

Anarchism in Germany Max Stirner

From *Anarchism In Germany: The Early Movement.*

Andrew Carlson

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Max Stirner, nom de plume for Johann Caspar Schmidt, came into this world at six o'clock on the morning of October 25, 1806. He was born in a house at number 31, Maximiliansstrasse (Marketplatz) which was the principal street of the city of Bayreuth. He was less than half a year old when his father, a maker of wind instruments, died of tuberculosis on April 19, 1807, at the age of 37. His mother, two years later, married Heinrich Ballerstedt, a 57-year-old pharmacist from Helmstedt, and they all moved to Kulm on the Vistula. Johann returned to his native town of Bayreuth in 1818 for his education, living with his godfather, and uncle, Johann Caspar Martin Sticht after whom he was named. He remained there for the next eight years, completing his studies in the gymnasium where he distinguished himself by always placing in the upper percentile of his class.

In 1826 he left Bayreuth to study at the University of Berlin where he remained for the next two years. In Berlin he met a fellow student, Ludwig Feuerbach, who was destined to be one of his future rivals. At the University of Berlin Stirner studied logic under Heinrich Ritter, geography under Carl Ritter, "Pindar und Metrik" under Bockh, and the philosophy of religion under Hegel. Leaving Berlin on September 1, 1828, he went to Erlangen where he matriculated in the university on October 20th, but only enrolled in two courses; one given by the theologian Georg Benedict Wiener on the Book of Corinthians, the other in logic and metaphysics by Christian Kopp, the philosopher. Stirner then "dropped out" of school for three and a half years wandering around Germany. During this period Stirner at one time matriculated at the University of Königsberg but did not attend a single lecture because he was called to Kulm to care for his mother who had lapsed into insanity.

In October of 1832 Stirner returned to Berlin to complete his studies. On June 2, 1834, he asked permission to appear before the Royal Examination Commission for the Examination pro facultate docendi in the five areas in which he had prepared himself: ancient languages, German language, history, philosophy, and religion. The examiners found that he had two deficiencies. He was lacking in a precise knowledge of the Bible, and did not possess the basic qualities of logic necessary in history, philosophy and philology. Because of this he was granted only a limited facultas docendi which qualified him to teach in the Prussian gymnasia. It should be brought out, in all fairness to Stirner, that his examinations were delayed by the visit of his insane mother to Berlin. Whether or not this visit had an affect on the outcome of his examinations is doubtful because a person of the type of unorthodox character which Stirner exemplifies in his writing, would probably be found lacking in exactly the qualities which the examination board found him deficient. During 1834-35 Stirner served as an unpaid training teacher in the Berlin K nigliche Realschule. Following this internship he tried unsuccessfully until 1837 to obtain a salaried teaching position from the Prussian government. Lack of employment did not stop him from marrying his landlady's daughter, Agnes Clara Kunigunde Burtz, on December 12, 1837. This marriage ended the following year when his 22-year-old wife died in childbirth on August 29th along with the child.

Once again it was Stirner's lot to be called upon to take care of his insane mother, a task which occupied his time until 1839, when he found a teaching position in Berlin at Madame Gropius' school for girls. He remained there performing his duties satisfactorily until 1844.

During the five-year period he taught at Madame Gropius' school Stirner frequented Hippel's Weinstube at 94 Friedrichstrasse where the Young Hegelians gathered to refute the teachings of their master. They referred to themselves as Die Freien -the Free Ones. The leaders of Die Freien were the brothers Bauer, Bruno and Edgar. Marx, Engels and the poets Herwegh and Hoffmann von Fallersleben were occasional visitors. Ludwig Feuerbach, Wilhelm Jordon, C. F. K ppen, Dr. Arthur M ller, Moses Hess, Ludwig B hl, Adolf Rutenberg, Eduard Meyen, and Julius Faucher also frequented Hippel's. Arnold Ruge, self-appointed high priest of these Hegelians, carried on nightly' debates which were often very bitter. A sketch by Engels of one of these nightly disputations has survived. On the sidelines of the debate sits a lonely figure. highbrowed, bespectacled, smoking a cigarette, this is Stirner. Woodcock, on the basis of this sketch, concludes that Stirner played the role of the silent, detached listener in Die Freien, on good terms with all and a friend of none. It is doubtful if Woodcock's conclusion would hold true. Engels at the same time also commemorated Stirner in poetry, writing:

