation of another forced upon him. For a brief period Stirner referred to himself as “Magneto”, but soon became dissuaded by that choice when he discovered it was a comic book character. His second choice of name, “Terd Ferguson”, provoked only laughter. Max thought it was a stern and powerful name, one to invoke fear. He felt disparaged when the small children of Berlin cackled like Hyenas as he demanded they “Bow before Terd Ferguson”. Run on sentences LOL, YOLO. With his first two choices in name not stern enough, Stirner decided upon “Max Stirner”. While this pseudonym was decidedly superior to its successors, few took it seriously. Matters were not helped by Stirner’s insistence on wearing a cape and a tiara. Eventually he bullied his friends, family members, and acquaintance into accepting the name, by threatening them with flatulence.

After bathing in the sewage filled river, Stirner made his way to the school. He entered as he always did, up through the garbage shoot, out of the maintenance room, down the hall, and into the staffroom where he made some coffee. The other school instructors looked grimly upon Stirner’s river-washed appearance.

“Another night in the barn, eh Johann?” chortled Mr. Murgle, a colleague. Stirner tried to ignore him. “Not too hung-over to teach today?” Max farted and the staffroom emptied. How dare they mock him! As punishment for their condescending attitude. On a daily basis he would have to release his essence upon them, and demonstrate the might of his spirit. The other teachers simply viewed his excessive flatulence as a side effect of his severe alcoholism. As a young boy Max was raised by negligible parents. They raised their son on a diet that consisted almost solely of government cheese. This resulted in Max being able to toot on command.

He poured two spoons of sugar into his cold coffee and went off to teach. Stirner was a social studies teacher, which often cause a bit of controversy. It was not due to Stirner’s drunkenness, so much as it was his insistence on teaching the suspiciously inaccurate Hegelian picture of history. Most of the students, and faculty for that matter, we’re flabbergasted by his rants about “mongoloids” and “Caucasoid”. The students would often tease him about his smelly odor and unkempt manner. Unlike the ridicule he received from adults, the mocking of children possessed a certain sting. Adults felt ashamed and embarrassed at Max- their discomfort brought him joy. The laughter of children gutted his soul. They would laugh and cackle with joy when he was flatulent. How dare they take joy in his own “ownness”, little shits.

That day’s class began uneventfully. For the first two hours he bored and confused the children with a brief history traditional hunting tents used in 9th century Poland. Eventually a young girl named Glenn fell asleep, and began to snore loudly.

“Glenn wake up!” shouted Stirner. But Glenn continued to sleep. The rest of the children giggled. Glenn continued to snore. “Stop laughing! You think this is funny? I am Max Stirner, the greatest man who ever lived. Don’t you dare laugh at me!” The children’s laughter increased. “One day I will write the greatest book ever written. It will being major turning point in the western philosophical tradition!” The laughter did not cease. “You treat me like I am one of those joke authors! One day I will be taught and read in every classroom in the world. I won’t be obscure or unheard of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. “You see this, this is crap. In a hundred years this Frederic fellow will be considered a complete joke. The only place his works will be read is obscure student directed seminars at unborn universities that will be built in the squalored lands of the new world!” The laughter stopped for a brief moment, but continued again when the children set aside their confusion in favor of mocking their teacher.

Stirner had enough of their dissent. He had enough of the little children bullying him. Could they not smell his greatness? He teach them, and everyone else in the school, once and for all. He held his breath, quench his sphinctor, and summoned the most beastly gas-demon he had ever created. After four minutes of holding it in he unleashed the super fart. Every window within a three-mile radius shattered. The hair fell off cats. Birds fell out of the sky. Several of the elderly died.

Stirner’s colleagues knew they could not let him tyrannize any longer. During the lunch break they cornered him in the staffroom.

“Why are you all wearing gasmasks?” asked Stirner. “And Mr. Murgle, what are you doing with that cork?”

The staff jumped on Stirner. They held him as Mr. Murgle sewed a giant cork into Stirner’s bum. Max Stirner would never fart again.

He cried for weeks and weeks. Day turned into night. Night into day. Days into weeks, weeks into months, months into groups of months into seasons, seasons into year, and year into years.

It was one day, several years after he had last farted that Max Stirner could hold it in no longer. He tried has hard as he could, but he could not toot. At least not out his bottom. He felt the gas rise up through his bowls, ascending through his body, until it reached his ears. A fury of methane shot out both sides of his head, carry with it a hefty load of ear-wax. After the fury had ceased, Max opened his eyes. Some of the gunk had serendipitously spelt something out.

“All things are nothing to me!”

The Ego and Its Own was born.



Max Stirner and Trent Reznor

Esteban Berman

Prof. Pig

We've been through this many times. We have discussed egoism in Stirnerian terms; we've chased his ideas to incredible limits and have been able to devise the most clear and vague interpretation of his ideas. By now we should comprehend the idea of egoism, and everyone's self-ownership, and when we hear someone declare, "my concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc. but solely what is mine"⁴⁷ we will know the spirits, which they are fighting

I think it would be an interesting experiment to see how Stirner's views are echoed in contemporary forms of expression. Stirner's concepts (egoism, ownness, spirits, uniqueness), even if they are (arguably) poorly defended by him, are common motifs and themes that have shown up in different types of art such as George Orwell's *1984* (the idea of having a life outside of the state), the British TV show *The Prisoner* (being trapped and labeled by someone else into being someone you are not) and even in shows like *The Simpsons* (many examples here: Bart's many rebellions against principal Skinner come to mind). In this essay I will be looking for themes akin to Stirner's in Nine Inch Nails' third album *The Downward Spiral*. At the end of this essay I hope to show how both Nine Inch Nails' album and *The Ego and Its Own* share similar existentialist themes.

The Downward Spiral was released March 8, 1994 through Nothing/ Interscope records. The album is mainly the work of Nine Inch Nails' front man Trent Reznor, but also feature collaborations by producer Flood, Steve Perkins from Jane's Addiction and Danny Lohner from A Perfect Circle. Since then the album has been certified as Platinum four times in the US (this is about 4,000,000 CDs sold). The album was recorded throughout 1993 in the house where Sharon Tate and her friends were murdered by Charles Manson and his family of bandits. Legend goes Reznor nicknamed the house 'Le Pig' after seeing one what one of the murderers carved in the floor⁴⁸. This album has been well received not only by listeners but also by other musicians. For example, Johnny Cash's last single before he died *Hurt* was a cover of the last song on this album.

The Downward Spiral opens to the pounding drums of the first track *Mr. Self Destruct* and it is here that we can start seeing the parallels between Stirner and Reznor. Now before I get on with this essay, I need you to understand, dear reader, that I am about to throw many random and harebrained ideas that I'm going to need you to try and follow with me. I promise that by the end of this exercise we will both have seen a very unique way of interpreting some of the themes in Stirner.

Now, back to *Mr. Self Destruct*. After the drums gradually become more and more faster the whole band kicks in to this manic attack. The first lines of this song are "I am the voice inside/ and I control you". Right at this point we the listeners are introduced to one of the most important themes of the album, control. I will argue that Mr. Self Destruct is the protagonist of this story, but that he is divided in two: first he is the true person that he wants to be himself, he is the true egoist here; besides

⁴⁷Stirner *The Ego and Its Own* pg. 7

⁴⁸Source: Wikipedia

himself is the many spirits that he has accepted before, and have now become embodied in him. This latter side throughout the whole of the album will continually grow in power until the thirteenth song (the title track of the album) where he (apparently) commits suicide. Throughout the first track in the album we are introduced to the many things that the second side subjects to the egoist. For example this second side says “I speak religion’s message clear (and I control you)/ I am denial, guilt and fear (and I control you)/ I am the prayers of the naïve (and I control you/ I am the lie that you believe (and I control you)”⁴⁹. At this point we can remember Stirner’s early question, “do truth, freedom, humanity, justice desire anything else than that you grow enthusiastic and serve them?”⁵⁰. Mr. Self Destruct is not able to get away from these other egoists and now he starts his descent through the downward spiral into the deepest, most wretched recesses of himself.

