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Union of Egoists

This item was contributed by the family of Sidney Parker.

I thank them for their support of the project.

-Kevin I. Slaughter

What is a UnionOfEgoists.com?

This is an informational resource provided by Kevin I. Slaughter of Underworld Amusements and Trevor Blake of OVO, initiated in February and publicly launched April 1st of 2016. The website initially focuses on providing historical, biographical and bibliographical details of a few their favorite Egoist philosophers. It is also integrating the archives of egoist website i-studies.com, the former project of Svein Olav Nyberg, and the EgoistArchives.com project of Dan Davies. Further, it will be home to Der Geist, a Journal of Egoism in print 1845 – 1945. UnionOfEgoists.com will be the best resource for Egoism online.

What is a Union of Egoists?

“We two, the State and I, are enemies. I, the egoist, have not at heart the welfare of this “human society;” I sacrifice nothing to it, I only utilize it; but to be able to utilize it completely I transform it rather into my property and my creature; i. e., I annihilate it, and form in its place the Union of Egoists.”

– Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*

What is Egoism?

“Egoism is the claim that the Individual is the measure of all things. In ethics, in epistemology, in aesthetics, in society, the Individual is the best and only arbitrator. Egoism claims social convention, laws, other people, religion, language, time and all other forces outside of the Individual are an impediment to the liberty and existence of the Individual. Such impediments may be tolerated but they have no special standing to the Individual, who may elect to ignore or subvert or destroy them as He can. In egoism the State has no monopoly to take tax or to wage war.”

-Trevor Blake, *Confessions of a Failed Egoist*

The Anarchism of **MAX STIRNER**

SINCE Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own* was published in 1844, its author has been the subject of controversy. He has been called, among other things, a precursor of fascism, a pioneer of syndicalism, an egoistic nihilist, an existentialist "before the letter". More than anything else, however, Max Stirner has been connected with anarchism.

Of course, it has been maintained by some that Stirner cannot be classified as an anarchist. R.W. K. Paterson, for example, in his full-length critique, *The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner*, argues that Stirner's philosophy is incompatible with anarchism. Paterson identifies anarchism with the moral ideals of certain evangelical socialists who want a world of "universal love and brotherly cooperation", and thus has to rule Stirner out of the anarchist court. If one accepts Paterson's definition, then Stirner was certainly not an anarchist. But if one does not see anarchism as a form of egalitarian and democratic communism, then his objection does not hold. Indeed, its probable source was indicated by the late Enzo Martucci when he wrote in his *In Defence of Stirner*:

The question between anarchists and archists has been badly stated from the start. We are not concerned with whether anarchy or archy can cement the best social relations, or bring about the most complete understanding and harmony between individuals. We try, instead, to discover which is the most useful for the realisation of the individual.

Although Stirner did not call himself an anarchist, *The Ego and His Own* is the most trenchant case for the individual against authority that has ever been written.

Stirner proclaims his cause to be himself, the unique one, conscious of his egoism, and scorning the State, God, Humanity, Society -- and all the other abstract "spooks" in which the individual is supposed to believe.

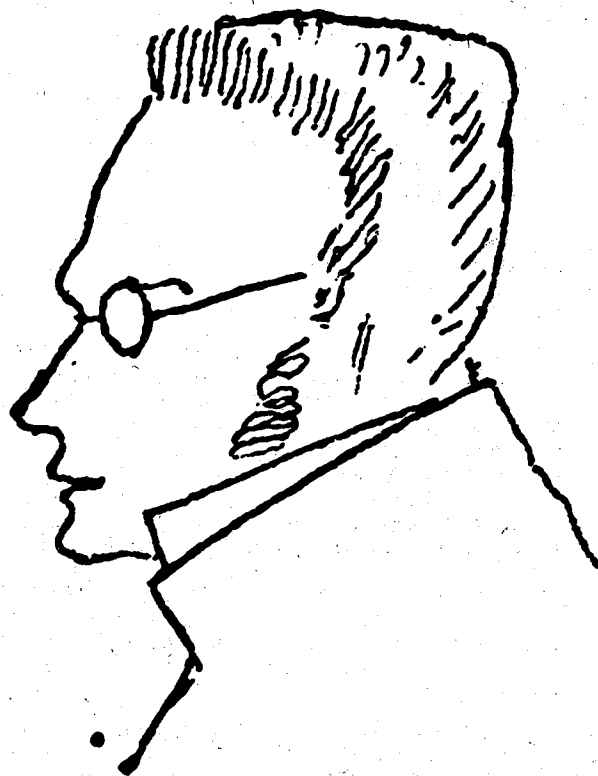
"Away, then," he writes, "with every concern that is not altogether my concern!"