Look at Stirner, look at him, the peaceful enemy of all constraint. For the moment, he is still drinking beer, soon he will be drinking blood as though it were water. When others cry savagely “down with the kings” Stirner immediately supplements “down with the laws also.” Stirner full of dignity proclaims; you bend your will power and you dare to call yourselves free. You become accustomed to slavery Down with dogmatism, down with law.

At Hippel’s Weinstube Stirner met his second wife, Marie DŠhnhardt; a pretty, brilliant and emancipated free spirit, whom he married in 1843. The wedding ceremony, if you want to call it one, took place October 21 in Stirner’s apartment. The pastor, a Reverend Marot, arrived to find the bridegroom and the witnesses, Bruno Bauer and Ludwig BŸhl, in their shirtsleeves, playing cards. The bride arrived late, dressed in her everyday street clothes. A Bible was not available so the neighborhood had to be scoured to locate one. Since no one had remembered to buy wedding rings, the ceremony was completed with the copper rings from Bruno Bauer’s purse. Stirner continued to teach at Madame Gropius, until October 18, 1844, although he could have quit after his marriage because his wife, when she arrived in Berlin from Gadebusch, was an heiress to some 20-30,000 thalers. Marie was a petite, graceful blonde with heavy hair which surrounded her head in ringlets according to the fashion of the time. She was a striking beauty and became a favorite at meetings of Die Freien She smoked cigars and sometimes donned male attire in order to accompany her husband and his friends on their nightly excursions.

It is not known if Stirner was forced to leave his position at Madame Gropius, school or if he left voluntarily, thinking that his forthcoming book, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1844), would win him literary fame and fortune. His book won for him abuse from his contemporaries whom he had attacked, but very little fortune. In 1845 Stirner went into the dairy business, using the remainder of his wife’s inheritance as capital. This enterprise failed quickly because of a lack of business experience. Stirner had seen to it that he had a large supply of milk coming in from the dairy farmers, but he had failed to solicit a list of customers to buy it. Stirner’s milk business was a never-ending source of amusement among his circle of friends, but it embittered Marie against him for squandering her inheritance.

In 1847 his wife, in disgust and anger, left him and went to London. When Mackay attempted to interview her in 1897 she replied tartly that she was not willing to revive her past but added that her husband had been too much of an egoist to keep friends and that he was “very sly.” Marx, in a letter of July 13, 1852, related to Engels that “Madame Schmidt-Stirner” had left for Australia in search of gold. In Australia she married a laborer and took in washing to earn a living. Even-

tually she went back to London where she used the name May Smith and became a devout Roman Catholic refusing to discuss her earlier life, even with Mackay.

Deserted by his wife, Stirner gradually sank into poverty and obscurity, living in a series of poor lodgings, earning some kind of miserable living, often in debt. During the years 1845-1847 Stirner had worked on a series of translations of J. B Say and Adam Smith which proved to be an arduous but unremunerative endeavor. He spent much of his time evading his numerous creditors but was twice imprisoned for debt, from March 5 to 26, 1853, and January 1 to February 4, 1854, and often went hungry. Stirner could bear hunger for he was a man of moderation in his eating and drinking habits and had always lived frugally. In 1852 he published his *Geschichte der Reaction* in Berlin. It was not greatly successful and earned him little money. It was too pedestrian in style to arouse much interest.

The end came for Stirner on June 25, 1856, at the age of 49 years and eight months, dying from the bite of a "poisonous fly." A number of his former friends hearing of his impoverished condition collected enough money to purchase a second class grave for him. It cost one thaler and ten groats, equivalent to one American dollar at the time. Among those present at his burial were Bruno Bauer and Ludwig B hl, who had been the witnesses at his marriage to Marie D shnhardt.

Early Writings.