Piggy is the second track of the album. The song contains two subdued drum tracks playing a swing feel, which goes well with the acidic and satirical message that this song gives off. In this song we are exposed to another of Reznor’s recurring symbolisms, the pig. The pig is most certainly one of the adversaries of Mr. Self Destruct, but at some point they must have been close. Reznor sings “Hey pig/ nothing’s turned out the way I planned/ hey pig/ there’s a lot of things I hoped you could help me understand”⁵¹. Mr. Self-destruct was treated poorly by the pig (“black and blue and broken bones/ you left me here I’m all alone”⁵²) and this leads the main character to state his rebellion from everything unlike himself in the chorus (“Nothing can stop me now, ‘cause I don’t care anymore”⁵³). It is in this chorus that we see the main character start to become similar to Stirner who for example says, “Man must first become so completely unconcerned and reckless, so altogether without relations... so altogether indifferent to the world that even its falling in ruins would not move him”⁵⁴

Moving on, in the third track, *Heresy*, we are introduced to yet another adversary of Mr. Self Destruct, Religion. Heresy’s music is almost danceable, with a drumbeat mainly focused on 16th notes played on the hi-hat, the bass drum on the first beat, and the snare on the third. This is a standard disco drumbeat. The message is very clear in the chorus: “Your God is dead/ and no one cares/ if there is a hell I’ll see you there”⁵⁵. The first verse is interesting “He sewed his eyes shut because he is afraid to see/ He tries to tell me what I put inside of me/ He’s got the answers to ease my curiosity/ He dreamed up a god and called it Christianity”⁵⁶. Track 4, *March of the Pigs*, (also one of the album’s singles) is similar to the previous track, but where the previous tracks’ emphasis was on religion, *March of the Pigs* is concerned with society. The egoist’s true want to be free from these influences is once again present when Mr. Self-Destruct declares: “I want to watch it come down”⁵⁷.

Closer, the fifth track, is one of the most known Nine Inch Nails. This is a track dripping with so much sexuality and power; it is nigh impossible to not perceive the message here. The infamous chorus goes (subjective language here): “I want to fuck you like an animal/ I want to feel you from the inside/ I want to fuck you like an animal/ my whole existence is flawed”⁵⁸. I want to now say, as an aside, that I am well aware that it might seem as if this is not related to course material, but I have a theory where I believe we can connect the dots. What I think makes this track so interesting is the amalgamation between Mr. Self Destruct’s unique ego to the side of him that wants to accept all that

49- “Mr. Self Destruct” track 1 in *The Downward Spiral*

50- *The Ego and Its Own* pg. 6

51- “Piggy” track 2 in *The Downward Spiral*

52- Ibid

53- Ibid

54- *The Ego and its Own* pg. 22

55- “Heresy” track 3 in *The Downward Spiral*

56- Ibid

57- “March of the Pigs” track 4 in *The Downward Spiral*

58- “Closer” track 5 in *The Downward Spiral*

his enemies from the previous three tracks try to shovel his way. In fact, we can see this point even more in the track that follows, *Ruiner*, where Reznor asks “How’d you get so big/ How’d you get so strong”⁵⁹. It is at this point that the thin line between ownership of the self, and being owned by spirits almost ceases to exist. The egoist is still fully conscious of the prison he is falling into. Has the egoist become the property of the spook? Read on....

The Becoming is a poignant song. This song seems to have two types of narration, for one part it feels like in this song Mr. Self-Destruct describes himself to himself, and in other parts it is as if he is describing himself to another. With lines such as “Even when I’m right with you I’m so far away”⁶⁰ we can sense that the egoist, the true essence of Mr. Self-Destruct’s individualism and authenticity is locked away in the ego he let himself be created. Mr. Self-Destruct is well aware how damaging it is for him to be divided in the way he is; the song ends as he declares “It won’t give up it wants me dead/ Goddamn this noise inside my head”⁶¹.

The Becoming eventually ends and *I Do Not Want This*, the eighth track of the album begins. Once again the two sides inside of Mr. Self-Destruct are constantly battling for control of the egoist’s mind. The Ego attacks the spook declaring: “Don’t you tell me how I feel!”⁶², but what makes this track so curious is how it goes between submission to declaration of independence. Reznor laments “Maybe I don’t have a choice/ and maybe this is all I have/ and maybe this is a cry for help”⁶³, and it seems at this point as if he submits to the spook. But this is not the case because he, the egoist, is still very much alive and loudly proclaims “I want to know everything/ I want to be everywhere/ I want to fuck everyone in the world/ **I want to do something that matters**”⁶⁴. This line here reminds me of when Stirner said “Self-enjoyment is embittered to me by thinking I must serve another, by my fancying myself under obligation to him”⁶⁵. The egoist is still very much alive in his body and is now starting to understand slowly and surely that he can overcome the spook that has been running his life for so long.

Big Man With a Gun, Track 9, foreshadows Mr. Self-Destruct’s eminent demise. It is at this point that his egoism asserts itself and decides to take his power into his own hands. He says “maybe I’ll put a hole in your head, you know, just for the fuck of it” and “I’ve got the power”⁶⁶. A possible interpretation of this is that now the ego is starting to assert itself and actually feels how much power he has in his hands and needs to use it, just for the sake of it. The song is riddled with phallic and violent imagery, which successfully serves to create an atmosphere of reckless, chaotic use of power.

But, sadly (maybe?) this rush of power ends and for the next three tracks (*A Warm Place*, *Eraser* and *Reptile*) the spook has almost successfully taken over the egoist. The egoist himself in *The Downward Spiral* will eventually end this when he shoots himself.

A Warm Place is interesting because it is a very minimal, almost relaxed song that serves as a good contrast to the rest of the album’s hate-fueled declarations. The only line in the song is “the best thing about life is knowing you put it together”⁶⁷. The song is melancholic and serves to remind us of Stirner’s involuntary egoist, who Stirner explains that “however much he shakes and disciplines himself in the end he does it all for his sake”⁶⁸. Mr. Self-Destruct has been in charge of his actions all throughout, the spook was him. And in this moment of peace and near-silence he admits it, because he

59- “*Ruiner*” track 6 in *The Downward Spiral*

60- *The Becoming*, track 7 in *The Downward Spiral*

61- Ibid

62- “*The Becoming*” track 8 in *The Downward Spiral*

63- Ibid

64- Ibid

65- *The Ego and Its Own* pg. 318

66- “*Big Man With a Gun*” track 9 in *The Downward Spiral*

67- “*A Warm Place*” track 10 in *The Downward Spiral*

68- Ibid

truly can see things for what they are.

Eraser is a bleak track, and like other tracks in the album, splits its narration in two. First, Trent Reznor lists some of the things that the spook has done and can do to the egoist (Need, dream, find, taste, fuck, use, scar and break). But then the narration sharply changes from “Need you/ dream you/ find you”⁶⁹ to “Lose me/ hate me/ smash me/erase me”⁷⁰ and ends in “kill me/ kill me/ kill me” and so on.

Reptile is an interesting track because here Reznor finally identifies the spook as being a She. This makes me wonder, has the egoist blindly fallen in love with the spook? We have to remember that this battle Mr. Self-Destruct is fighting is internal and with himself. It is interesting to consider this track as the protagonist’s final submission to his spook. The chorus for this song goes “Oh my beautiful liar/ Oh my precious whore/ my disease my infection/ I am so impure”. The last line of this chorus, I believe, exemplifies what happens when we let the spooks take over us: we become tainted, we are no longer ourselves.

