

# **Break-Out from the Crystal Palace**

The anarcho-psychological critique:  
Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky

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## 2 The critique of ideology

### The origins of anarcho-psychology

The intellectual historian must set buoys to mark the flood and ebb of particular tides which run in the ocean of human history. He contributes to man's understanding of himself and his social experience by paying the high price of having to accept an intrusive degree of simplification, even arbitrariness, in his work. Noting that October 1844 stands out as the inaugural month for anarcho-psychology provides us with a convenient point of orientation.

It was in this month of 1844 that the first copies of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* were, most probably, distributed in Berlin. Even the Young Hegelian friends of its 38-year-old schoolmaster author, the shy, retiring Max Stirner, were staggered by what had been clandestinely written within their midst.<sup>1</sup> In the same month, about one hundred miles to the south, in a small village not far from Leipzig, Friedrich Nietzsche was born.

Anarcho-psychology necessarily had progenitors. Key passages in the work of both Stirner and Dostoevsky echo Christ's parables. All of the anarcho-psychologists were to share the debt that Freud confessed, to the poets of many ages and many cultures. Stirner and Nietzsche, in this regard, owe much to Goethe. There is a debt to thinkers of quite different intellectual dispositions; in the case of Stirner, to Hegel and Feuerbach, in the case of Nietzsche, to Schopenhauer. Strains of a sometimes similar type of psychological anar-

<sup>1</sup> A biography of Max Stirner, an account of the influence that his work has had since 1844, and a brief assessment of its importance are included in my introduction to *Max Stirner: The Ego and His Own* (ed. and intro. John Carroll, 1971). References to Stirner will be either to this edition, denoted henceforth as *Ego*, or, in a few cases, to the complete 1912 edition (trans. S. T. Byington), *Ego* (1912); See note on p. 178, below.

chism are to be found in the writings of Charles Fourier. Finally, there is one case of remarkable anticipation. The placing of William Blake as an *Einzelgänger*, a man apart from his time, is supported by the fact of his wide-ranging and intimate kinship with the figures central to this study, none of whom were acquainted with his work.<sup>1</sup>

It has been orthodox among intellectual historians, and indeed among a number of anarchist theoreticians themselves, to regard Stirner as one of the seminal writers in what is conceived of as the anarchist tradition. He is credited as the father of 'individualist anarchism', as distinct from the 'mutualism' of Proudhon, Bakunin's 'anarcho-communism', or the 'anarcho-syndicalism' which has been attributed to Tolstoy and Gandhi.<sup>2</sup> His unrelenting attacks on the structures of social authority, on the State, on political parties, on educational institutions, place him, as a theorist, unambiguously with the anarchists on the political spectrum.

What has not been recognized is that Stirner initiates the method of *psychological* thinking which has usually been attributed to Nietzsche, the method to be developed most fully and systematically by Freud. His work has retained its freshness and trenchancy through time primarily because its radical political analysis is grounded in psychology. His best aphorisms bear that pungency which Nietzsche was to make his signature, an incisiveness which marks the accuracy of their probe into the sensitive tissue at the nucleus of human motivation. The locus of Stirner's interest is the individual psyche; he investigates the effects on this psyche of some of the ways men choose in their social context to pattern their behaviour, and of the manner in which they then conceive of themselves. *Der Einzige* is a psychological philosophy of the growth of *ego*, of self-realization, and as such shares features with the *Bildungsroman*. Through its sustained, cyclically progressing monologue, meditating the vicissitudes of the unique individual, it develops an inner logic akin to that which endows the novels of character individuation with their fundamental coherence.

Stirner's psychological anarchism suggests that attachment to ideological and institutional structures of political authority reflects attachment to deeper and more general frames of authority. There is implicit anticipation of the notion of the 'authoritarian personality'.

<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche would have had to qualify his acerbic, dismissive comments on the English and their psychological obtuseness if he had known Blake's work. It is André Gide who will establish a Blake-Dostoevsky-Nietzsche tradition.

<sup>2</sup> George Woodcock: *Anarchism*, 1963, pp. 17-19. These brief general remarks on Stirner's anarchism are elaborated in the Introduction to *Ego*; important texts are referenced in its bibliography.

This perspective indicts as merely ideological those branches of anarchism, and indeed of all political theory, which fail to take account of the psychology of the need for authority—its unconscious origins, the nature of the individual's relationship to particular orders of dominance. These ideologies operate exclusively in an abstract realm of ideas; they do not come to grips with social and psychological reality. Stirner's pursuit of psychological explanation provides anarchism with a wider rubric.

The deeper and more general frames of authority which constitute the focus of Stirner's social critique can be meaningfully collected under the heading of ideology. We define ideology as any system of ideas about human behaviour and social life, containing its own moral imperatives, and held in some sense to communicate absolute truth. Throughout our discussion the term will be used pejoratively: ideology bears, finally, the characteristic of abstraction, of masking rather than illuminating reality. Marx viewed ideology as philosophy failed, philosophy detached from the concrete material relationships of society: political ideas not grounded historio-sociologically. The anarcho-psychologists select ideology for critique for the contrasting reason that it fails to mediate the domain of the individual's self-enjoyment and his self-realization. The first standpoint explicates ideology as socially determined, the second as psychologically determined: both accuse it of remaining oblivious to its own determinations. We devote a section later in this chapter to the conflicting attitudes of Stirner and Marx to ideology.

The works of both Stirner and Nietzsche develop as a critique of existing patterns of human thought and behaviour; their driving ambition is to provide the key to a revalued world. The critique operates on the ideological veneers which distort human communication, which inhibit individual fulfilment and enjoyment, and thereby preclude self-realization. It is directed at the unconscious causes of the attachment to religious, moral, and political ideologies, and the effects of the resulting self-deceptions. In its own way, taking ideology as the primal and generative structure of authority, it is profoundly anarchist; it sets itself the task of demolishing what it sees as the most powerful ideologies of its own period in history.

The first distinctive anarcho-psychological argument, the critique of ideology, is developed by Stirner and re-echoed, in part amplified, by Nietzsche. This study concentrates on Stirner on the grounds that his work precedes that of Nietzsche and has been curiously neglected in the subsequent history of European thought. Some sense of the remarkable degree to which there is anticipation will be conveyed by footnoting passages from Nietzsche germane to the text proper. A concluding section discusses the advances Nietzsche makes on the critique he takes up.

There is a strong strain of Protestant masochism in this assault on morality and ideology. What is set as the key value is the capacity itself for coping with uncertainty, for relishing the unknown, for proving able to progressively destroy the scaffolding for understanding and evaluating experience as it is being constructed. Framing this perspective is the Protestant image of the utterly self-reliant, responsible individual, and Ibsen's harsh dictum from *An Enemy of the People*: 'The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone'.

### The existentialist

At the base of the philosophical innovations of Stirner and Nietzsche is ontology: their radically new perspective on religion, on morals, on political and social life, stems from their attitude to *being*. Their entire work branches out from the stem conviction that there is a primary order of reality about which all that can be said is that the individual exists, that 'I am!' The individual first exists, and then begins to define himself. Essences, the communicable, socially mediated dimension of individual character, belong to the second order of reality. Behind them lies an unconscious, irreducible, never realizable or comprehensible force, an inviolable coherency: the individuum. This is the ground of *der Einzige*, the unique one, the realm of what Stirner calls his 'creative nothing'. Existentialism, whose primary philosophical concern has been with questions of *being*, of *das Wesen* or *l'être*, and in particular with the axiom that existence precedes essence, received its first well-developed modern statement in 1844. Heidegger and Sartre, like Nietzsche, neglect the man who, on a number of key issues, is their most significant precursor.