"What's good, what's bad? Why, I myself am my concern, and I am neither good nor bad. Neither has meaning for me. The divine is God's concern the human's, man. My concern is neither the divine, nor the human; not the good, true, just, free, etc. but solely what is mine and it is not a general one, but it is unique, as I am unique. . . Nothing is more to me than myself."

To make myself my own cause is to become a self-owning individual and so enter into perpetual conflict with everything outside of me for which my allegiance is claimed and my obedience demanded. Certainly there are and are always likely to be forces -- both natural and institutional -- that are more powerful than I am. But they have no authority in my eyes, and if I am not strong enough to overthrow them, I will evade them in any way that I can.

The state is one of my enemies, for its purpose is at all times and in every place to subordinate my interests to its interests, to extinguish my particularity with the generality of its laws.

Every state is a despotism, be the despot one or many, or (as one is likely to imagine about a republic) if all be lords, -- i. e. despotise over one another. For this is the case where the law given at any time, the expressed volition of (it may be) a popular assembly, is thenceforth to be law for the individual, to which obedience is due from him, or towards which he has the duty of obedience. If one were even to conceive the case that every individual in the people had expressed the same will, and hereby a complete "collective will" had come into being, the matter would still remain the same. Would I not be bound today and henceforth to my will of yesterday? My will in this case would be frozen. Wretched stability! My creature -- to wit a particular expression of will -- would have become my



*Pencil sketch of Max Stirner
Drawn after his death from memory by Engels*

commander. But I in my will, I the creator, should be hindered in my flow and my dissolution; because I was a fool yesterday I must remain such my life long. So in the state life I am at best -- I might just as well say at worst -- a bondsman of myself. Because I was a willer yesterday I am today without will; yesterday voluntary, today involuntary.

How change it? Only by recognising no duty -- i.e. not binding myself nor letting myself be bound. If I have no duty then I know no law either.

Stirner, however, has no time for those who rebel against the domination of the state in order to replace it with the domination of "society". Society is not something created by me in collaboration with you for the attainment of a specific end; it is not an association of egoists. It is something into which I am born without choice and from which I must free myself if I am to become fully my own. This cannot be the case if the horizontal authority of "society" is substituted for the vertical authority of the state.

Against the coercions of state and society, Stirner advocates the formation of associations of egoists when cooperation between individuals is expedient. These associations are temporary and voluntary. They have nothing "sacred" about them and exist purely to serve the interests of those who compose them. When I consider an association is of no more use to me I will abandon it without ceremony, since at no time do I consider myself under any obligation to it. Association is thus the opposite of society.

Stirner, therefore, rejects the communist ideal of making society the owner and provider of the means of life:

Communism, by the abolition of all personal property, only presses me back still more into dependence upon another -- viz on the generality or collectivity; and loudly as it always attacks the "state" what it intends is itself again, a state -- a status a condition hindering my free movement, a sovereign power over me. Communism rightly revolts against the pressure I experience from individual proprietors; but still more horrible is the might that it puts in the hands of the collectivity.

For Stirner, property is necessary for his well-being, but it is not to be found in the legalised property system of capitalism, nor in the collectivised property system of the communist. "Property" is what I have the power to appropriate and make my own, irrespective of the "law" or the "community". No scruples about private property as a "total concept" will stop me from theft if this is the only way I can survive. Nor will I be halted by the moral imperatives of the community if I desire to have property of my own and I have the might to get it.

Stirner regards morality as one of the forms of domination over the individual. Moral domination is even more binding than the external constraints of the state and society as it is expressed in the internalised authority called "conscience", a mode of self-intimidation often favoured by the religious (Stirner reminds us that the word "religious" comes from a Latin word which means "to bind"). This is the most difficult form of authority to shake off, for, while I can unscrupulously rebel against the external impositions of the law or social custom, to rebel against conscience seems like rebelling against myself. None the less, the Stirnerian egoist dissolves this spook along with the others, and becomes an amoralist, living "beyond good and evil" even when prudence indicates an outward show of conformity. "I am neither good nor bad. Neither has meaning for me."