And then, suicide. *The Downward Spiral*, the thirteenth track of this album, is full of anguished screams, the track progressively gets louder and louder as it goes along, but all throughout Reznor’s voice is calm and contained; even when he says “problems have solutions/ a lifetime of fucking things up fixed in one determined flash”⁷¹. Is this similar to Camus’ idea of suicide when meeting the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus*? Who knows.

Hurt is the fourteenth and last track of this album, and if you haven’t heard it, I highly recommend it. Both the Nine Inch Nails and the Johnny Cash versions of the song perfectly convey both the sadness in this song and the narrators finally breaking through their spooks to own their ego. It is in this track that Mr. Self Destruct takes ownership for his actions. For once the spook does not show up to narrate. Many times in this song does the egoist truly see through the fake creations that the spook built for him. Reznor asks, “What have I become?”⁷², FINNALLY stepping outside of himself to see what he is now. He sees his “empire of dirt”, his “crown of shit” and his “liar’s chair”⁷³ and realizes that they are not real things. He hasn’t created a real empire for himself, and the crown he wears on his head (possibly metaphorically) is actually not a crown, it is not even valuable to himself.

This last song is important because the ego has finally risen against the spook and decided to live his own life for himself (that is, if he’s not dead from the shot he fired into his face⁷⁴). The final chorus ends with the lines “If I could start again/ a million miles away/ I would keep myself / I would find a way”⁷⁵.

Now, I am well aware that less than 50% of this essay is on Stirner. In fact, it’s probably much less than that. But I think that analyzing this album is relevant towards the course because we can see how many of the things that were troubling Stirner in his time, still occur and keep on repeating itself. Somehow both Stirner and Reznor talk about the same themes (egoism, ownership, being owned by another, spooks), and this is what makes it relevant to the course. Maybe it’s not Stirner’s direct influence that we see in works of art like this, but both the *Ego and Its Own* and *The Downward Spiral* can put you into the same self-lamenting existential trip.

The whole point of this essay was to relate Stirner to someone else to make sense of him. Sure, the connections I’ve made are abstract, and maybe they don’t even make any sense. But I think this

69- “*Eraser*” track 11 in *The Downward Spiral*

70- Ibid

71- “*The Downward Spiral*” track 13 in *The Downward Spiral*.

72- “*Hurt*” track 14 in *The Downward Spiral*

73- Ibid

74- “*The Downward Spiral*” track 13 in *The Downward Spiral*

75- “*Hurt*” track 14 in *The Downward Spiral*

album is interesting to listen to when thinking about Stirner. That is how the idea for writing this essay popped into my head, I was listening to the album while reading Stirner sometime in February. If you are into heavy industrial, but very creative music, and want to hear some amazing lyrics I highly suggest you give this album a listen. And if you try to make sense of it in Stirnerian terms... well maybe you'll understand some of the ridiculous thoughts I put in this essay.

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Anonymous

We live in a world ruled by social norms. We live in a world where there are rooms that one cannot enter. Bathrooms, living rooms, domiciles. We live in a world where one can live next to a family of four, a drug dealer, a lonely man, or a crazy cat lady and know nothing about them. We live in a world full of rushed decisions, unnecessary hassles. We flow from one place to the next, looking for our next break, to be lifted above on the shoulders of those below. To be able to take advantage of what society has created for us. To be special, to succeed. To make it, to be rich, while others are poor. But there is always another rung up the ladder. The culture continuously makes you feel shitty, feel the need to produce more, help more, continue in your bondage, continue in your toil. What can we do? What is there to but resign or rebel. Become the obnoxious alcoholic, and flaunt your shit. Yell at people in bars, start fights, fuck it all. Sing songs that others have created. What is culture? How can we make a society and ignore history. This paper is for a class about Stirner, but Stirner says distance yourself from culture. The whole idea of using Stirner! Using his ideas! Comparing his ideas to others: fucks with the whole feel of his argument. His argument is: I am Prime! I decide what I want to talk about. Everything is about me. I am everything, whatever I enjoy, what I feel, what I want, flows into the life I want. Do I let my life be dictated by others, by the culture I live in? of course I do!!! Stirner may say go against that shit but I know for what I want, I cannot ☹!! I want to study the brain!! How am I to study the brain without the biotech industry, without the accustomed culture of academia that gets all the brain instruments!?!? I go to a university that just spent a couple of tens of millions of dollars to build a brain research center!!! Fuck Yah, I Love the university!! I love the establishment, it allows me to study what I want. But does it let me be who I want to be, does it let me do other things? What is networking, what are these words thrown around, what do they mean, how do they make us what we are, why are we what I am? How do I Feel, How Do I Want, Why DO I want, Why Do I do, why do I LIVE!?!???

Feel our being, who am I, who are you? We are you?? We make ourselves, and we can recreate ourselves in any image. Fuck Gods image, fuck the perfect image. Every image is an image of creation, and we create all images. I write in a bar, I write in a class, why do we write? Why do we have language, why do we feel the need to share? Why did this class come to be? Why do I Respect Your opinion when I Can just as easily say fuck off, your shit is meaningless, and what I know as truth is better. Is might right, fuck yah it is, cause if you beat me in a fight, well, what you say goes????!!!!

What does it mean? What is home? What is life? what is sweet home? Is it what is needed? The real place where I find shit with Stirner is his essence of relation to people. Stirner relates to people as property, and I relate to you because you are my property and it is beneficial to me to relate to you. Fuck that. People are the most important. I cannot live without people, yet egoism seems to reject the idea of people and society until his last idea of a union of egoists, which, personally, seems thrown together in a shitty way without any idea of the actual way of relations of people in the world. We are socialized, and idealism of egoism is great and all, but fuck man, really! What do I really want?? The flow, the love, the feel. Without people why live? Seriously, why live? I want connections, I want flow, I want life? But what is life in the system we live in? in Canada, In America, we are stuck in a system where capitalism and socialism attack each other, and anarchism is the fuck it all destroy everything!! That's what anarchism means to most people. The anarchist cookbook is a description of how to make bombs out of common household items. Fight Club is a pretty good feel of what most people think of anarchism! But fight club is a cult. It's a destruction of the society we live in, but only perpetuated by not asking questions, and doing exactly what the culture (Mr. Durden) wants us to do? Even if the culture is the counter culture, it still puts forth ideals. But what are ideals but my people wanting something/? Is want so bad? Society today prolly came about through wants. What kind of want? The want for stability? The want for living, the want for fucking, what are the essential wants? We can use evolution, but it's a concept that we came up with. It's a cause and effect that we see!! We come up with statistics to say our perception, our INEVITABLE conclusions are not right!! We are subject to bias, that we only see if we take a step back! Is that step back elitist, does it fuck with people, does it destroy a real whim of society, of many people coming together to express a sentiment!!??? Why is society the way it is? Is anarchism a response to what the world is like or is anarchism a fundamental want of the human spirit? And what the fuck is the human spirit?

Why do we give a shit? Why are all these systems of relations in place. Why am I writing this in a bar where karaoke is being sung instead of interacting with people? What the fuck is that? Because this class has made me think about each interaction, and why it makes me feel the way I feel. Why I understand, why I think, why I feel society is fucking with me? Why? Why? Why? Is that what we have, the questioning? The rebellion, the feel of being against something? What something? But what are we for? What are we doing, and why are we doing it? Is it just a reaction to what is, or is it really a way of being?

Personally, I love my life!! It flows in so many ways and I feel so many vibes! I feel teenage wasteland, where they are all wasted! I feel that! I have been in situations where that is the vibe! But why is that the vibe? Why question!? Why question the desire to burn, the desire to fuck, the desire toss it all to wind? And I can equate all of them! Just there, with words, I can equate abstract concepts with the joy of eating, the joy of fucking, the joy of fighting, the joy of whatever makes you feel joy!! I can feel all of them, I can feel every flow. And if wanted to, I could relate it to some person who may have had the idea before me! But, really, fuck that! My ideas are my own! I would rather come up with my own shit, my own way of relating to people!