The political anarchism of Stirner and Nietzsche is a logical development of their ontological anarchism: their denigration of social authorities represents one dimension of their endeavour to displace the authority of essences and stress the primacy of the I. Both see the springs of the human condition as anarchic, wilful, problematical, a complex of forces with their deeply individual source beneath the superstructure of social mediation; both recognize what Plato referred to as the 'unutterable' in each individual, a noumenal core which makes of human thinking, by necessity, an isolated, introspective activity. The social or essentialist superstructure is by itself lifeless; its function is to provide the *I* with a means of expression.

The defining axiom of this ontologically grounded psychology is vividly represented by Freud's favourite metaphor for the psyche: the iceberg. But the most strikingly similar, and, at this point in our

argument, illuminating, psychoanalytical formulation is to be found in the work of the strangely neglected Georg Groddeck. Groddeck argues, principally in his *Das Buch des Es* (1921), that the individual is governed by an unconscious being, the *it*, which both funds his instincts, his desires, and his emotions, and patterns them. This *it*, or *id* as Freud's notion of *das Es* is translated into English, a notion incidentally which Freud credits to Groddeck, lies beneath the range of conscious control. The role of consciousness is to interpret the messages from the *it*, whether they be expressed in emotions, dreams, physical disorders, or mental stresses. Self-understanding is consequently defined as the process of coming to know the ways of the *it*. The 'I am' has its generative source in the 'it', not with the conscious ego.

The strong existentialist themes in Stirner's philosophy find their most complete expression in his reply to Feuerbach's critique of *Der Einzige*.<sup>1</sup> For Stirner identity or self-ness is not primarily a sum of qualities; rather it is that which the individual knows without having to predicate this knowledge; it is the precondition of all knowledge, 'the *who*, the *he* of the phrase'. Thus the ego is a sense (a feeling, an intuition, even a comprehension) of identity; it is the spine that supports and conditions the growth of personality. The 'I think, therefore I am' of Descartes, the 'I feel, therefore I am' of late eighteenth-century Romanticism, and the 'I possess, therefore I am' of bourgeois man are dogmas, partial at that, incorporated to define a being that is incapable of defining itself. Certainly the existentialist 'I am!' is also dogmatic, but for Stirner, the only dogma which is not *alienating*, the one which does not make being other than itself.

It might clarify Stirner's ontology to point out that the *who* of the phrase is structurally similar to Nietzsche's image of *man* as a bridge,<sup>2</sup> the carriageway that supports the process of 'becoming who one is'; being is thus the dynamic shell within which man realizes himself. Then the question 'Who am I?' is essentially unanswerable, for I, as a potentiality, am no more than a bridge whose traffic is always in motion, and carrying its supports on with it. Stirner exalts movement: the unique one is the statement that changes, that fades into silence every minute, the vehicle of a continually developing-in-dying *I*.<sup>3</sup>

The 'egoist' plays the same functional role in Stirner's philosophy as the *Übermensch* does in Nietzsche's.<sup>4</sup> It is an ideal-type, to which

<sup>1</sup> 'Recensenten Stirners' (1845); the relevant section is included in *Ego*, pp. 257-9.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., *Zarathustra*, *Vorrede* 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ego*, pp. 257-9.

<sup>4</sup> Following Danto's convention in retaining the original German *Übermensch* rather than substituting either of the unhappy English translations, 'superman' or 'overman' (Arthur C. Danto: *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, 1965, pp. 196-7).

man can at best approximate;<sup>1</sup> it is a supra-human end towards which all striving should aim, an intimation of the direction in which life is at its best. In this schema the process itself, the means not the end, is the goal of human action: not to arrive but to make the most of the journey. Rilke was to use the 'Angel' as a device equivalent to these ideal-types in his *Duinese Elegien*: the hint to, and the promise of, perfection in human life, the consummate imprint of the rare, fleeting moments when man transcends his mundane necessities.

Stirner's ontological first principle is not exactly the simple 'I am!'; he rather asserts that 'I am—present!'<sup>2</sup> All that the individual can say with certain knowledge is that he exists and is present, that he exists because he feels or senses the presence of himself. Memories of the past and hopes for the future are at one remove. Heidegger will make 'presence' one of his key categories: one of his ontological theorems states '*Sein heisst Anwesen*'. He develops Stirner's axiom by substituting *anwesend*, the alternative German for 'present', for Stirner's '*gegenwärtig*'.<sup>3</sup> The English loses the full meaning of *anwesend*, which translates literally as 'being-at': thus to be present is to have entered a state of *being*. The English has the virtue that *presence* is subsumed under *present*: temporal presence implies spatial presence. Stirner's axiom serves also as an ethical imperative, exhorting the individual to savour the here-and-now, to get the best out of it.

Stirner is the philosopher of the infinitely possible. The egoist is the limitless one; his freedom lies in his ability to create his own infinity. Stirner has in effect taken the omnipotence fantasy of the child, who believes that he has unlimited power in choice and action, and made it accessible to the adult, who is soberly conscious of the ideological traps inherent in ideals and fantasies. But whilst Stirner's 'I elect for myself what I have a fancy for, and in electing I show myself—arbitrary'<sup>4</sup> provides a salutary antidote to conformist religion and unreflected obedience to social conventions and values, it remains one-sided. It rings with the defiance which is blind to social necessity, which refuses to acknowledge what Freud will call the 'reality principle'. It represses the recognition that loss, despair, constraint, and frustration are inherent in the human condition. This philosophy does not take a full and balanced account of human passions.

<sup>1</sup> The ideal-type is closely analogous to the mathematical notion of the limit to which an infinite series converges, ever more closely, but without ever quite reaching. It is a convenient tool for locating the series, and the salient feature of each of its elements, without being able to define fully any element.

<sup>2</sup> *Ego*, pp. 117–18.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger: *Being and Time*, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> *Ego*, p. 241.



And yet, at another level, Stirner's affirmation of freedom rings true. It capitalizes the moments when life quickens and excites, moments of high intensity and absorption, the moments which will be remembered with nostalgia, and will almost invariably be the ones counted to have made life worthwhile. It passes all else by as relatively unimportant. Stirner has faith that experience is never irretrievably cut from these moments. He heads his preface with Goethe's 'I have founded my affair on nothing'. The next line of Goethe's poem, *Vanitas! Vanitatem Vanitas!* is equally central for him: 'And to me belongs the entire world'. There are moments when an individual becomes omnipotent.

We are confronted by a flaw in the orthodox structure of Western logic. One of the main roots of the anarcho-psychological perspective, and its opposition to rationalist-positivist thought and to progress models of society, is its disbelief in the law of non-contradiction. Implicit in the work of Stirner, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky is the conviction that knowledge cannot be comprehensive, and consequently that there do not exist hypotheses which are both interesting and tell the whole truth. The reality of the human condition is far too complex to be encompassed by propositions: philosophy can proceed only part-way towards creating propositions, and then for only a few of the many facets of this reality.<sup>1</sup> In the specific case under discussion, it is true both that Stirner's work is one-sided, when viewed from the perspective of, say, Freud, and that it is adequately comprehensive, when viewed from a more romantic individualist perspective. The two perspectives do not mutually exclude each other; they could both be held by the same individual at different levels of his consciousness, or as applicable in different situations according to their nature or his own mood.