The late Herbert Read once wrote of *The Ego and His Own* that it stuck in his gizzard. He could neither digest Stirner's philosophy nor get rid of it. Stirner has presented this problem to many of his interpreters, particularly those who sought to solve it by sweetening his views and incorporating them into doctrines he would have spurned with a few sarcastic

words. Daniel Guerin, for instance, tried to do this in his book *Anarchism*, but he had to conclude mournfully that "Stirner's synthesis of the individual and society remained halting and incomplete. In the thought of this rebel the social and the anti-social clash and are not always resolved. The social anarchists were to reproach him for this, quite rightly."

The reproaches of "social anarchists", like those of Guerin, are a product of wishful thinking, if not outright ignorance. Stirner's anarchism is thoroughly individualist and, far from wanting to reconcile the individual with society, was aimed at dissolving society into its component individualities. To try to make of him yet another social synthesiser is completely to misunderstand him. As John Carroll has remarked, "Stirner's uncompromising advocacy of self-realisation sets him far apart from other anarchist philosophers, especially Proudhon and Kropotkin. He would have regarded their scrupulous plans and halcyon dreams as abstract and religious in the extreme, not far removed in spirit from the millenarian vision of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*. Stirner's own prolonged introspection gave him a psychological perceptivity which was too down-to-earth to permit Orphic musings -- it is this 'realism' that makes his brand of anarchism the one most congruent to today's situation."

Stirner as a critic of authority and an advocate of the "anarchy of individuals" has yet to be surpassed. He signposted a way of rebellion and of affirmative individualism that depends on neither the changing but superficial fortunes of the political scene, nor the fickle servilities of the acephalous mob. His greatest achievement was to create *The Ego and His Own* and so provide a perpetual source of intellectual ammunition for those unique ones who succeeded him. In the words of his biographer, John Henry Mackay:

"He did what he has done for himself, because it was a pleasure to him.

"He demanded no thanks, and we owe him nothing.

"He has only reminded us of our indebtedness to ourselves!"

S. E. PARKER



"IS THAT THE WHITE HOUSE, IS THAT YOU, RONNIE, MAGGIE CALLING, I'VE JUST HAD A MARVELLOUS IDEA, LET'S ORGANISE THE WESTERN WORLD TO BOYCOTT THE THIRD WORLD WAR."

FORWARD TO THE LOO

I HAVE written that history repeats itself first as tragedy and then as farce and if my claim to have compounded this platitude is false then sue me. On the 20th April 1920 the Cologne Dadaists decided to hold their first 'The First Dada Event'. It was organized by Max Ernst and Baargeld and while it was exciting it is recorded that even the work that was to be given away free failed to find buyers. There was the inevitable cries of obscenity and communism over the use, one assumes, of the revamped marxist slogan *Dilettanten erhebt euch! Dilettantes arise!* and the fact that a young girl wearing her first communion dress stood within the exhibition and recited poems of Jacob van Hoddis. All in all it was happytime with imitation blood and Max's historical axe chained firmly to a tree trunk for the visiting firemen to hack away to show their simulated rage. By IT and OZ standards of 1950 and 1960 it was watered down lager. Baargeld was one of the founders of the Rhineland Communist Party and in 1919 the left of left paper *Der Ventilator* that he directed and which contained poems and articles by Max Ernst had a run of 20,000 copies therefore anything that they became involved with had by their nature to be of interest. Yet one feels that in politics and in art it was the vicarious pleasures of nihilism that was the key to their actions. Having cocked their snoot at the local Establishment the inevitable took place and Max Ernst's uncle acting in his other hat as the public prosecutor issued a warrant for the police to close the gallery but as in all good Reagan style B movies the white hats won when it was found that the only piece of good clean public filth on display was Durer's etching of Adam and Eve. What made the 1920 Dadaist exhibition of note was that to enter the exhibition that was held in a room behind a cafe one had to go through a public lavatory and into history. The National Portrait Gallery is an austere building wherein one nods to the attendant, walks up the stone steps, is handed ones press hand out and visually records that the current exhibition is on one's left and the wine table red or white, is on the right. Every one is very polite and there is no horseplay with the mad Pole or the bearded Dutchman and the press office women have the shy trembling charm of Pre-Raphaelite paintings womanpersonwise. It is this simple fact that makes the heart pound and the blood surge when on entering the National Portrait Gallery for the 'The Gentle Eye' exhibition of photographs by Jane Brown of the *The Observer* newspaper one was