Many people are not aware that Stirner wrote a large number of articles before he wrote *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*. They view Stirner's book as a bolt out of the blue. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is possible, by reading through these early articles, to trace the development of Stirner's thought to the point where it is expressed in *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*. It is not possible in this study to include a detailed examination of everything Stirner wrote prior to the appearance of his book. In his early writings Stirner examined Hegelian principles and rejected them. His ideas on religion, education, and the political and social structure of society are to be seen in their incipient stage. Stirner's book, when viewed from the perspective of his earlier writings, is the logical outcome of a carefully thought out course he was following, and not the instantaneous aberration of a brilliant, misguided, erratic mind as is often inferred. Stirner examines, very carefully, both acceptable contemporary solutions and contemporary proposals on the problems in which he is interested before rejecting their solution as unsatisfactory. This is what is accomplished in his early writings. Once having discovered what he thinks to be the faults of society he set out in *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* to outline what he thinks is acceptable solution. The format for Stirner's assault on religion, the state and society is present in the early writings. Stirner arrived at the conclusion that everything should be determined by one guiding principle: egoism. *Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum*.

The Ego and His Own, as the English translation of Stirner's book is called, was not an immediate success when it was published in 1844. It was re-issued around the turn of the century when the philosophy of Nietzsche was popular. Today Stirner's book is once again enjoying some popularity among the student anarchists. *Der Einzige* has been analyzed many times. What does this book contain that keeps it alive today nearly a century and a quarter after it was first published? Why do students who feel a "generation gap" between themselves and their parents feel an affinity for Stirner's book? Why does James Huneker call it "the most revolutionary book ever written?" Stirner starts his book with a short introduction. He uses the first line from Goethe's poem *Vanitas! Vanitatum Vanitas!* as the title for this introduction. It reads: "Ich hab, mein Sach' auf Nichts gestellt," translated literally as "I have set my affair on nothing" or, translated more freely, "all things are nothing to me." This introduction at once lets the reader know what the subject of the book is-self. According to Stirner the supreme law for each individual is his own welfare. Everyone should seek out the enjoyment of life. A person should learn how to enjoy and expand life. Everything a person does shall be directed toward self-satisfaction. Nothing should be done for the sake of God or for the sake of anyone else. The earth is for man to make use of. Everyone and everything mean nothing to Stirner. Things and people are to be used and then when they are no longer of any utility they are to be cast aside. Stirner loves mankind, not merely individuals, but mankind as a whole. But he loves them because of his own egoism, because it makes him feel happy to love. It pleases him. Stirner is not concerned with Christian or human values and morals. If what Stirner wants to do gives him pleasure, then it is justified. Everyone is using everyone else. The only true relationship people have with each other is useableness. Everyone you meet is food to feed upon.

Stirner rejects law. Laws exist not because men recognize them as being favorable to their interests, but because men hold them to be sacred. When you start to speak of rights you are introducing a religious concept. Since the law is sacred, anyone who breaks it is a criminal. Therefore there are no criminals except against something sacred. If you do away with the sacrosancity of the law then crime will disappear, because in reality a crime is nothing more than an act desecrating that which was hallowed by the state. There are, according to Stirner, no rights, because might makes right. A man is entitled to everything he has the power to possess and hold. The earth belongs to him who knows how to take it. Self-welfare should be the guiding principle to follow rather than law. Stirner relates that you can get further with a handful of might than you can with a bagful of right. The way to gain freedom is through might because he who has might stands above the law. A person only becomes completely free when what he holds, he holds because of his might. Then he is a self-owner and not a mere freeman. Everyone should say to

himself; I am all to myself and I do all for my sake. I am unique, nothing is more important to me than myself. Stirner does not believe that a person is good or bad, nor does he believe in what is true, good, right, and so on. These are vague concepts which have no meaning outside a God-centered or man-centered world. A man should center his interest on self and concentrate on his own business.