The laws of consistency on which positivism depends cannot accommodate such logic: any sense of knowledge steadily accumulating is undermined, as is belief in progress in any supra-individual sphere. What results is, as will be clarified in later discussion, an epistemology based on the partial truth, or, to be optimistic, the *half-truth*. Interesting insights must be qualified with a 'but', they never tell the whole truth; another proposition will emerge which contradicts them at some level, but which is also true. Finally, half-truths are the best truths we have.

Nietzsche's hostility to systematic thought derives from his overwhelming sense of the limitation of knowledge, his conviction that systems create the delusion of comprehensive understanding. His work articulates the belief that human knowledge, at its best,

<sup>1</sup> In recent years a neo-rationalist model of science has been constructed by Karl Popper which takes account of many of these limitations inherent in human understanding.

can provide no more than a series of aphoristic insights. These insights will not be systematic, they will not fit neatly together, but neither will they be completely random: they are communicable as the self-reflections of a coherent entity, the individual. Anarcho-psychology postulates a logic of the individual, of his impulses, moods, and thoughts, which supersedes all other logics, and in particular the logic of abstract thought which derives from Aristotle.

In spite of Stirner's existentialist leanings, his egoist critique of hypocrisy, or *mauvaise foi*, is not backed by any moral affirmation of truth or honesty. Personal integrity is a value for him only to the degree that it facilitates self-expression: Stirner does not hanker after the 'dignity of man'. He does place value on 'ownness' (*Eigenheit*), a concept of authenticity concretely bound to the individual self and its realization.<sup>1</sup> What he rejects in this context is the brand of nihilistic existentialism which when articulated states: 'in this meaningless world at least I must display before others my honesty in the face of despair, my integrity'. Like the atheism that Stirner rejects it has not shaken off the religious mentality—within the void of stifled egoism it still gropes for abstractions.

Stirner anticipates existentialist philosophy in the emphasis he places on concrete, lived and living, experience, in his sustained critique of religious, moral and metaphysical ideals, and above all in the stress he places upon the *self*. However, he is not unequivocally attached to the primacy of self or ego; indeed, ontology, as a focus on being, occupies a curious place within his philosophy, one which may be illustrated by referring to a modern debate within the psychoanalytic movement. Fairbairn, the pioneer of object-relations theory, places primary emphasis in his work on the individual's need to maintain contact with an object; his position contrasts with Freud's instinct theory, which centres around the need to find instinctual gratification. According to Fairbairn man is innately driven to seek objects and not primarily to seek pleasure.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary 'ego-psychology' has tended towards Fairbairn, as has the so-called 'existentialist psychoanalysis' of R. D. Laing. Stirner's orientation, however, in spite of his paeans to ego, is analogous to that of Freud: he portrays the ego as growing in a matrix of instinctual satisfactions. The central concern of this hedonism, as we

<sup>1</sup> Again he directly anticipates a central Heideggerian concept: *eigentlich*, usually translated as 'authentic'. Some sense of the measure of the debt to Stirner is conveyed by one of Heidegger's definitions, from an essay of 1943, of what it means 'to find': 'den Fund zu eigen bekommen, um in ihm als dem Eigentum zu wohnen' (*Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, Frankfurt, Klosterman, 1971, p. 14). The centrality of Stirner's play on *eigen* (own) and *Eigentum* (property) will become apparent as we proceed.

<sup>2</sup> W. R. D. Fairbairn: *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*, 1952.

have stressed, is the liberation of internal forces and desires. The drive to establish relationships is secondary, or merely instrumental.

We have noted that a total escape from ethics is not an option available to Western man. It is instructive to delineate the different ethical responses to a world in which the Christian God had been deposed, in which absolute morality in any guise was no longer credible. Apart from the idealization of History as a redemptive process, which sprang out of the Hegelian tradition, and the attachment to an unambivalent notion of sustained progress, both of which fall into the category of ideology attacked by Stirner and Nietzsche, there appear roughly seven meaningfully differentiable ethical systems. This classification is not intended to provide categories which are either very precise or strictly mutually exclusive. Its aim is merely to further discussion of the various ethical positions available within the vague rubric of existentialism.

First, there is the hedonist ethic. Stated in its extreme form, urging a return to the purely instinctual life of the apocryphal noble savage, it is facilely utopian. It is blind to the dependency of human society on some degree of instinctual renunciation if it is to function. But there is a more refined version of the hedonist ethic: it stresses self-enjoyment rather than animal pleasure, it values gaiety, exuberance, *joie de vivre*.

Second, there is the ethic of rebellion for its own sake. Put bluntly it holds that in an absurd world, where there is no 'up and down', there is at least some integrity in revolting against the false, illusory structures of meaning that men create around themselves. The explicit statement of this position is Camus' *L'Homme révolté*.

Third, there is the aestheticist ethic. It holds that what is distinctively and valuably human is what man does and creates with style, elegantly, movingly—aesthetically. Whatever man does is absurd; there is at least dignity in doing it well. Nietzsche is driven in part to this position; it is more obviously the preserve of 'art for art's sake' theorists such as Flaubert.

Fourth, there is the ethic of stoic pessimism. Schopenhauer gave theoretical expression to the view that life is ineluctably painful, dour, and unrewarding. Sartre's talk about the 'agony of responsibility' places itself here. Freud was probably the modern to give this ethic its most impressive incarnation. There was a strong Old Testament moralistic strain in his dedication to knowledge, a sense of duty and service. Characteristic of his conception of his own life and his vocation was his sardonic, yet pained: 'Much is won if we succeed in transforming hysterical misery into common unhappiness'.

Fifth, there is the ethic which places ultimate value in the mystical experience, or in noumenal connections between the individual and his external environment. As we shall later examine, this becomes

significant to Dostoevsky. Rilke gives sublime poetic formulation to mystical, transcendental values and their presence in human experience: they are mediated in his vision through the figures of Orpheus and the Angel. The mystical ethic is central too to the late work of Heidegger, especially to his meditations on Hölderlin's poetry, and his *Vorträge und Aufsätze*.

✘ Sixth, there is the individualist ethic. It holds that the only non-arbitrary, coherent phenomenon is the individual, bounded by his life and his death. There is no stronger statement of this position than that already discussed in the work of Stirner and Nietzsche. It is reflected also in the view held by Dilthey and Jaspers that the most meaningful task for the human sciences is biography: there at least the limits of the subject matter are defined, as is the locus of coherency underlying the study. According to this classification, an ethic of personal responsibility is conceived of as a fusion of individualist and stoicist ethics.

Seventh, there is the ethic of friendship. It has taken different forms. Schiller's idealist *Don Carlos* holds that only a man's relationship with his friend is sacred: all else can be sacrificed to preserve this union. Carl Zuckmayer concludes in his autobiography, *Als wär's ein Stück von mir*, that in the human dialectic between the will to live and despair there is one synthesis, and that is friendship. An attachment to the more general principles of mutual aid, comradeship, or *solidarité* is also representative of this ethic.