'The Bathing Pool Dogs' by Stanley Spencer



Jane Brown

S. J. Perelman,
London, 1978

directed down to the public lavatory. One gives a shy smile and whispers 'later' and asks to be directed to the exhibition and three polite attendances point down to the public lavatory and in that situation one can only take history by the throat and with one hand on one's zip and the other holding the press card descends into the unknown and there was the exhibition and there at their small table were two shy presspersons, to my right was the exhibition, to my left was the red and white and within touching distance was the public loo. All else can

only be an anti-climax in this re-run of history 1920/1980. Honesty and good faith demand that I speak of Jane Brown's photographs and all that one can say is that they are pleasant studies of a number of minor celebrities of our age who did little harm to the world in general and writ their names small on the arse of history and we who will never attain to being Poet Laureate, Archbishop, Sir or Cardinal sneer only because I am sick with jealousy but I will never hold that photography is an art form so that pretty Jane I wish you well. It would seem that we are surrounded by the desire of the *Observer* newspaper to educate the Island Race artwise for they are responsible for the Stanley Spencer exhibition within the Royal Academy. Spencer was a brilliant draftsman and he could fill the great wall spaces so that the paintings merge into a great unified whole but having mapped out his great fresco I feel that he became lazy and that the brush work became of little import for the excitement was in the initial layout. In his small self portraits he is a magnificent colourist. In his landscape magnificent. In his great paintings of the Clyde ship workers there are brilliant areas of red hot welded metal but in the painting of cloth, walls and people he became slipshod. The Academy can take pride in this exhibition and in the great catalogue which one must assume is a definitive work of the man as artist. Is Spencer a great painter and I would say no. His

fame is purely parochial in relation to these islands and I would place him alongside men such as Diego Riviera. One is impressed by the sheer weight of the subject matter. One has an historical association with it and that is what stays in the mind but the longer one stays with these great paintings the more one is conscious of their flaws. I honour a brilliant painter and congratulate the Royal Academy of winning the jack pot for at long last giving the visitor their entrance fees worth. But one cannot say this of the 'Treasures from Chatsworth'. The Duke and Duchess of Devonshire trod the light fantastic on the press day as the fourth estate searched for the wine and I wish them well for their title has a Rowlandson ring but of the treasures then not for me. I do not dispute that all in all it is probably worth zillions of £££ but to my innocent eye it is like so much of these great heirlooms no more than junk jewellery cast in gold and decorated with whatever pretty baubles that one has. There are drawings by Inigo Jones, van Dyck and Rembrandt and own them and you cannot go wrong etc but one must bow to the Duchess' taste in that she has a number of watercolours by Lucian Freud who is our finest watercolourist. But the 1607 Kniphausen 'Hawk' 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high reminded me too much of Sam Spade and the Maltese Falcon and I feel that if I won that or the Delft tulip vase at a bingo session I would hand it back for a bottle of whisky rather than be seen walking home with it. Bad taste made acceptable only by venerable age, as they said of my late and unlamented grandfather. But what I do like is the fine catalogue with its civilised introduction by Sir Anthony Blunt. It is nice to know that old Sir Tony made this exhibition before he dropped his clanger. He was naughty but he left lesser types behind. Sir Hugh Casson PRA is one of those happy types who are destined to appear at the end of every speech by those in command. A small and cheerful little man who smiles through one and is the ideal Personnel Officer for some great Corporation on a rising market and why not. Esso Petroleum and the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum have presented the Island Race, within the Royal Academy, with the work of eight artists and they have named it in a moment of mental aberration 'British Art Now'. Diane

Waldman made us a long involved speech that must be fodder for so many a mid American art college but one looks at the work upon the walls, and condemns it out of hand. It cannot be accepted as British Art now for it is no more than the usual slap happy abstracts, tree trunks, plaster boulders and all the other third rate trivia that Bond Street junked ten years ago. Sir Hugh Casson leaped like an aged superman onto one of the padded seats and made his bow to Diane for her speech and this exhibition and then made his fatal mistake by asking for questions and I asked and repeat that if this insignificant abstract work is 'British Art Now' then why does Sir Hugh, and I am a right crawler for a title Duchess, not give it pride of place among all the representational work that fills his Summer Exhibition and Hugh smiled and answered with a zen answer but he knows I am right.