Stirner rejects the state. Without law the state is not possible. The respect for the law is what holds the state together. The state, like the law, exists not because an individual recognizes it as favorable to his welfare but because he considers it to be sacred. To Stirner the state, like the law, is not sacred. Stirner is the mortal enemy of the state. The welfare of the state has nothing to do with his own welfare and he should therefore sacrifice nothing to it. The general welfare is not his welfare but only means self-denial on his part. The object of the state is to limit the individual, to tame him, to subordinate him, to subject him to something general for the purpose of the state. The state hinders an individual from attaining his true value, while at the same time it exploits the individual to get some benefit out of him.

The state stands in the way between men, tearing them apart. Stirner would transform the state into his own property and his own creature instead of being the property and creature of the state. He would annihilate it and form in its place a Union of Egoists. The state must be destroyed because it is the negation of the individual will, it approaches men as a collective unit, The struggle between the egoists and the state is inevitable. Once the state is annihilated the Union of Egoists will prevail. This union is not sacred nor a spiritual power above man's power. It is created by men. In this union men will be held together by mutual advantage, through common "use" of one another. In joining the union an individual increases his own individual power. Each person will now through his own might control what he can. It does not imply though that there will be a region of universal rapacity and perpetual slaughter, nor does it mean the wielding of power over others. Each man will defend his own uniqueness. Once he has attained self-realization of true egoism he does not want to rule over others or hold more possessions than he needs because this would destroy his independence.

Stirner's Union of Egoists is not communistic. It is a union that individuals enter into for mutual gain from the egoistic union which will be developed within the union. There will be neither masters nor servants, only egoists. Everyone will withdraw into his own uniqueness which will prevent conflict because no one will be trying to prove himself "in the right" before a third party. Egoism will foster genuine and spontaneous union between individuals. Stirner does not develop in any detail the form of social organization that the Union of Egoists might follow. Organization itself is anathema to Stirner's Union. Within the Union the individual will be able to develop himself. The Union exists for the individual. The Union

of Egoists is not to be confused with society which Stirner opposes. Society lays claim to a person which is considered to be sacred, but which consumes an individual. The Union is made up of individuals who consume the Union for their own good. How is the abrogation of law, state, and property to be realized so that men will be free to enter into the Union of Egoists? It will occur when a sufficient number of men first undergo an inward change and recognize their own welfare as the highest law, and then these men will bring into being the outward manifestations: the abrogation of law, state, and property.

To Stirner revolution and rebellion are not synonymous. Revolution is an overturning of the condition of the existing state or society. Revolution is thus a political or social act. Rebellion, on the other hand, is a transformation of conditions. Rebellion stems from men's discontent with themselves. It is not an armed uprising, but a rising up of individuals. Rebellion has no regard for the arrangements that spring from it. Revolution aims at new arrangements; rebellion results in people no longer permitting themselves to be arranged, but to arrange for themselves, placing no great hope on existing institutions. Rebellion is not a fight against the established order, but if it succeeds, it will result in the downfall of that order. Stirner does not want to overthrow the establishment of order merely to overthrow it. He is interested in elevating himself above it. His purpose is not political, nor social, but egoistic.

To bring about the transformation of condition and put the new condition in the place of law, the state, or property, violent rebellion against the existing conditions is necessary. Force is necessary. If each man is to have what he requires he must take it. This will necessarily mean a war of each against all, for the poor become free and proprietors only when they rebel. The state can only be overcome by violent rebellion. Only rebellion can succeed. Revolution will fail because it will only result in setting up another unfavorable political or social condition. Only rebellion can entirely eliminate unfavorable political and social conditions and permit man to enter into the Union of Egoists where he will be able to achieve the highest realization of self. Stirner's Critics.

Stirner's critics did not take long to reply to his book. His principal critics were Kuno Fischer, Ludwig Feuerbach, Moses Hess, Bruno Bauer, Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels wrote an extensive, almost word-for-word refutation of Stirner's book which was not accepted for publication at the time. In the main his loudest critics were his former friends from *Die Freien*. *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* was not released until December 1844 but already in November Engels had obtained a copy from Otto Wigand. In a letter of November 19, 1844, Engels wrote to Marx that "we must not cast it [Stirner's book] aside," and that even though they were opposed to the ideas in the book they should make use of what they found there.