Stirner's emphasis on self-enjoyment associates him with the hedonist ethic as much as his emphasis on self-realization and egoism associates him with the individualist ethic. It will become clear later that traces of the rebel ethic also permeate his work. There are good reasons, additionally, for connecting him with the friendship ethic, but in a special sense. Neither Schiller's idealism, Kropotkin's principle of mutual aid, nor Sartre's advocacy of commitment and engagement find parallels in *Der Einzige*. But his 'I love men because love makes me happy', taken together with references to the comradeship of children in their play, and to other 'merry egoist unions',<sup>1</sup> suggests an embryonic notion of egoistic friendship. Nietzsche's more specific valuation of the friend amplified themes in Stirner which are only lightly voiced. Zarathustra comes to preach not the neighbour, but the friend.<sup>2</sup> This friendship is totally amoral; there is no Kantian 'ought' in the relationship, there is no Benthamite sense of calculated obligation. This is the warrior friendship of Achilles and Patroclus, it is the friendship of Gilgamesh which satisfies the need for a high-spirited comrade, his match, with whom to play out his almost superhuman store of energy. Nietzsche describes the friend as the one most capable of being an enemy, of taking the other seriously enough

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> *Zarathustra* I:14 and 16.

to confront him with his failings. This conception is deliberately anti-sentimental; it explicitly sets itself against a humanist idealization of 'love'.

Stirner's development of what are notably existentialist themes is inextricably bound to his critique of liberalism. It is therefore convenient at this point to introduce the attack on this specific political ideology. We have already treated the first half of the argument. Stirner in calling Feuerbach's work 'the last metamorphosis of the Christian religion'<sup>1</sup> identified him not only with humanism, but also with liberal political ideology. Stirner saw liberalism as having failed to emancipate itself from moralistic images of man: the liberation it offered was merely from one fixed standpoint to another.<sup>2</sup> Although the God outside had been forgotten, devotion to the ideals of 'man', 'truth', and 'freedom' had become all the more strict.

With Nietzsche the focus of the critique of liberal ideology switches to the English, and in particular John Stuart Mill, who is taken as the prototypical moralist. Mill is portrayed as the cleric perpetually waging war against evil. Nietzsche regards his ideals as obscuring psychological reality: egalitarian democracy is Christianity made natural, altruism in political dress.<sup>3</sup> Working from the egoist axiom, Nietzsche attacks utilitarianism as the most mendacious form of egoism, egoism moralized into the ethic of the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'.<sup>4</sup> He affirms his favoured master morality as 'the antithesis of that low degree of warmth which any calculating prudence, any calculus of utility, presupposes'.<sup>5</sup>

From the anarcho-psychological perspective the English liberal, utilitarian, democratic achievement constituted the most powerfully dangerous embodiment of the moral mind, the most serious manifestation of political ideology. Nietzsche's repeated attacks on liberal-democratic ideals follow Stirner's analysis of clericalism: the liberal is the half-hearted one whose instincts have become ineffectual.<sup>6</sup> Liberal-rationalism moralizes pleasure: 'Man does *not* strive for pleasure; only the Englishman does'.<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche does not view socialism any more kindly, accusing it of perpetrating the same vices;

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> *Wille* 30, 215, and 925-6. It is worth noting that Nietzsche criticized George Eliot, and by implication the English in general, for imagining that she had done away with the Christian God, whereas, in fact, she clung all the more fiercely to its morality (*Götzen-Dämmerung* x:5). His attitude precisely mirrors that of Stirner to Feuerbach. Moreover, George Eliot was the first translator of Feuerbach into English, and even wrote in a letter dated 29/4/1854 to her friend and editor Sara Hennell: 'With the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree'.

<sup>4</sup> *Wille* 62 and *Jenseits* 228.

<sup>5</sup> *Genealogie* I:2.

<sup>6</sup> *Wille* 864.

<sup>7</sup> *Götzen-Dämmerung* i:12.

he dubs it 'la religion de la souffrance humaine'.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Mann will transform these themes into a militant nationalistic defence of vital Teutonic culture against the encroachment of the effete, decadent, liberal-democracy of France and England.<sup>2</sup>

Feuerbachian liberalism was to pass in Germany, and more abruptly than Stirner would have imagined in 1844. Liberal-humanism disappeared with the failure of the revolutions of 1848; events did indeed suggest that its high-flown idealism had distanced it from the social and political reality. Its political eclipse thus followed quickly after its philosophical one. The real alternatives became Prussian autocracy *à la* Bismarck, Marxist socialism as yet still in its infancy, and for the individual—particularly the bohemian or the artist—in its peculiar inward-turned, self-contained style, Stirnerian anarchism.

Stirner viewed all the radical political philosophies of his time as forms of liberalism, with their common source in Feuerbach. We postpone to the later section on Marx his discussion of communism, which he associated with Weitling and referred to as 'social liberalism'. His critique of his friend Bruno Bauer's school of 'criticism', which he classed as 'humane liberalism', is neither of contemporary relevance nor of significance to our argument.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Proudhon is classed as a 'social liberal' because of his attachment to an image of the ideal society. For Stirner, Proudhon's plans for the social utopia precluded any real understanding of property, which he was forced to relate to an abstract concept of the just and beneficent society.<sup>4</sup> Stirner would have been equally hostile to Kropotkin, regarding his principle of 'mutual aid' as merely another misty liberal-humanist ideal. Anarcho-individualism, as it is conceived in *Der Einzige*, indicts other theories of anarchism for not taking their attack on authority far enough, for retaining a supra-individual social ideal.

The second part of Stirner's critique of liberalism centres on the notion of freedom. Liberalism is in effect defined as that political philosophy which follows the principle of 'freedom from': it directs itself to removing constraints, to reducing infringements on the individual's free choice. Stirner's argument is that this is a purely negative principle, that the passion to be 'rid of' heralds nihilism: when all constraint has been peeled away nothing but a void remains.<sup>5</sup> His point is that the successful application of liberal means

<sup>1</sup> *Jenseits* 21.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Mann: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> On Stirner's relationship to Bruno Bauer, see Brazill, *op. cit.*, p. 213, and my first footnote to p. 90 of *Ego*. Bauer did clearly influence Stirner, but the quality of his written philosophy does not compare with that of his friend.

<sup>4</sup> Arvon (*op. cit.*, pp. 85-7) suggests that Stirner borrowed this point from Edger Bauer.

<sup>5</sup> *Ego*, pp. 111-13. Stirner's point can claim some sociological support from

does not ensure that where previously there was constraint there will be fulfilment, that where there was misery there will be enjoyment. He accuses a liberty principle such as Mill's of being irrelevant, of concealing the real issues. He counterposes the notion of 'ownness' to the ideal of 'freedom'. Real freedom is a positive movement towards taking possession and realizing one's own. It is to be assessed by a qualitative evaluation of the content of experience, not a description of its extrinsic form:<sup>1</sup>

The man who is set free is nothing but a freedman, a *libertinus*, a dog dragging a piece of chain with him; he is an unfree man in the garment of freedom, like the ass in the lion's skin . . . all freedom is essentially—self-liberation . . . Of what use is it to the sheep that no one abridges their freedom of speech? They stick to bleating.

Stirner's intended task might be characterized as freeing the individual from ideology; similarly Freud set himself the task of freeing the individual from his neurotic fixations. But this is a freeing from *in order to* release that which lies within: 'ownness'. The endeavour depends for its success on the resources of the 'own', of what Stirner calls the 'creative nothing' at the core of being. The liberal-rationalist concept of 'freedom' is trivial from this perspective, for it misses the crucial point as to whether the individual is capable of coming into presence. Substantive freedom is this capability itself. The metaphor of peeling the onion layer by layer, of 'freeing from', has nothing fundamental in common with the metaphor of neutralizing the poisons in the soil in which the bulb is planted.