And how do we relate! Through mutual disdain of culture! Through mutual drinking, through mutual desire, through mutual thoughts! But do we know that our thoughts are mutual? We use words, but do we communicate what we want? I can construct a labyrinth of words, to be read in any order, as Julio Cortazar did, or I can bring the labyrinth into my work, and construct insanity and misdirection in words as Borges did! I could inspire a library of Babel where everything has to be, because of the infinity of combinations, but does it really mean anything?

Maybe I wish to bring magical realism into it, a technique developed by the dude who wrote one hundred years of solitude. A whole world in a small village, with the legends, the people, the flow, and bring the question of reality into it. Is reality what we feel, what we are, what we flow. How do we understand!!!!? Do we understand anything as anyone else understands it? Can the words we say influence reality!!!!???

Or perhaps I will follow the writings of Mr. Hunter S. Thompson! Gonzo Journalism, describe my consciousness as I fuck with it, with ether, with alcohol, with LSD, with mescaline, with alcohol, with acid, with psilocybin, with the adrenal gland of the human body? Or I can chill with the craziest bike gang of the time, and realize that my own life is just as intense!!! Fuck with guns, with people, with weed, with the idea of journalism itself! Why is there gossip, why do we care what any of these fuckers had to say, and why did they want to share it with the world??!! Why did this man want to share his experiences with the world, and why is journalism a profession, why do so many want to know whats going on somewhere else? Why is gossip something that exists in every society, whether it's the middle or high school society, or the first world to third world gossip? Or even whats going on in a different class, instead of the blue collar class, te parasite class, the politicians, or the drug war, or whatever!? Why is journalism a thing, what is that curisosity going on in every level of human interaction!! I want to know more about you!!!!!!

That's the essential irony of this entire class!! What I have gained from Stirner is do what you want! Do what you want, as long as it makes you happy, we knew it when we were kids, and now we are socialized into new norms! Now we critique other writers, we critique our fellows, we fall into camps, radicals, hippies, free thinkers, marketers, captalists, libertarians, communists, anarchists, sexists, racists, rapers, criminals, dicks, bithces, sluts, fuckheads, shitheads, dickmunchers, addicts, saints, religious, atheist, agnostic, the labels go on and on! We even critique the whole idea of writing, the scientist laughs at art, the mathematician looks down upon the number challenged, Richard Dawkins is an asshole, yet Carl Sagan was a poet, and George Carlin and Bill Hicks thought for themselves! We have the most beautiful music, and trap and dubstep give each other shit, where Wolfmother follows in the footsepts of Zepplin and Hendrix!!! Where did the love generation go, why has it evaporated to the back of society! Acid was promising, MDMA helped post traumatic stress patients, and sure we can help them when they reconsolidate and get rid of a lot of the stress by stopping reconsolidation (if you want the facts just email me)! But where is the curiosity into substances! Where has it gone, where are we now? Why is shamanism, spirituality, chakra, and all that laughed at or subjected to the corner by Western culture! Like it knows so much better? Science, the essence, the epitome of western thought, has no idea of consciousness, wherass shamanism, spirituality, budhism, and chakra have a much better idea of consciousness, yet still our society is like BAHAAAAHAHAH! Well fuck that!!

I took this course because a friend told me it would be dope! And rad it has been, I have looked into many philosophies, many thoughts I have never had before! But this is a course to try something new, to flow outside of the STRUCTURE that has been imposed upon us! The whole idea of word limits, the whole idea of beurocracy making sure something has happened in this course, goes against the man we have imposed above us, and has to be 50% of what we talk about that in an essay. Well fuck that, I don't give a shit, I really don't. Every word I Have written of this paper has been intozicated. Over the last week I have added to it when I whip out my computer and add drunken thoughts, but are they really worse? Or are they free of imposition, free of all the restraint, like fuck, I even made motherfuckin paragraphs, so fuck all your shit! I like cursing, fuckidy fuck fuck, motherfucking fuck fuck!! Love guys, seriously, whoever reads this, whenever it is read, love should flow from the writng, it's a ramble with no real point. It expresses sentiment that I can expand upon in

life, but can words on a computer, typed words, really capture everything I want to say? Of course not, never, because response is essential, and response in words, in conversation, in person, that's the primeness!! That's the essence, that is a fixed idea I can prescribe to, communication, talking, being with people!

People are essential, talking is essential! But words can never really communicate everything, only being with people, forming COMMUNITY, forming ESSENCE, forming UNION, forming a sense of BELONGING!! And the words are capitalized because they cannot be expressed, what they are is an understanding within the context, an understanding among people, and understanding that flows from being, from COMMUNICATING, and DOING, from BEING with EACH OTHER, and LOVING, and SUPPORTING, and LOVING. !! always, love, always feel, always flow!!

We flow in a circle, a circle that never ends. Our entire point is to reach the middle of the circle, but to reach the middle we have to be able to describe the middle, and this is impossible. So we continually flow around it, never quite making it. Language, the fact that each experience is yours, stops the one from finding the center. The center is a neverending quest, a neverending quest that never ends. We think we find, we do the most ridiculous things to find it, we drink, we come up with ways of control, we work at mental hospitals, but will we find it? It is a quest. Life is a quest for the center! And the inability to reach the center makes it all the more worth living, because as we reach for the center we move towards love peace happiness!!! We should all move towards love flow and happiness..... and if you want to know how I (IGAL STERIN) feel about philosophy, why I feel all this is pointless meandering and the conceptual idea of infinity basically renders it useless read Hopscotch by Julio Cortazar, Library of Babel by Julio Borges! Or ask me for some other beat generation Latin American authors who reveal the pointlessness of writing, while writing, and making a living of writing, and thinking about writing, post modernism that emphasizes the point of feeling, cause feeling is irrational.

Thank You for allowing me express myself!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**SOLIDARITY, FRIENDSHIP, FLOW
TURN ON, TUNE IN, DROP OUT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

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Anonymous

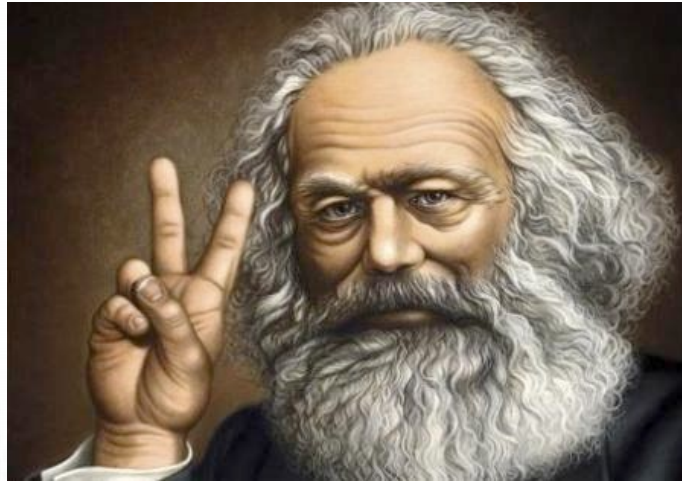
I don't want to write this paper. So fuck this paper. Am I an Egoist?

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FUCK TITLES

El Taco Bell (pseudonyms are fun o_O)

So let's get those academic requirements out of the way, shall we?



Good, now to get to the good stuff.

/For those too dense to understand my brilliance, A Picture is worth a thousand words. I know you have trouble with math so two pictures is worth 2000 words. There saved ya the time. 1000 for Max and 1000 for Marx/

Clearly, Marx has already won since he is such a chill dude according to this picture while Max only cares about getting cancer. Won what you may probably not ask, though I will answer as if you did. Well he won the argument! Though I know you, oh faithful reader, do not care. For when one accepts a conclusion ahead of time, there is no need for an argument. Yet remember, this paper, despite its academic requirements should not be graded on logic, academic standards or sense. The mark should be given based on that tingle in your balls or the wetness in your panties for the lesser sex (How do you have time to read books and take courses? Shouldn't you have children by now?).