There is so much rubbish around the Town but one should not complain. Paul Jenkins with lazy slap happy work at Gimpel when he is capable of so much good abstract painting. Old Victor Pasmore padding along along in the upstairs gallery of the Royal Academy with his regional abstractions on display and the pleasure to talk to the old man and to remember his past work with pleasure. The awful rubbish of the late Canadian painter Jack Bush in the Serpentine Gallery and do not let us speak ill of the unknown dead but let us at least have the honesty to condemn bad work badly executed. Yet there is salvation and it is not the rent paying portraits of Thomas Gainsborough that will be around comrades when we are dust but again to the upper air of the Royal Academy for the exhibition of the late Algernon Newton who slipped his mortal coil in an off beat moment in 1968. Introduced by Nicholas Usherwood they are beautiful paintings of a decaying and a dying London. Like the American small town painters they give us a world of early morning or dying light, 20th century Canaletto, their beauty lies in the empty streets and empty hearts and the silence that the gaudy boys of British Art Now will never know.

ARTHUR MOYSE.

The Economics of Nuclear Power

THERE'S no use opposing nuclear weapons without opposing all war - quite obviously. Therefore it is important to examine some of the causes, and possible results of war. War is an important part of capitalist and authoritarian society, including the state capitalists in China and the USSR; and nuclear war is not as significantly different from conventional war as most people imagine.

In the early days of nuclear weapons and the cold war in the 1950s and 60s the policy in building up nuclear weapons, partly because of the crudity of the weapons technology, was for large scale nuclear destruction and holocaust. America had a policy of Mutual Assured Destruction which was supposed to be so horrible that no-one would possibly dare to start a nuclear war.

This is all changing. Weapons technology has developed to a stage where nuclear war can and possibly will be used as a logical extension of conventional warfare. Nuclear weapons are getting smaller and more accurate. This means that relatively small scale destruction could take place if the countries concerned limited the scale of the war. This is far more likely to happen amongst small countries not part of NATO or the Soviet bloc - especially under pressure from these two.

There are now smaller and more powers with nuclear weapons. At the time of the Cold War and Mutual Assured Destruction nuclear capability was only held by Nato, the Soviet Union, China and France.

On September 22nd 1979 South Africa and Israel set off a nuclear explosion in the south Atlantic. Brazil, Iraq and Pakistan are all known to be close to nuclear capability. Politicians in many other countries are keen to get their grubby mitts on weapons and many of these are now being sold nuclear power - for instance the Philippines.

All of these countries are in unstable areas and a small scale nuclear war could easily flare up somewhere like the Middle East.

Like other sorts of war, nuclear war destroys wealth faster than it can be created. It was previously thought that nuclear

war would be akin to Armageddon and Einstein even said that if there was a nuclear war then World War IV would be fought with bows and arrows.

This is no longer true. If a small scale nuclear war took place then capitalism would make massive profits out of the reconstruction as happened after World War II in Germany and Japan who now have the strongest economies in the world. These capitalists are the very same ones who are manufacturing the weapons. They don't want to see a holocaust any more than we do because they can't make profits out of it. World War III could still conceivably be fought conventionally.

But they can, and do, make profits from manufacturing increasingly obsolescent weapons to destroy wealth and then make more profits out of reconstructing that wealth - always at the expense of the workers.

And now they have a better way of doing it. War also cures unemployment because the unemployed are pressed into the army and the weapons industries. War kills off those who are not kept busy at home. Small scale nuclear war could do the same.

But if all they want to do is to cure unemployment and make profits by taking over someone else's industry intact they have the neutron bomb which kills off the opposition population but leaves its industry intact so that the national industrial reserve army of unemployed and others can be moved in to get the industry busy at making them profits with the minimum possible delay and without all the problems of reconstruction.

So they now can make the choice of how to make their profits from war and at the same time cure such slight embarrassments as mass unemployment and a depressed economy, as well as stirring up a bit of national pride to keep the workers from thinking about capitalism and provide a good excuse for rounding up subversives.

And in the meantime they make their profits by selling their weapons to armies of all sides regardless of their fake national pride.

DS

Jean Paul Sartre

1905 - 1980

Introduction

JEAN PAUL SARTRE died this year at the age of 74. Essentially for Sartre a person is their life, their work - what they do. Critics and commentators normally attempt to describe, explain and evaluate the characteristics of Sartre's prodigious work in philosophy, psychology, literature and politics, in terms internal to and derived from that work. For example, in terms of the categories of his early, pre-'94 'pure' existentialism, or the later, post-war, so-called Marxist or 'Marxist-existential' concepts of, say, Saint-Genet, the Critique of Dialectical Reason or the abandoned four-volume study of Flaubert.