### The anarcho-individualist and social action

Stirner applies his critique of ideology to social structure. He argues that the power of the State is essentially ideological, depending on the successful indoctrination of its subjects. He maintains that this Leviathan would become redundant if its citizens realized that it acts in opposition to their individual interests, and that they have the power to organize themselves. Thus, with other anarchist theorists, he holds that the State is both repressive and superfluous.

Erving Goffman's *Stigma* (1968), p. 21. Goffman quotes an example of people who become dependent on their stigma (e.g. a face without a nose) as the distinctive feature of their identity. When it is removed (made 'normal') they lose the scapegoat for their ills, their shield from social responsibility, and the anxiety which follows must be diagnosed as resulting from a loss of sense of identity.

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*, pp. 122–3, and, in particular, my footnote to p. 122—it is equally relevant to this passage. Nietzsche sets up the 'Will-to-Power', his equivalent to 'ownness', as the counter-principle to '*laissez-aller*' (*Wille* 122).

He differs from them in contending that any principle of social organization will provoke inherently repressive operations. Stirner's position compares instructively with that of Freud, who also believed that society with its arrangements is of its essence repressive of the individual and his 'polymorphous perversity'. But Freud added that society is nevertheless, even in these terms, necessary.

In this section we examine the last stage in Stirner's critique of ideology, in particular his belief that the way to neutralize the State is to lay bare the illusions legitimating its power. At the same time we consider some of his own recommendations for social action.

Stirner advocates ruthless realization of the right of the individual: this allows no compromise with social organization. 'Every State is a *despotism*';<sup>1</sup> every State needs a strict morality; every State depends on freezing the will of the individual; for the State 'might is right' and violence the means to legitimating this right.<sup>2</sup> 'The State has always the sole purpose to limit, tame, subordinate, the individual . . .<sup>3</sup> I am free in no State . . .<sup>4</sup> I am the deadly enemy of the State . . .<sup>5</sup> the egoist has nothing to say to the State except "Get out of my sunshine"'.<sup>6</sup>

Stirner follows the realist tradition in political theory, that of Machiavelli and Hobbes, in extracting one principle from politics—might is right.<sup>7</sup> However, instead of completing his social picture with a dour pessimistic view of man as a violent warmonger by nature, he shares with Rousseau a passionate optimism for the creative potentiality of life. The comparison stretches no further. Stirner accepts the responsibility for piecing together a basis for community within the limits set by his renunciation of all supra-individual authority. He can neither, with Hobbes, postulate the State as a necessary expedient, restraining the 'war of all against all', nor with Rousseau believe in the possibility of a 'social contract' that interprets the 'general will' of the people: both lead to despotism, both set limits. Stirner's anarchist solution to the problem, in the words of Georg Simmel, 'How is society possible?' and consequently the political dimension to the anarcho-psychological perspective, is inextricably bound to his sociology of the existing State. To this we now turn.

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*, p. 132.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.      <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156. Cf. Nietzsche, whose attitude to the State matches Stirner's step by step: 'Wherever the State ceases, the man who is not superfluous really begins: there begins the song of the necessary one, the unique and irreplaceable melody'. For a paraphrasing of Nietzsche's attitude to politics see Karl Jaspers: *Nietzsche*, 1965, ch. 4; here p. 255.

<sup>7</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf contrasts the two mainstreams of political thought—the Thrasymachus/Hobbes tradition and the Socrates/Rousseau tradition—in his article 'In Praise of Thrasymachus' (*Essays in the Theory of Society*, 1968).



The State represents for Stirner all organized authority above the influence of the individual. It is composed of the complex of government, its bureaucracies, and its instruments such as the educational system and the police force; but it is defined above all else by its power. The State is the predominant alienating force in modern life: it 'cannot endure that man stand in direct relation to man; it must step between as—*mediator*, must—*intervene*'.<sup>1</sup> Through creating order and stability it creates dependence.

Stirner now develops the dichotomy that he had suggested in 1843 between the principles of 'love' and 'will' in politics.<sup>2</sup> Dutiful *love*, as it can be manifested in the law-encompassed order established by the State, serves to obfuscate political reality. Politics is about power, not love, retorts Stirner. The State condones love only when it is within the ambit of its laws; it is love of the State which is tolerated. Stirner lays bare what he sees as the authoritarian reality: 'The common weal may cheer aloud while I must "come to heel"; the State may shine while I starve'.<sup>3</sup> As the Church plays upon guilt to reinforce the moral law, the State calls in its police to defend the civil law. Stirner realized that the distinction between the internal authority of conscience and external authority can be slight: he noted that 'Every Prussian carries his *gendarme* in his breast'.<sup>4</sup>

'Right is the *spirit of society*', begins the chapter headed 'My Power'.<sup>5</sup> Stirner points out that in common speech 'it served him right!' is generally the solemn judgment of justice, invoked in referring to failure. He suggests that it could be no less aptly used to applaud a successful enterprise;<sup>6</sup> as the situation is, however, this 'right' is introduced in order to give a fact, an *is*, a moral valence, and turn it into an *ought*. But a criminal is in the wrong only because the punishers gain the upper hand, and thus the might to assert their right.<sup>7</sup> His only sin is against a mundane authority more powerful than himself. The egoist, on the other hand, recognizes no moral right and no principle of justice; he knows that life is not just.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*, p. 164. Cf. Schiller's rejection of the will of the State, in *Don Carlos*, in favour of friendship.

<sup>2</sup> 'Einiges Vorläufige vom Liebesstaat', *Kleinere Schriften*, pp. 269–77. The crux of the argument is that: 'In the arms of love the will relaxes and sleeps, and only the wish, the petition wakes'. Stirner quotes the Governor of Berlin: 'Repose [*Ruhe*] is the first duty of the citizen!' (p. 277).

<sup>3</sup> *Ego*, p. 141. A sadly prophetic comment considering that Stirner's last years were lived in wretched poverty. Nietzsche makes the identical criticism of the State sacrificing the individual 'for the sake of the general interest' (*Morgenröte* 146; *Menschliches* II:ii:186).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153–4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ego* (1912), p. 242.

<sup>6</sup> *Ego*, p. 130.

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche makes the identical point (*Morgenröte* 20), then later in his *Genealogie* develops it in a more complex and profound form.

<sup>8</sup> *Ego*, pp. 127–8. Nietzsche analyses the concepts 'right' and 'power' similarly (*Morgenröte* 112).

The tiger that assails me is in the right and I who strike him down am also in the right. I defend against him not my *right*, but *myself*. . . The only thing I am not entitled to do is what I do not do with a free cheer, that is, what I do not entitle myself to do.

When a man is coerced to tell the truth he can be under no personal obligation to obey, for he has given the State no right to his confidence. Truth has no value in itself; it is not sacred; one has the full 'right' to lie in order to protect a friend.<sup>1</sup> This is the first hint of an irrationalist idea important for all the anarcho-psychologists, that *truth*, however profound and well substantiated it is, which comes into conflict with the individual's self-interest, should be rejected.

Stirner asks why he should surrender to this 'wretched stability', why he should 'freeze his will', why he should be duty bound to a body which gives him no pleasure; his anarchism states ultimately that the privilege of equality before the law is meaningless to one who sees the reality underneath the ideology and who therefore does not respect that law. Anticipating Marcuse by a century and a quarter, he finds that the State by means of its repressive laws commits *violence* just as effectively as if its police struck physical blows; it calls the individual's counter-violence crime. The threat of violence is as coercive as its implementation; in the end the State tolerates only the 'harmless'.<sup>2</sup> Stirner, like Nietzsche, calls for a realistic assessment of politics and its rationalizing moralities; his attitudes directly oppose the optimism of Bentham and Mill, and their belief that society could be organized according to rational principles and a universally-accepted liberal-utilitarian ethic. To his view any social concept such as the 'happiness of the greatest number' is an illusion, mystifying reality. The liberal-rationalist morality is blind to the nature of the individual's ubiquitous egoism; its primary abstraction, 'liberty', has no correlate in the experience of the individual and thus serves but to distract him from himself.