You know there is a name for someone who accepts a conclusion based off a subjective experience. We call these people religious and their ideals are beliefs. Thus if one simply states the world will be better if we dissolve governments and form unions of anarchists, this is a belief. Those who accept this unfounded assertion are followers of the religion of Max Stirner, or religiously anarchists.

Interestingly enough there is a divide in the religion of Anarchy. Stirner claims there are no such things as rights. Our hippy-born-again-punk Anarchist, Penny Rimbaud, claims that humans have rights and something like a duty towards other people. This isn't too surprising though. I mean look at Christians, Catholics, Protestants, etc.

It is also funny how, since Anarchy isn't really an argument, a difference of perspective changes things. Where you see an oppressive system, El Taco Bell sees a group of people enabling each other. I searched long a hard to find this 'system' but I couldn't. It must be an ideal but those don't exist, right?

There once was an Anarchist watching a child try to learn to ride a bike. The child fell. The Anarchist told the child to give up trying to ride the bike and walk. The child said they wanted to ride around the world, to help with chores, to be able to play with friends, to teach others to ride. The child got back up and tried riding again, and once again fell. The Anarchist said, "See I told you, riding bikes is a waste of time." The Child muttered that they had ridden farther before falling but the Anarchist refused to acknowledge this fact. The Child ignored the Anarchist and got back on the bike. The Anarchist continued to moan that riding bikes is a waste of time and that the Child will never figure it out. The last thing the Anarchist saw was the Child riding off into the sunset to be with its friends and make the world cool. The Anarchist stood there, alone, sighed, and started walking, alone, towards the horizon.

- Wow Story time was fun, eh kids!? Wasn't the Anarchist a loser?

Here let me tell you another story. Remember Just like South Park, the characters are all fictitious and if there is any resemblance to actual figures, it is purely coincidental.

There once were two Dudes, let's call them Max and Karl. Karl was sitting there patiently listening to Max. I am not sure why because Max was literally talking out of his ass which couldn't have been pleasant for Karl. The thing was that Karl had a point to prove and it was personal with Max. Karl wished to rip Max apart and drag his, already at the time, forgotten name through the mud. So Karl and Forgotten Name (FN from now on to save my hand strength for masturbation later when the intellectual type gets old.) are talking, well, actually, FN is just yelling. FN starts yelling about GEIST.

Now, my oh so unintelligent reader, GEIST can mean multiple things. It can mean MIND, GHOST or SPIRIT. Now, MIND tends to be associated with humans and their ability to think. For some people, MIND is synonymous with brain. GHOST is like those things that haunt old mansions. SPIRIT can be a soul, a quality of courage, a prevailing thought of a particular time, Whatever!

Now whoever initially told me this story started using spirit in place of the word geist. FN never really defined geist/spirit for Karl as he was too busy talking out of his ass.

Since this conversation clearly confuses most and Karl will be tossed aside as too logical, try my stupid example!

Example: My essay needs to be long. I want my essay to be perfect (Is the perfect essay long or short, what if it is short though my essay needs to be long?) The essay wants to eat a sandwich. (Wait, what the fuck? my essay is a subject that wants stuff now?) The essays want to take over the world. (So not only is my essay alive and hungry but other essays have popped up out of nowhere and are bent on world domination... great! can this day get any worse? I just wanted to write a (or is it the?) perfect essay.)

-Reading this doesn't make much fucking sense now does it? What is this essay that I am talking about? And what are the steps I left out that got me from quantity of words, to quality of essay, to a subject, to multiple subjects? IT IS NONSENSE!!!! HELLO!!!!

NONSENSE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR FUCKING FACE, IN A FEW SENTENCES!!!!

If it isn't useful for FN's point, then why write it?

Nothing is explained! Everything is asserted!

The death of idealism? Did it die? Did FN show that ideas are empty if they do not come from within? Nah, he just said it! GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU, YOU RELIGIOUS TOOL!

Karl continuously shows FN's disconnect from reality. FN sets up his own version of history, of politics, his own ontology, etc. He then topples them. FN has never actual touched on reality. He has not attacked anything external of himself, which is why no one pays attention to FN. He has ignored empirical relations!

The union of egoists is an ideal! A pipe dream! You assume it will work with no basis, no

understanding of human nature because you threw human nature out the window! Look at Rimbaud claiming the motorcycle gang wasn't a bunch of Anarchists (or at least proper Anarchists)... They are one spectrum of Anarchism, bathing in the chaotic end of human Nature while these hippie punks bathe in the opposite ordered, loving end.

What is the Ego, dear FN? What is this self you speak of and where did it come from? Is there a 'you' calling these shots and forming these truths? Perhaps you are just a preformed cog in a machine, with some emergent consciousness which makes you feel special. FN was born useless and died useless, all his awareness of his 'uniqueness' could never change this fact.

Hmm. Turns out this egoism/anarchy thing is quite enjoyable, yay for me! I should say whatever I want without considering other people all the time! After all, they are just my objects for my own enjoyment! It is so enjoyable calling out idiots and watching them squirm and fume, powerless to retort. Kinda like calling out the fat, ugly chick at a prom and watching her run home crying. Fucking classic, I'll tell my grandkids about how much enjoyment I got from that fat, ugly object of mine.

Hmm, Yes, Old Chap! That was quite a clever little read! Like a Jackson Pollack or Andy Warhol, pure shit on the surface but oh so deep... yes deep like the deep end of a pool filled with shit, deep shit. [I know you have a feces fetish ASSMAN(Seinfeld reference, don't cry), so lay the grades on me!] hmm yes tea time, cheerio!

MY MAGNUM OPUS!

/Work of fiction not intended to hurt fragile egos (what are those anyways, like waffles?)/

Referenced Stirner's Ego and It's own and Rimbaud's hippie story from Crass - A series of shock slogans and mindless token tantrums.

Yes Tantrums are all they are from these childish Anarchists. Go glue more politicians' doors shut, really changes things for the better!

-El Taco Bell

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A Feminist/Queer Reading of Max Stirner

brought to you by Surly Prolixxxx

During the course of this seminar Max Stirner has come under fire from many students who feel that his hardline individualism, perhaps epitomized by his proclamation that might equals right, is a callous and cutthroat doctrine that emanates from the ignorance which his own privileged social position affords him. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the language and metaphors that he deployed echoing colonial conquest imagery, and by his general glorification of strength and power over mutual aid and cooperation. Such a philosophy could be interpreted as lauding an omnipotent hypermasculine ideal while marginalizing those who, for a variety of reasons, are less well disposed to single-handedly launch such a campaign against the system. While not denying the validity of such critiques, the aim of

this essay is to perform a feminist and queer reading of Stirner to illustrate how his paradigms can just as easily be used towards radical emancipatory ends aimed at disrupting hegemonic hierarchies rather than reproducing them. It does so by first examining how the philosophic system developed in *The Ego and Its Own* can be fruitfully employed to deconstruct the gender binary and heteronormativity, and subsequently patriarchy, and by exploring why such oppressive institutions are inherently incompatible with egoism. It then aims to dispel the notion that the doctrine of egoism is only accessible to a privileged male demographic through a discussion of two powerful womyn whose works we read in class, Sybil Dorset and Valerie Solanas, and how they can be regarded as models of Stirnerean egoism.