But what is true in his principle, we, too, must accept. And what is true is that before we can be active in any cause we must make it our own, egoistic cause-and that in this sense, quite aside from any material expectations, we are communists in virtue of our egoism, that out of egoism we want to be human beings and not merely individuals.

On January 17, 1845, Hess wrote to Marx outlining Ms proposed attack on Stirner. Arnold Ruge in a letter of December 6, 1844, to Fršbel wrote that Stirner's book was a good criticism of communism. 18 To his mother, Ruge wrote on December 17, 1844, that Stirner's book was the first readable work of philosophy in Germany. Bruno Bauer Is criticism appeared in the article written by Sozeliga. Feuerbach's and Bauer's attacks were hurried denunciations, more personal than philosophical. Marx evidently viewed Stirner's book as a great threat. He attacked it systematically in *Die deutsche Ideologie* which is practically a point-by-point criticism of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. In order to understand fully his attack you have to read it together with Stirner's book. Marx attempted to undermine the basis of Stirner's position. His comments are more than a personal vendetta against Stirner, it is one system of thought clashing with another, with Marx in the final outcome the beneficiary. Unlike the others, when criticizing *Der Einzige*, Marx gauged the positive merit of Stirner's work as well as the negative.

He acknowledged that Stirner was correct when he pointed out the failure of the existing system to deal with poverty. Marx furthermore agreed with Stirner that the practice of getting to the wealthy man's purse by appealing to his sense of piety and fair play, often referred to as "sentimental and idealistic philanthropy," was not sufficient. He also agreed with Stirner's contention that the process of man gaining his self-identity would, of necessity, involve class warfare. He praised Stirner for pointing out the hollowness of slogans which appealed to humanity, country, reason, justice, or abstract freedom. Stirner pointed out that these abstractions only tended to muddle and conceal the real issues. He liked Stirner's attack on private property, but he pointed out that Stirner had little insight into the origins of private property. Marx also agreed with Stirner's criticism of the doctrine of natural rights although he himself did not subscribe to Stirner's reasons nor his emphasis on egoism. Marx welcomed Stirner's claims that genuine freedom implied material power, because he reasoned that political democracy could never result in social democracy because in a political democracy which emphasizes free competition "he person without the material means was in an unfavorable position from the outset. It should be noted, however, that Stirner was no admirer of social democracy, which he viewed as a subterfuge through which the weak oppressed the strong. Marx also concurred with Stirner that revolution, which stops short at political reforms, can never guarantee the freedom of the people. Revolution can only guarantee the freedom of expression, which really means nothing because, in

the final analysis, no state would permit itself to be ground to nothingness by this freedom of expression.

The negative aspects of *Der Einzige* which Marx finds, are that while Stirner rejects God, freedom, immortality, and humanity, he nonetheless retains their method. Stirner, according to Marx, has only replaced the abstractions of God with an even more monstrous abstraction—the ego. Marx related that Stirner rejected the ideals of patriotism, church, and family as empty abstractions which pretended to be something they were not, but then questions whether Stirner’s devotion to the ego is really any different than devotion to God or country. Isn’t a man more than merely his ego? Can you strip him of his social relationships and social dependencies, strip him of his bare ego, finding these the source of his friendships, his love, and his work? Can this be done? Or would it not be more correct to say that once you have done this you have destroyed him, or at least his uniqueness is destroyed. Personality exists within society. It is the effect of social life and not the pre-condition thereof. Different social systems produce different types of personalities. To understand personality you have to understand the environment in which it functions. Therefore the pure, isolated ego is something which never was and never can be.

Marx further attacks Stirner’s subjectivism which comes about from the contention that the ego conditions social life rather than social life conditioning the ego. Marx thought that in not recognizing the sovereignty of the state Stirner was only deluding himself. Stirner, in Marx’s estimation, could not effectively struggle against the state because he did not realize what was the real source of its corporate abstraction. To do away with the state dialectically on paper means nothing. It is still there, you cannot ignore this fact.