In an important sense Stirner regards the covert violence of the State as more oppressive than a spontaneous outburst of aggression; for, hidden under the deceptive guise of social harmony and consideration, it is the more vicious and pitiless when it finally bursts forth. The institutions of the State in the modern world have incorporated the cleric's resentful righteousness. What has emerged is a form of utilitarianism in which the State and its needs are sovereign.<sup>3</sup>

Although Stirner holds no truck with the dictum that all men are equal, he is more of a democrat than Nietzsche with his elitist

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*, pp. 208-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-5, 149; see, in particular, my note 3 to *Ego*, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

teleology: 'A people [*Volk*] is nature's detour to arrive at six or seven great men—and then to get around them'.<sup>1</sup> That is, unless for Nietzsche the 'great' are simply the egoists. Each man, for Stirner, has the unique resources to make himself great—at least in his own eyes. Stirner's utopianism may have been to value the potential of the majority of men too highly, at least given foreseeable socio-cultural conditions, and to fail to recognize that successful self-expression is often, if not always, directly connected to the presence of a dark, guilt- or shame-ridden side to the individual.

The State's most effective and most insidious form of violence is that perpetrated against children through their education. Stirner points out how this education stretches man to fit a Procrustean bed of ideology, how it applies the 'shears of civilization'.<sup>2</sup> This 'violence to thought' is even more repressive than the persecution of blasphemy, for the irreverent thought has not been granted consciousness.

Stirner's response to the State is *insurrection*. He looks back into history and finds that all Churches, all States, indeed all generalities, have at one stage fallen, and as a result of the 'secession of individuals'.<sup>3</sup> The reform of the State is futile, for authority itself is the issue at stake; it is vulnerable only to permanent insurrection, lasting until the egoist can joyfully exclaim: 'Mankind is buried, and I am my own, I am the laughing heir!'<sup>4</sup> Thus the task of the political philosopher is to make the people conscious of the degree to which the power of the State is a figment of their own imaginations.

Stirner concludes his 1843 attack on Eugène Sue, the moralizing novelist who never describes a character who could be called a 'self-created man', by asserting: 'Our time is not sick, in order to be cured, but it is old and its hour has struck'.<sup>5</sup> He chooses the metaphor of senility rather than sickness; society needs to be invigorated with new life, not to have the little energy that remains paralysed by moral condemnation of its outlets, or by the attempt to instate a new political morality. He takes the position that Georges Sorel was to popularize in his *Réflexions sur la violence* (1908), arguing that society, if it is not to decay, must be revitalized. With no presentiment of the reality of twentieth-century fascism he can enthusiastically argue that new sources of passion must be tapped.

Stirner, at the core of his anarchism, distinguishes between revolution and insurrection. The act of revolution is irrelevant, merely leading to new structures of organizational authority. It does not escape from the ideological cage: one spook is replaced by another. On the other hand, 'insurrection leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and set no glittering

<sup>1</sup> *Jenseits* 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Ego*, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>5</sup> See my footnote 2 to *Ego*, p. 199; also *Kleinere Schriften*, pp. 289, 294.

hopes on "institutions" <sup>1</sup> the intentions of the insurgent are neither political nor social, but egoistic. Stirner accordingly views political parties with disfavour: even opposition parties, the havens of revolutionaries, are no more than States within the State.<sup>2</sup>

The act of greatest subversion, the case for insurrection maintains against the liberal and the socialist alike, is the one of indifference. A man, or a group, finds it unbearable that someone can be simply uninterested in his, or its, convictions. The enemies of Christ—Stirner's prototypical insurgent—could not bear his independence; his 'Give to the emperor that which is the emperor's'<sup>3</sup> showed a contempt for the affairs of State and its politics—for the moral order—that their self-respect would not let them tolerate. There is a degree of complicity, or mutual respect, between the believer and the man who attacks his beliefs (the revolutionary), for the latter takes them seriously. Nietzsche argues in parallel that one has to be capable of hating a person in order to love him.<sup>4</sup> Stirner has here anticipated one of Freud's most important discoveries, that in the unconscious opposites are often identical.<sup>5</sup>

Stirner clarifies the mechanics of insurrection, the politics of the 'secession of individuals', and at the same time shows the possibility of a theory of social action extrapolated from an ethics centred on the individual. We take as our point of entry his discussion of freedom of the press, an issue of crucial importance to him and his friends who were always potential targets for the Prussian censor.<sup>6</sup>

The two forms of freedom that we have noted are to be read in the specific case of censored journalism. Freedom in the first sense, as 'freedom from', as liberation from overt coercion, is contingent on the permission of the State, and hence the beneficent disposition of the people.<sup>7</sup> Stirner suggests that in England, where there was no press censorship, no problem arose because everyone believed in the State and so were incapable of writing against it. Hence the conception of 'responsible press'—responsible to the State.<sup>8</sup> Here the authenticity

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*, pp. 219–23; here p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157–60; see, in particular, my note to *Ego*, p. 158. Stirner's argument reappears as the central theme in Albert Camus' *L'Homme révolté*, 1951; Camus devotes one section of the book to Stirner.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220. Cf. Philip in Schiller's *Don Carlos*:

Happily might I hear  
That Carlos hates my advice, yet with  
Displeasure detect, that he disdains it.

<sup>4</sup> *Zarathustra* I:14.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> *Der Einzige*, however, easily passed the censors: they said it was too absurd to be dangerous (J. H. Mackay: *Max Stirner: sein Leben und sein Werk*, 1898, p. 137).

<sup>7</sup> *Ego*, pp. 194–5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

of a piece of writing depends on the State's imprimatur. The will-to-freedom of the type of person who adheres to this morality implicitly recognizes the authority of the State: 'good' citizens take its laws so seriously as to devote much of their energy to changing them. On the other hand there is egoist freedom. Egoists do not ask for permission, they grasp it; the truly free man must 'cheat the State'.<sup>1</sup>

What kind of anarchism can emerge from the debris left by Stirner's critique of practically every type of socio-political organization? This is left to the individuals concerned: they must map their own praxis. Stirner does not lay down a blueprint for social structure, nor even for individual action—neither do Nietzsche or Freud. Nor does he call for 'permanent revolution' which creates its own structures.<sup>2</sup> Stirner is far from the nihilist with his *faute de mieux* attachment to insurrection; he moves from a categorical value base to his appeal for insurrection. This mode of political action is not an end in itself, it is an epiphenomenon of realizing oneself. Politics and the affairs of State are dissociated from the orbit of the individual, and in so far as they cannot be repossessed as his living private property they must be rendered impotent.<sup>3</sup> Thus the individual acts politically, firstly in order to protect his own autonomous development, and secondly, if he is political by inclination, in order to express, and therefore experience, himself.