The gender binary is a term used to connote the bifurcation of humanity into two counterpoising gender categories, male and female, based on one's genitalia and the subsequent sex one is assigned at birth. It is a social construction which is naturalized so as to appear invisible, immutable and essential, so much so that its ideology is pervasively present in virtually all aspects of social life. The gender binary circumscribes the parameters of what is considered acceptable behaviour, aesthetic and desire in order to situate people within a distinct hierarchy. In her work *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler, a prominent queer theorist, conceives of gender as “a form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects (Butler 48).” In other words, gender provides a template which informs us how to act and perceive ourselves in relation to other subjects, bestowing privilege upon some at the expense of others. The gender binary is the central pillar which upholds patriarchy, which can be defined as a paternalistic system of male social dominance and its accompanying female subordination. The handmaiden of the gender binary is heteronormativity, or the assumption of compulsory heterosexuality that only legitimates desire when it exists between opposing genders.

Stirner's framework lends itself quite nicely to an analysis of the gender binary, and a feminist reading of *The Ego and Its Own* provides a useful lens with which to deconstruct patriarchal social relations, in addition to an impassioned call to liberate oneself from the yoke of gender based - and for that matter, all - forms of oppression. At the crux of the project of Stirnerean egoism is the denouncement of all externally imposed fixed ideals in favour of developing a unique identity. For Stirner a fixed ideal is a totalizing paragon that by its nature cannot ever be fulfilled, which requires one to constantly strive towards it. A fixed ideal requires that one enshrine it as sacred and ceaselessly submit to it; its fixed nature indicates that one cannot strike it down in an instance where one's inner desires would transgress its prescripts. By this same token, submitting to the dictates of a fixed ideal in the vain hope of embodying it necessarily involves suppressing one's uniquely generated convictions, desires and caprices, which Stirner terms one's ego. To Stirner the process of renouncing one's uniqueness in favour of anything “higher” constitutes religion. Stirner advocates purging these “alien spooks” or externally generated ideals, ultimately the work of an artist other than oneself, from one's psyche and assuming the role of the creative nothing, “the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything (Stirner 18).” Becoming the creative nothing involves exalting one's uniqueness above all else, and allowing that which is most inexorable to oneself to determine the character of one's life, namely one's “ownness.” Stirner conceives of ownness as the most fundamental level of one's unique self: “Ownness [is] my whole being and existence, it is I myself (Stirner 88).”

Therefore, in the context of Stirner's paradigm, the gender binary is a prime example of a religion. This insidious normative institution erects ideals of male and female and inscribes them upon individuals' bodies, who are then expected to conform to an arbitrary list of ascribed characteristics which are deemed to correspond them due to their genitals. The ideal categories of feminine and masculine are defined from without, and require constant upkeep and policing in order to be suitably fulfilled. Judith Butler's theory of performativity describes gender as an ongoing social performance necessitating an elaborate array of props and scripts. In Stirnerean terms, the artificiality and maintenance involved in submitting to an ideal gender makes it the equivalent of striving towards a fixed ideal, and therefore a religious act that is a betrayal of one's ownness. The gender binary then is most certainly a structure incompatible with a Stirnerean worldview, where individuals would not allow

their ownness to be circumscribed by fixed ideals. A queer reading of Stirner naturally follows from this, since without the gender binary the distinctions of hetero/homosexuality could not exist. Stirner's call to reject religion and embrace ownness can be taken up as a rallying cry for a genderqueer society liberated from the rigid dichotomies that currently dominate conceptions of gender and sexuality, and from the oppressive mechanisms wielded to enforce these artificial binaries.

Stirner's major work in a sense aims to reclaim the term egoism from the negative connotations with which it has been imbued by a society enslaved to fixed ideals. For him, the egoist is the individual who prioritizes ownness over subjection to religious strictures, and as such is the only truly authentic artist that exists. Stirner uses the term 'artist' in a broad sense that encompasses creating physical works of art but that situates the primary location of one's art as the life that one lives. In this seminar we read a work by one individual who unquestionably epitomizes Stirner's conception of the egoist - to a far greater extent, even, than he himself. Indeed, she is the truest incarnation of a Stirnerian egoist that I have ever encountered. Sybil Dorset (to isolate only one of her myriad aliases for simplicity's sake) is a trans-womyn who, aside from producing breathtaking artwork and brilliant zines, lives an incredible semi-transient life that skirts the periphery of legality and constitutes a staunch rejection of socially dictated conventions. Her life is unique in every sense, and every aspect of her person radiates a scintillating ownness. In my opinion she provides an inspiring example illuminating how rad the world could be if its so deeply entrenched conformist tendencies could be overcome, as Stirner envisions.

Sybil's article entitled "How to Kill Queer Scum" demonstrates how insurrectionary subversion of hegemony can be exercised on an individual level. Stirner draws a distinction between revolution, which he perceives as the overthrow of one dominion in order to erect another in its stead, and insurrection, which he sees as an individual elevation above and noncompliance with oppressive systems (Stirner 157). In his own words, "The revolution commands one to make arrangements, the insurrection demands that [one] rise or exalt [one]self (Stirner 157)." For Stirner revolution is always in the service of a higher cause than oneself, and as such is merely another religion. By contrast, insurrection is an egoistic act because its end goal is liberating oneself from external domination. Sybil lives her entire life as an insurrectionary act, prioritizing her ownness above all else regardless of the negative consequences inherent in implementing this choice from within the confines of a society that is homicidally hostile to uniqueness. Her article describes how she was brutally beaten with a pipe, almost to death, as a result of her gender non-conformity. She then goes on to detail numerous other instances of queer-bashing which she has been the target of, generally provoked by her defiant response to interpellations of "Tranny" or "Faggot." Sybil candidly recounts these harrowing hate crimes in an astonishingly lighthearted, almost humorous tone, which is in my opinion emblematic of the extent to which she has elevated herself above the hatred with which hegemonic narratives inscribe her body as deviant. Her resistance to internalizing these discourses is further displayed when she sarcastically parodies the rampant heterosexism and trans-misogynistic repudiation which she encounters all too frequently, making such statements as:

As you may know queers are basically revolting wretched garbage people who are human trash and the kind of garbage people no one would ever miss. The fact that I'm sitting in a diner with fag waiters in the middle of San Fagsisco with fags and dykes of all age combinations walking around holding hands in public might make that theory look discredited slightly. I've also been crashing with friends a lot and most of them are queers or trans people or both. It's as if there is a happy friendly community of them or something.

Sybil Dorset unabashedly rejoices in her subversion of the status quo and never even for a moment relinquishes her ownness, her effervescent egoism radiating like a shining beacon against the dull monochromatic backdrop of mindless religious monotony in which she is mired. Her article illustrates just how radical the act of defying a fixed ideal is amidst a society of fervent believers, and the tremendous strength that it takes to perform such a transgression.

A more ambiguous, yet not unrelated, figure vis-à-vis Stirnerean egoism is the notorious Valerie Solanas, author of *The SCUM Manifesto* and would-be assassin of Andy Warhol. Compared to Solanas' vision of a utopian all-female world resulting from the genocide of men, Stirner's work can no longer boast of being inflammatory and appears positively tame. Though her work reads like a brilliant satire of the misogynistic (or at best, androcentric) history of post-Enlightenment thought, parodying all the intellectual titans from Freud to Marx to Sartre, various details from her personal life seem to suggest that this piece was not intended to be facetious. Taken as a serious political treatise it is plagued with many problems, most glaringly an uninterrogated reproduction of gender essentialism which aims to overthrow patriarchy by eliminating all men. With this proposal, she fails to engage in the critical deconstruction of the gender binary which could result in an egalitarian society free of domination on the part of either gender. However, what is most pertinent here is to consider whether or not Solanas should be considered an egoist, a question which is open to debate. She does not lack for ownness, but the programme she articulates is clearly revolutionary in character. *The SCUM Manifesto* presents the blueprint for an ideal society which, despite its lack of achieving a widespread following, renders it a religion. Valerie Solanas is therefore living in the service of an ideal, but it is her *own* ideal; to use Stirnerean terms, she is the creator and it is her creature. How then to insert her into Stirner's framework? I am inclined to consider her an egoist because she is an artist and a creator whose life stands as a display of uncompromising iconoclasm, and because though she serves a cause greater than herself it is an entirely self-generated and therefore egoistic one. An example taken from Solanas' personal life also testifies to the breadth of her egoism: her infamous shooting of Andy Warhol was motivated by a (mistaken) belief that he was conspiring to steal her writing without compensating her. She was willing to murder someone rather than allow him to appropriate her artistic creatures, a chilling testament of her resolve not to relinquish her property and thereby her power, for in the words of Stirner "my power *is* my property (Stirner 100)."