Marx also attacks Stirner for his belief that you can isolate an individual’s state of mind from the society in which he lives. It is Marx’s contention that a man’s state of mind is something that is made up of a succession of states of mind; on the other hand, Stirner believed that this state of mind was controlled by self. Marx says he is mistaken that the world does consist of more than a state of mind. What a person sees and how he views it is determined by something which is not a state of mind at all. People see different things because of their different social environments. What is significant in one society may or may not be important in another. Marx concludes that:

Stirner’s social nominalism, therefore, not only is incapable of explaining what the individual consciousness finds but cannot explain the significant modes of the activity of consciousness proper—its wishing, fearing and appraising. Stirner ... is erecting the contemporary order of things and consciousness into the historical invariant. Stirner’s standpoint is religious because whatever history it does treat of, turns out to be a history of ideas. The world, as it existed before Stirner came on

the scene, is explained by a double inconsistency, as the result of man's mistaken religious ideas.

This criticism of Stirner by Marx is important for therein is contained the germ of his new philosophy of history

The standpoint with which one satisfies himself in such histories of the spirit is itself religious, for in it one is content to stop short with Religion, to conceive Religion as a cause of itself. This is done instead of explaining Religion in terms of material conditions; showing how certain determinate industrial and commercial relations are necessarily bound up with certain social forms, how these are themselves bound up with certain forms of the state and therewith with a certain form of religious consciousness. Had Stirner acquainted himself with the real history of the Middle Ages he would have discovered why the ideas of the Christians in the medieval world took the exact form they did, and how it came about that these ideas later developed into others. He would have found that "Christianity" had no history at all and that all the different forms in which it was held at different times were not "self-determinations" and progressive realizations of the "religious spirit," but that they were effected by completely empirical causes quite removed from any influence of the religious spirit.

Marx attacked Stirner's egoistic anarchism by attempting to demonstrate that it is self-defeating. According to Marx the individual can gain greater freedom and develop his individuality better by associating himself with the group, which will protect his individual differences better than he himself can. The absence of group support will in time deprive the individual of the opportunity to capitalize on his individualized abilities. Then, according to Marx, man's individual interest, economic as well as noneconomic, lies in the group. It is a sacrifice on the part of all involved but will result in harmony among men. This harmony makes it possible to "create institutional guarantees and mechanism by which the advantages of the specific capacities of all may be made available for all."

Naturally Marx disagreed with Stirner's concept of "one's own." He pointed out that this is an artificial abstraction, and that no man can make a claim for what is exclusively his own. Marx also criticized Stirner's concept of "self interest" or "one's interest." Furthermore, Marx demonstrates that the individual "I," which Stirner considered to be above every social limitation, whether proletarian or bourgeois, is nothing more than the expression of the German petite bourgeois who aspired to become bourgeois. Stirner's Influence.

It is difficult to assess accurately the influence of Stirner. There is definitely a connection between his thought and the school of individualist anarchism. The connecting link between Stirner and other thinkers and movements is not so easily established; however, some writers portray Stirner as a precursor of Nietzsche, while others point out that the seeds of fascism are found in *Der Einzige und sein*

Eigenthum, Still others place Stirner as a forerunner of existentialism. I myself can see a logical parallel between Stirner and Rudi Dutschke, contemporary leader of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund. Much is attributed to Stirner today, but during his life time he was not able to attract any disciples or school of followers. Stirner's influence during his life time seems to be limited to Julius Faucher (1820-1878), who represented Stirner's ideas in his newspaper the Berliner Abendpost. This paper was, of course, quickly suppressed. Zenker gives us an example of Faucher's comprehension of Stirner's thought