At the community-scale level of social organization Stirner advocates the Union, a voluntary coalition of egoists. Each individual, confident in his own power and his own property, joins with others, recognizing and utilizing their special competences for his own greater satisfaction. The Union, an aid for the whole man, is founded upon the same principle as friendship. The egoist unites with his friend in order to accomplish more, to increase his power, and in a broad sense to heighten his enjoyment.<sup>4</sup> The principle of 'multiplied force' is the sole *raison d'être* of the Union. In 1842 Stirner had suggested the basis for successful association: "be "each one fulfilled in himself", then will your community, your social life, also be fulfilled".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ego*. We recall Christ's parable of the unjust steward who is dismissed for stealing from his master. Being too old to take up another occupation, and too proud to beg, he cheats his master again. The master, far from being angry when he finds out, praises the old steward for his worldly wisdom (Luke 16:1-11). Recurring through the parables is the theme that life is not just, that the 'good' do not get rewarded for their virtue, and above all, that life must be twisted and cheated if it is to be realized to the full. Stirner is a disciple of the master of this teaching.

<sup>2</sup> This slogan was popular among French anarchist students during and after May 1968 in Paris. In that instance the failure to answer the State's question "What do you really want?" frequently reflected a dearth of positive values.

<sup>3</sup> A key Stirnerian theme, to be examined in the critique of *homo economicus*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ego*, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup> 'Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung', *Kleinere Schriften*, p. 237.

A distinctive feature of individualist-anarchist political philosophy is its indifference to any social totality, whether it be community, society, race, or nation. Stirner's 'organicism' is unerringly ego-centric. It deviates from the Hegelian model at the point at which the self-conscious individual develops an objective social being beyond his personal relationships. This is the point at which Hegel's own drive to discover the 'total' and the 'organic' led him, via Rousseau's conception of the 'general will of the people', to an ultimate synthesis in the harmonious fusion of individual, family, and civil society. For Stirner, the *social* axiom of conservative, liberal, and socialist schools of political thought alike is in itself repressive: it disguises as potentially redemptive an order whose central function is inhibitory of the individual's interests. (We postpone criticism of Stirner's position until the next section.)

Stirner does not, however, advocate a withdrawal from the centres of organized society to form, say, an Owenite utopian community; that would be merely to institute another highly normative social order. The challenge of individualist anarchism is to stand firm, not to seek salvation elsewhere, but to exorcise from consciousness all images of society and of union with large groups, and in the place of the old illusions instate the self and its voluntary personal relations. The battle is thus to be conducted on the plain of ideology.

Martin Buber considers that Stirner is important for his onslaught on substitute reality, but contends that his egoism fails to recognize the mutuality of life, the value of responsibility towards other people.<sup>1</sup> This is the point at which Stirner's philosophical system is most vulnerable. The question broached is a profound one: it resolves ethically into whether an 'I-thou', or a purely 'I' ontology better describes the preconditions for man's most fulfilling experiences. Going to the roots of the ethical alternative, Stirner's psychology cannot cope with the persuasive argument (not put directly by Buber) that there are two, what may be called for convenience, primary human drives: the one drive certainly directed towards self-realization and self-enjoyment, but the other towards union with other persons, or at least one other person—perhaps a drive ultimately to form exclusive heterosexual relationships.

Psychology has not yet devised an adequate approach to the problem of drives. There are at best informed speculations, one of the most impressive of which contains an implicit critique of the Stirnerian position. John Bowlby describes systematically the development

<sup>1</sup> 'Die Frage an den Einzelnen' (1936), an article on Stirner and Kierkegaard, included in the English collection *Between Man and Man*, 1961, pp. 60-108, esp. pp. 60-71.

of the young child's attachment to a mother-figure.<sup>1</sup> This attachment is instinctual; its success is decisive for the balanced growth of the child. Individualist psychology is restrictively one-sided to the degree that this drive can be shown to carry through into adulthood, however diversified its targets may become.

Freud took the attitude that man is self-centred, but has an emotional need for community.<sup>2</sup> He preserved Stirner's suggestion that the individual uses other people egoistically, maintaining, in the words of Rieff, 'that satisfaction from an object is but a devious means of self-love'.<sup>3</sup> The egoist axiom is adapted and elaborated into the theory, to piece together relevant fragments from Freud, that there is one primary drive, directed at self-satisfaction, but that a second, subsidiary drive deflects essentially narcissistic impulses outwards, so that objects from the wider community provide satisfactions as if they were the subject's own extended limbs. Love remains narcissistic, but gains a wider compass as the individual learns to find projections of himself and his body in his environment. Thus, to carry the argument further, although a man may be sensually drawn by a dissimilar other, or at a sublimated pitch compelled by the beauty of the other, the enduring bond of intimacy is possible only with an other who reflects one's own character, or in the presence of whom grows an *experience* in which one can express, or realize, some of the multilevelled mystery of one's being.

The anarchism of Proudhon and Kropotkin provides the drive to community with a stronger formulation and an ethical superstructure. Emphasis is reversed: the comrade or the neighbour becomes the primary object and purpose of man's highest drive.<sup>4</sup> Psychology cannot decide categorically in favour of either the egoist principle or the principle of mutual aid; it merely persuades that neither is complete by itself. Nevertheless, we note that the work of the anarchist philosophers who follow a social principle leaves itself vulnerable to the charge that it is no more than utopian ideology. It fails to ground itself thoroughly in sociological or historical analysis, as developed by Marx; it also fails to grapple with the unconscious causes of human conduct, to analyse the roots of individual gratification and fulfilment, and leaves little psychological insight into individual behaviour and social action. Thus the resulting theory can claim neither a firm sociological nor a firm psychological basis.

<sup>1</sup> John Bowlby: *Attachment*, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Rieff: *Freud: the Mind of the Moralist*, 1960, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> This is the orthodox reading of Proudhon, which is however thrown seriously into question by work currently being undertaken by John Hooper in Oxford. Hooper's interpretation places the mature Proudhon much closer to Stirner.

One of Stirner's central tenets, which has been curiously neglected by subsequent psychology, is that of *uniqueness*. Whilst such notions as 'identity crisis' and 'ontological insecurity' have been the subject of elaborate investigation, there has yet been no systematic attempt to determine the degree to which a strong sense of identity depends on a feeling of uniqueness. The question of the relationship of the unique-I to the shared-I is at the core of social psychology. A common antipathy sometimes precludes friendship between two people who are temperamentally similar: perhaps one individual's hypersensitivity to the other's faults reflects both a need to differentiate himself from the threatening other and, by castigating the other, to exorcize symbolically his own faults. To take another case: the only unique action available to Judas is to betray the man who embodies all the virtues to which he himself aspires, and whose living presence thus renders him impotent. It is a commonplace that radical political groups show more intense hostility towards those parties close to them ideologically than to those to whom they are theoretically opposed. Moreover, modern European history suggests, in the repeated examples it offers of people submerging their individuality in the crowd or the mass, that attempts to deny individual uniqueness in favour of group identity release the most brutal and sadistic of the primitive human passions. The sense of unique identity stands, by contrast, as a means of structuring and sublimating primitive drives. Here are strong indications that the dominant ethical emphasis which Stirner places on uniqueness should be able to draw upon wide-ranging psychological support.

Stirnerian anarchism has found two viable styles of life, the one individual, typified by the artist, and the other more directly social. Max Ernst, the German Dadaist, Surrealist painter, is the ideal epitomization of the man Stirner has influenced. Ernst felt an exceptional sympathy for Stirner, finding in him the person who aimed to overthrow single-handedly the whole structure of human belief, one who nevertheless could not cope with the demands of everyday life. *Der Einzige* provided the orientation for Ernst's youth from the time he first read it at the age of fourteen or fifteen: he acknowledged it as a lifelong tie.<sup>1</sup> He even titled a painting of 1925 *L'Unique et sa propriété*. Indeed, the Stirnerian egoist is most fully embodied in artists like Max Ernst, isolated men whose extreme lives are sustained by the force of their imaginations, and an inviolable confidence in their own capacity for revolutionizing human consciousness. Stirner is their philosopher; it is they, moreover, who have done most to define the contours of his praxis.