Sybil Dorset and Valerie Solanas both embody Stirnerean egoism through their uncompromising ownness, which compels them to challenge patriarchy despite the risks they face in doing so. Sybil's disobedience with the laws of the gender binary is brutally punished by cissexist zealots, but she nonetheless resists internalizing their religion at the expense of compromising her ownness. Valerie Solanas' scathing denouncement of the condition of women in patriarchal society led her to advocate for its violent overthrow. Both of these womyn demonstrate that Stirnerean egoism is not only the preserve of privileged men but rather can be exercised by anyone who refuses to capitulate to hegemonic domination. Max Stirner presents us with a radical proposition: to liberate ourselves from all socially prescribed fixed ideals that seek to define and limit who we are and what we can be, and to take the task of self-creation entirely into our own hands. This is the most fundamental tenet of Stirnerean egoism, a beautiful proposal whose unparalleled emancipatory potential in my opinion transcends any cumbersome or problematic language which the author uses to convey it. A feminist and queer reading of Stirner demonstrates how egoism is an effective tool in dismantling the mechanisms of domination used to sustain patriarchy, namely the gender binary and heteronormativity, but we need not stop there. Stirner's ideology could just as easily be applied to overthrow any prescriptive system of oppression, and as such is an invaluable tool in combating hegemony in order to build a free society.

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Maximum Stirminar

Nor! L'Orb

I once saw a paper shredder working. Whole piles of paper were fed into the machine at one end, and out of the other came fluffy straw, which could be used for all sorts of things. It was used for packing round and protecting valuables, for safe storage. We are the paper, or the straw (Wright 42).

I – Overture

Max Stirner presents a challenge to educators – how are they to help individuals without prescribing a standardized formula for success? How can they teach without indoctrinating? How can they help individuals actualize themselves and awaken their innermost passions? When I first read his work, this task appeared as a call to action. Immediately I attempted to orchestrate an environment where individuals could freely explore themselves without being told what to think or who to be – I attempted to create a place where unrestricted discourse could take place and individuals could make up their own minds – a place where individuals could choose themselves – I started a seminar. However, I was unsuccessful in liberating the seminar from the claws of the state and make it my own – the environment was instantaneously stifled. Parts of the course's structure were forced upon me; I was not permitted to dispose of them when they ceased to be of use – grading, systematization, discipline and hierarchicalization could not be avoided in this context. Ultimately, I recognized that self-realization did not need an environment in which to be defended. My peers and comrades were already actualizing themselves – and perhaps they could not help but realize themselves. Indeed, the inevitable result of planning, posturing, and schematization was a class in which discourse became routine and totalitarian, another part of the iron-system. If one seeks to actually help individual students, they cannot do this within the state, as state sanctioned education is capable of nothing more than the endless dichotomization between “correct” and “incorrect” modes of being.

II – Stirner's Proposition

Stirner's challenge to academics runs something as follows: school, especially higher education, is an institution designed to regulate discourse and action. At the most fundamental level, its goal is to enshrine specific modes of behaviour and value judgements while delegitimizing others, and to ensure the reproduction of this hierarchy by instilling it into its students. To plan a syllabus is to demarcate what the terms of a class are – what will be discussed and what won't. To create assignments is to set up a series of regulations and tasks that individuals must perform. They must regiment and train themselves in order to complete them. Schools are regulated by the state and as such Stirner proposes that “in bidding freedom of instruction keep within the due bounds, the state at the same time fixes the scope of freedom of thought (*Ego* 304).” Indeed, within state-sanctioned education, one can only run a class in particular ways; the goal of a class is to turn people into an abstract concept – the proper person. Just as Stirner proposed, schoolmasters serve Man, and therefore they cut off the heads of individuals (Stirner 74). In our bleak world one must not actualize themselves in the way they see fit within the academy – one can only act like an academic.

However, early in his writings, Stirner proposed that we should seek a shift in education away

from a focus on the non-voluntary and programmatic learning towards something different. He was a proponent of the necessary decline of non-voluntary learning and rise of the self-assured will which perfects itself in the “glorious sunlight of the free person”, proposing that “knowledge must die and rise again as will and create itself anew each day as a free person” (*Education* 15). He wanted us to break free of convention and follow our beliefs to only learn as we see fit, to have each come to a self-understanding and live their own knowledge. The Stirnarian way of education was a beautiful dream that inspired me.

III – The School

To Stirner, moral influence is the chief ingredient of our education (Stirner 263). The role of state institutions of learning is moral education, how to act and how to not act. Everything was set in place to train us into a particular brand of morality that requires a certain metaphysical view and ontology. The teacher is the main perpetrator of the whole operation – the real lobotomist.

TEACHER.

YOU FUCKERS. YOU FUCKING CONSUMERS. YOU EAT THE YOUNG. YOU EAT YOUR PRISONERS. YOU MEASURE YOURSELF BY THE WORDS YOU PUT IN OUR MOUTHS.

YOUR TRUTH IS THE MEASURE OF OUR FEAR. YOU ARE NOT BLIND. IT IS THE REFLECTION OF YOUR OWN FEAR. FEAR AND PAIN. YOU YOU PLAN AND TRAIN. YOU WIND UP AND LET LOOSE. TEAR THE INFANTS. TOWER AND TREMBLE AND STRUT AND BOUCE AND GESTURE. YOU ENTERTAIN AND YOU MAIM.

YOU ARE THE SYMBOL OF ALL AUTHORITY.

YOU ARE THE FACE OF MOTHER, FATHER, SOLDIER, POLICEMAN, PRIEST, GOD, DEVIL, TORMENTOR, DECEIVOR, JAILOR, BOMB. YOU USE IT, YOU KNOW YOU DO. YOU ARE SHIT, TEACHER. LAZY, PRETENTIOUS, MEAN-SPIRITED, AND COMPLACENT (Wright 41).

The teacher’s goal is fundamentally to create a dichotomy between what is permitted and what is not. At their disposal they have a system of grades which they deploy to create a hierarchy. State schooling is a process of extremely structured authoritative indoctrination, students are made complacent to and participants in the construction of the values of late industrial capitalism. They are led to believe that obeying the position of existing social institutions will bring them success in life and that questioning authority or striving towards individuality has negative connotations. Public education in state schools does not provide students with a free forum of expression or choice but rather a distorted perspective on history, often free from depictions of the colonial, gendered, ableist, sexist, ageist, elitist, oppressive and violent nature of our society. In this vein, public education is an institution without freedom of choice, where information is presented and discussed without room for dissenting input – *students buy a mindset*.

The student body thus becomes stifled, scared and measured against a distorted normality in a high stress environment under authoritative control. Students are trained for office work, factories and battlefields by professors who have become equally indoctrinated by similar systemic practices. These students ultimately learn very little save for how to obey others. They are like Foucault's disciplined soldier,

something that can be made; out of formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constant runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silent into the automatism of habit (Foucault 135).

School serves the purpose of engraining specific strict regimentation into unique beautiful bodies. By

the end of the education process everyone is contaminated by the academy's normalizing power. In the course of their education, if students do something the school, and by extension the state, thinks is wrong, they are punished. They are given bad grades or extra work to do, and they are deprived of a little freedom in locales such as academic probation, detention, etc. with progressively more being taken away if they don't accept the school ideal. If they do not listen to this logic, they will be made an example of, humiliated or attacked through parents and finally they will be thrown out of school. Then, the students are sent to psychologists and psychiatrists that attempt to force a retraining or modification of behavior. Students end up repressing real opinions and "toeing the line".