How strange and anomalous Stirner's individualism appeared even to the most advanced Radicals of Germany in that period appears very clearly from a conversation recorded by Max Wirth, which Faucher had with the stalwart Republican Schlöffel, in an inn frequented by the Left party in the Parliament in Frankfurt. "Schlöffel loved to boast of his Radical opinions, just as at that time many men took a pride in being, just as extreme as possible among the members of the Left. He expressed his astonishment that Faucher held aloof from the current of politics." "It is because you are too near the Right party for me," answered Faucher, who delighted in astonishing people with paradoxes. Schlöffel stroked his long beard proudly, and replied, "Do you say that to me?" "Yes," continued Faucher, "for you are a Republican incarnate; you still want a State. Now I do not want a State at all, and, consequently, I am a more extreme member of the Left than you." It was the first time Schlöffel had heard these paradoxes, and he replied: "Nonsense; who can emancipate us from the State?" "Crime," was Faucher's reply, uttered with an expression of pathos. Schlöffel turned away, and left the drinking party without saying a word more. The others broke out laughing at the proud demagogue being thus outdone: but no one seems to have suspected in the words of Faucher more than a joke in dialectics. This anecdote is a good example of the way in which Stirner's ideas were understood, and shows that Faucher was the only individual "individual" among the most Radical politicians of that time.

Nettlau agrees with Zenker when he writes that "few books have been so misunderstood or subjected to so many varying critical examinations." Stirner's greatest influence came toward the end of the 19th century. It is generally acknowledged that Stirner is the father of individualist anarchism. The individualist anarchist movement, which started in Germany in the 1890s, can be traced directly to the writings of Stirner. Was Nietzsche influenced by Stirner? In spite of Crane Brinton's protest to the contrary Nietzsche probably was. Although Stirner is not mentioned in Nietzsche's writings, numerous studies have compared their writings. In the final analysis there is but one piece of evidence to prove that Nietzsche knew Stirner. Löwith states the case:

Stirner is nowhere mentioned in Nietzsche's writings; but Overbeck's witness proves that Nietzsche knew of him, and not only through Lange's history of mate-

rialism. And Nietzsche was so “economical,” with his knowledge of Stirner because he was both attracted to and repelled by him, and did not want to be confused with him. Another interesting facet of Stirnerism is its influence on the development of fascism, specifically with regard to Mussolini. It is known that Mussolini studied *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* and admired the individualism of Stirner. Laura Fermi only raises the question of the influence of Stirner’s thought on Mussolini, and does not go into detail. Her account suggests that a thorough study of Mussolini’s writings would probably establish a firm connection. In recent years it has become fashionable to consider Stirner as an early exponent of existentialism, as a forerunner of Kierkegaard. Karl Löwith states that

Kierkegaard follows Stirner as the antithesis of Marx. Like Stirner, he reduces the entire social world to his own “self. But at the same time he finds himself in absolute opposition to Stirner; instead of ground in the individual upon creative nothingness, he places the individual “before God,” the creator of the world.

Martin Buber also makes it a point to demonstrate Kierkegaard’s debt to Stirner. Both Herbert Reed and Henri Arvon pose the question, if Christian existentialism recognizes Kierkegaard, why does atheistic existentialism continue to ignore Stirner? Even though many of the characters in the plays and novels of the atheistic existentialist writers are constructed round a philosophy which seems to be identical with Stirner’s, there is no way to prove this satisfactorily with concrete evidence.

The atheistic existentialists may disregard Stirner, but Stirner is popular today. The battles which Marx fought out with Stirner, Bakunin and other anarchists, and which he thought he had won, solved nothing. The giants he slew have once again come to life. The issues raised by Stirner and countered by Marx have a definite relevance in the world today, especially in the United States, France and West Germany. Marxism once again is engaged in a life and death struggle with anarchism. It would appear that the anarchists will win a victory over the Marxists at least in France, West Germany and even in the United States where anarchism seems to hold out more of a promise to the Radical Left of solving the world’s problems than Marxism in West Germany, France, and the United States anarchists and other groups today advocate making, use of rebellion to bring down the state which they refer to as the Establishment. Rudi Dutschke, in Germany, would set up small groups of people very similar to Stirner’s Union of Egoists. Dutschke, and some militants of the SDS, have pointed out that only rebellion can succeed in freeing the individual. Revolution only succeeds in setting up a new arrangement; it does not transform society. They use the example of the Russian Revolution to demonstrate the failure of revolution as a vehicle for setting the individual free. I do not know if Dutschke has studied Stirner’s writings, but there is a logical parallel between his faith in rebellion, and the development of small groups to set people

free, and Stirner's similar belief in the superiority of rebellion over revolution and Stirner's Union of Egoists.

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