<sup>1</sup> John Russell: *Max Ernst*, 1967, pp. 17-18.



If Stirner's ideas are to be accorded any enduring social *praxis* it has been in schools. Rudolf Steiner was a devoted follower of Stirner from early in his career. More significantly, there has been no credo which has matched Stirnerian principles more closely than the educational philosophy of both Maria Montessori and A. S. Neill. In these cases, however, there may be no direct influence. Individualist-anarchist ideas are amenable to group experimentation only in schools or communes, communities which can gain a high degree of autonomy from the institutional and ethical constraints of advanced industrial society. It is worth noting that Stirner wrote two pieces on education, and that they contain many of his best ideas outside *Der Einzige*. His theory of the development of the vital individual hinges on a different approach to education, one which stresses the unhampered self-expression of the child. It is one mark of Stirner's contemporary relevance that education along these guidelines is being discussed and innovated on a large scale for the first time.

Stirner does not defend the power of the individual to dominate others. While the individual is to apply his accumulated force to gain what he needs, what he needs is deeply personal and independent of the taste of others—and hence does not depend on proving their inferiority. Implicit in his philosophy of self-realization is what Nietzsche was to introduce as the positive, resentment-free Will-to-Power, the will to overcome oneself.

As Arvon has pointed out, it is only with the *Recensenten Stirners*, Stirner's reply written in the third person to his critics, that the case for the egoist is completed.<sup>1</sup> Stirner writes his 'anticritique' in the calm and reflective tone of a man who, confident of his position, feels free to banter the desperate and futile endeavours of his critics. He now focusses on *interest* as the principal guiding value in human life. His advice is to follow only what one is passionately interested in. At the same time: 'The holy interest is the uninteresting'.<sup>2</sup> Thus *interest* supplements, and encompasses, the twin value orientations of *Der Einzige*, enjoyment and realization. Stirner goes on to deny that he is a proselytizer: he is indifferent to how other men live their lives as long as they do not interfere with him—a principle which at its surface level is distinctively 'liberal'. The egoist is not the enemy of any 'real interest'; he opposes only the 'uninterested and the uninteresting'.<sup>3</sup>

The choice of *interest* as the supreme value provides an essential link in the development of vitalist philosophy. Interest is enjoyment raised up to consciousness, the first order of the sublimation of

<sup>1</sup> Arvon, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> 'Recensenten Stirners', *Kleinere Schriften*, p. 357.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

instinctual gratification. Interest is the parameter in the *Aufhebung*<sup>1</sup> of pure hedonism into Stirner's theory of self-realization. As interest is stimulated, the whole of individual being is focussed on the object of attention, and the life-provoking bond between the isolated self and the external world is struck. To be absorbed by an 'interest' is to be quickened and alerted by it; it is to become indifferent to all else; it is to become instated as the master of a domain which is worth possessing simply because it is interesting. Man is the measure of all things only so long as his interest in them stimulates his senses and his intellect to grapple with them, to enjoy them, and to understand them. Interest provides the bridge across the chasm between the measurer and the passive to-be-measured.

Indeed, the constellation of a man's interests, the seams along which his energy flows unimpeded—in effect, what psychoanalysis was to call 'libidinized attention'—define the shape of the self. What he communicates to others is what he is excited about, what holds his interest; the self is largely conceptualized in terms of the individual's externalizations of his inner world, that is predominantly in terms of what and how he communicates. Moreover, what he is enthusiastic about he will usually deal with lucidly and intelligently—in this sense 'intelligence' too is a function of interest. Finally, the sense of uniqueness, of completeness, of power, as the superlative resonances of the self, reaches a crest in the wake of an interest, at times of confident and spontaneous action.

Stirner's critique of ideology reaches its climax with the postulation of interest as an ultimate value. Ideology, following this analysis, is the diametrical opposite to interest. It constitutes an order of consciousness which stands against enjoyment and realization. It is not a sublimation in the sense of a 'raising up', an *Aufhebung* of instinctual energy; it is rather a means for the destructive displacement or repression of passion, for the reduction of human possibility. Finally, it is employed to rationalize resentment and viciousness which it itself helps to stimulate. In Freud's model the superego is the repository of ideology.

The next transition in this vein of intellectual history is not a difficult one for the post-Freudian world, that from *interest* to *eros*. However, it was left to Nietzsche, with his 'The degree and type of a man's sexuality reaches to the highest peaks of his spirit',<sup>2</sup> to suggest, and Freud to develop. The patterns of emotional response toward

<sup>1</sup> There is no English equivalent for Hegel's usage of the German verb *aufheben* (past participle, *aufgehoben*; noun, *die Aufhebung*); it has the triple connotation of to reject or cancel or negate, to go beyond or transcend, and finally, to take what has been negated up into the higher, transcendent order of meaning.

<sup>2</sup> *Jenseits* 75.

something in which the individual is passionately interested are so closely analogous to the flush of excitement, the ebb and flow of feeling, that a man experiences in close proximity to a woman who attracts him, that they can instructively be called erotic. Groddeck and Ferenczi, Reich and Norman Brown, and in particular Herbert Marcuse have continued this polymorphously instinctual, egoist line on from Stirner. (Nietzsche, as will be discussed, identified himself with ascetic themes which are not to be found in the writings of these psychologists.)

### Stirner and Marx

We have observed the anarcho-psychological perspective unfolding in reaction against what it saw as the rise of ideology and its socially pervasive role as an instrument for the repression of passion, and therefore gratification, and for the distortion of consciousness. In the particular case of Stirner the philosophical task was conceived of as taking the works of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Bruno Bauer to their logical conclusions, stripping them of their abstractions, and examining the implications of what remained. In doing this Stirner provoked Marx, with Engels, to write what is virtually an entire book in refutation:<sup>1</sup> this book also claims to be a critique of ideology.

The 'critique of ideology' is as central to the development of Marx's thought as it is to *Der Einzige*. Marx sets out to demolish Stirner's critique in the same manner as Stirner had set out to demolish Feuerbach's: by showing that it never escapes from the vicious circle of devouring its own tail. And indeed the subjection of egoist social theory to the Marxian critique of German ideology provides the most distinct insight into the limitations of Stirnerian philosophy.

Stirner's book and the Marx-Engels reply, taken together, place in vivid relief the issues at stake between the competing statements of man the individual and man the social species-being (*Gattungswesen* in Marx), man in an elemental state of conflict with a constraining society and man uniting with man to create an integrated and harmonious community. A dichotomy implicit in Hegel's philosophy, which was developed after his death by his radical followers, commonly known as the Young Hegelians, comes to a head at this point, marking the final fragmentation of the group and its thought.<sup>2</sup> At the same time an irrevocable schism in social philosophy was established, one illustrating much of the subsequent split in nineteenth-century

1 The section headed 'Saint Max' of Marx and Engels: *German Ideology*, 1965.

2 Engels wrote to Marx on 20 Jan. 1845 after a visit to Berlin: 'The decomposition of the dead body of the "Freien" [the last group of Young Hegelians] seems to be complete' (Marx/Engels: *Werke*, 1956, vol. 27, p. 17).