IV – My Intercourse (Fucking Up)

Ignorantly I thought I could break free from a sterile grey world – the academy, the beloved academy – it could be changed! *So I set off with my goal*, to preach the good news of Stirnerian own egoism; an egoism which calls us to joy over ourselves, which calls us back to ourselves, which says come to yourself (Stirner 148). My aim was to give a seminar without an "ought to", without a "thou shalt" – to say nothing and let others decide their own fate – to revel in the collision of minds attempting to grapple with their own uniqueness. I did not want to impart feelings, but to arouse them. A notion which Stirner elucidates in the following passage:

The difference is, then, whether feelings are imparted to me or only aroused. Those which are aroused are my own, egoistic, because they are not as feelings drilled into me, dictated to me, and pressed upon me; but those which are imparted to me I receive, with open arms - I cherish them in me as a heritage, cultivate them, and am possessed by them. Who is there that has never, more or less consciously, noticed that our whole education is calculated to produce feelings in us, impart them to us, instead of leaving their production to ourselves however they may turn out? If we hear the name of God, we are to feel veneration; if we hear that of the prince's majesty, it is to be received with reverence, deference, submission; if we hear that of morality, we are to think that we hear something inviolable; if we hear of the Evil One or evil ones, we are to shudder. The intention is directed to these feelings, and he who should hear with pleasure the deeds of the "bad" would have to be "taught what's what" with the rod of discipline. Thus stuffed with imparted feelings, we appear before the bar of majority and are "pronounced of age." Our equipment consists of "elevating feelings, lofty thoughts, inspiring maxims, eternal principles." The young are of age when they twitter like the old; they are driven through school to learn the old song, and, when they have this by heart, they are declared of age. (Stirner 61)

To arouse feelings I attempted to show students material that was relevant to liberation. I attempted to make everything as non-coercive as possible. The class was to be horizontal, we would all grade each other, care about each other and construct a community. It seemed as if nothing could go wrong. No one would have to do the work if they didn't want to. The students even had the option of changing the syllabus to their liking. Yet they didn't totally forsake the academy.

V – Fugue of Failure

The syllabus became stifling. I feel like I had regulated discourse by even proposing any readings – the students should have been able to choose for themselves. Soon, the school pressured me to give assignments and grade – *we wouldn't want students not to have grades would we?* Everything amounted to stress, pointless and infuriating tasks most in the class wouldn't ordinarily use themselves for. How were we to live with respect for each other when we were supposed to be each other's enemies? Tormentors who tell each other we are not good enough. Ultimately, I could not escape the bureaucracy of the institution. *Everything fell apart from the inside. My peers immediately turned back to previously trite systems of evaluation, placing works against each other on a numerical scale, first to*

worst. They did not look at the people that wrote the texts, did not seek the beauty in difference –they did not comprehend that everyone had something to share in their own way.

The course structure prevented students from prying and poking around at their own discretion in search of their own truth. The institution has a heavy stake in things going on as the state prescribes. Some students even reinforced this idea.

Regardless of the department, papers are arguments backed by evidence. Evidence can come from philosophical texts, literature, studies, etc. If you don't like the framework the institution forces on you, then go write on your own time. – ASTU 400G Student

Students were forced to rate each other, while they loathed writing the essays. They detested having to reference things in the academy, yet forced each other to do so. The result of the institutional pressure, which I attempted to brush off through a series of checks and balances, was the repetition of structures of labelling and hierarchy. Rather than a place where individuals could help each other actualize their own selves, the class environment caused students to police each other and replicate the structures that I had loathed to begin with and set up the class to critically deconstruct.

We had become a category of Stiner's regulatory police – “soldiers, officials of all kinds, those of justice, education, etc. - in short, the whole "machinery of the state"” (*Ego* 104). Of course we interacted with each other to a certain extent, but we also policed each other's behaviour through grading; we were still further policed by the institution into writing assignments. The school permeated my seminar by forcing students to do readings and write for a grade. Like in Stirner's time, the school held the function of “forcing them to mental culture” (*Ego* 200). Students must be academic; they must operate in the academy. If a student rebels against the ideology of the state they stand alone and isolated.

Indeed, Valerie Solanas was right when she said that “love can't flourish in a society based upon money and meaningless work” (Solanas 9). Students were being forced to correct each other – as if they could have done other than what they did. If they were being forced to do work, it was meaningless and if it was their own it was beyond grading. Why did we need to be so harsh, why wouldn't the institution let us be and learn in our own ways?

In the end, the task was too overwhelming. A discourse developed in which the message of finding ourselves fell flat – all that remained were the oppressive structures of the institution. Write this; read that; receive this grade; etc. I became totally disillusioned with everything. Regardless of what information is presented by a teacher, it will inevitably be biased and I no longer feel comfortable organizing or justifying academic purists. I feel completely and hopelessly overwhelmed and incapable of doing any more. Anyone involved in the creation or facilitation of any type of discourse within the state academy is a lobotomist, dictator and executioner; a censor and a creator of a proper morality. In this regard I give my apologies that I ignorantly and arrogantly expected this course to be something different.

Like Stirner, I had become the discontented school-master who based arguments about revolution and rebellion “on satisfaction and dissatisfaction” (Marx). I had envisioned a class where we could shrug off the structures of the academy in favor of forging exciting new ways to connect with each other and ourselves, and I felt hopeful about this notion. Yet, both students and the academy caused the opposite to happen. No modification of any syllabus could have improved things.

VI – Expectancy

Perhaps I set out to prove that we were unique, but could anyone in the class do anything besides in their *own* way? I do not think the seminar was even necessary to illustrate this point. Just like Stirner's critics, so too did my seminar comrades act in their own way, either reinforcing the system, or not, in their own way.

Stirner dares to say that Feuerbach, Hess and Szeliga are egoists. Indeed, he is content here with saying nothing more than if he had said Feuerbach does absolutely nothing but the

Feuerbachian, Hess does nothing but the Hessian, and Szeliga does nothing but the Szeligan; but he has given them an infamous label. Does Feuerbach live in a world other than his own? Does he perhaps live in Hess's world, in Szeliga's world, in Stirner's world? Since Feuerbach lives in this world, since it surrounds him, isn't it the world that is felt, seen, thought by him, i.e., in a Feuerbachian way? He doesn't just live in the middle of it, but is himself its middle; he is the center of his world. And like Feuerbach, no one lives in any other world than his own, and like Feuerbach, everyone is the center of his own world. World is only what he himself is not, but what belongs to him, is in a relationship with him, exists for him. (Stirner's Critics 19)

I do not believe anyone in the seminar could have acted otherwise and though we ended up policing each other, we also all reacted to the education system in our own unique ways, developing unique conclusions.

Some students did choose to forgo marking and only give grades of one hundred percent, while offering constructive criticism to indicate their respect for other students. Others proposed readings which I tried to incorporate as best I could. Still others subverted the paper writing process and submitted jokes, parody or other satirical bastardizations which mocked and played with the institution of the academic assignment. We had achieved some level of autonomy away from the university, but the university still hounded me for grades and expected me to regiment my peers properly. Where was the freedom to learn in all of this?

VII – Terminus

I had created a course searching for somewhere to build a safe space for own expression, a space where all could come to find themselves. However, the state had other plans, and students' indoctrination coupled with institutional pressure resulting in a class designed to regiment and police. I and many of my peers tried to subvert this, but the fact still remained: state-sponsored education can be nothing other than a tool for training – vocational training. Academia is a farce, a sham, but is this farce reality? *No*; it is a series of buildings filled with philistines. Leave the university – say goodbye to the seminar – real life waits.

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