To me, however, Sartre's life and work can best be comprehended in terms of four closely inter-related categories which may appear alien or foreign when applied to Sartre, but in reality provide the most adequate framework for any critical evaluation of his work. The categories are: Reason, Radicalism, Libertarianism and Anarchism.

Sartre's Rationalism...

Sartre is, in the first place, a man of Reason, a Rationalist, and this in at least three senses. First, in the sense in which we think of Kant, Voltaire, Humboldt, Mill, Freud or Russell, as members of the secular rationalist Enlightenment tradition, with its dominant insistence that Reason should govern the emotions in the lives of people, and not conversely. If, in Freud's image, people's passions are the power-providing horse, then reason should be the controlling and direction-giving rider. Second, Sartre belongs to a distinctive sub-tradition of the Enlightenment typified above all by Hegel, Einstein and Marx. This sub-tradition places special emphasis on the power of the rational intellect to comprehend or appropriate reality; and, in the case of Marx, to change it. For the distinctive Marxian variant, to which Sartre is closest in spirit, Reason, whilst not by itself sufficient, is always necessary for changing the world.

The third sense in which, throughout all the phases and stages of his diverse work, Sartre is a Rationalist, is the sense in which he remains indebted to the Cartesian Rationalism of French Philosopher and Mathematician, Rene Descartes. As Sartre stated in 1944, "...there's only one of our people (ie. French thinkers-) who has any profound effect on my mind, and that's Descartes. I consider myself a descendant of his and appeal to the old Cartesian tradition..."

In a more recent 1969 interview in New Left Review, Sartre accurately described his major work on existentialism, Being and Nothingness, as 'a rationalist philosophy of consciousness':

It was all very well for me to dabble in apparently non-rational processes of the individual, the fact remains that

L'Être et Le Neant is a monument of rationality. Sartre adds that "in the end it becomes an irrationalism, because it cannot account rationally for those processes which are 'below' consciousness and which are also rational, but lived as irrational!"

Reading Freud shocked him: I was incapable of understanding him because I as a Frenchman with a good Cartesian tradition behind me, imbued with a certain rationalism, and

I was therefore deeply shocked by the idea of the unconscious.

Despite Sartre's subsequent efforts to do justice to Freud's insights, in what a French psychoanalytic friend has termed his 30 year love/hate relationship with Psychoanalysis, and notwithstanding his efforts in Saint Genet, the Critique and his Flaubert to go beyond Descartes, there remains a profound sense in which he has been unwilling or unable to liberate himself from the conceptual framework, -fettlers, if you prefer- of the rational Cartesian individual.

...Radicalism...

The second essential characteristic of Sartre and his work is his Radicalism. By this I mean a fierce determination to get to the roots of the problem (of theory or practice) in question. For Sartre, as for Marx, to be radical is to penetrate to the root, and the root for man is man. Sartre's constant concern in every domain of 'pure' and 'socially' applied

reason with which he has been concerned, has been to understand and change the world of human reality, by means of radical intellectual (including imaginative) theory and practice. (I should say 'praxis' for Sartre because, as we'll see, one of his radical theses regarding humans is precisely the nonseparable unity of thought and action.)

Sartre gives clear expression to the point of his radical humanism in the New Left Review interview mentioned earlier. The point is ... 'to provide a philosophical foundation for realism. Which in my opinion is possible today, and which I have tried to do all my life. In other words, how to give man both his autonomy and his reality among real objects, avoiding idealism without lapsing into a mechanistic materialism'.

Sartre's radical intellectual temperament, his desire always to draw the radical (logical) conclusions for practice from his radical diagnosis of any phenomenon, is well exemplified in his theory of human nature in Being and Nothingness. People exist - are always and only situated - in external (natural and social) conditions:

"What men have in common is not a nature, but a metaphysical condition; and by that we mean the combination of constraints which limit them a priori; the necessity to be born, and to die; that of being finite and of dwelling in a world among men. For the rest, they constitute indestructible totalities, whose ideas, moods and acts are secondary and dependent structures, and whose essential character is to be situated, and they differ among themselves as their situations differ."

(Situations II. p 22.)

In thus emphasizing the external (natural and social) conditions in which we think, experience and act, Sartre neglects (to the point of denying) what men as different as Freud or Chomsky regard as the most important determinant of human nature: the internal or biological conditions of our situation. In short, our biologically given mental and physical capacities. These, for both men, determine the range (scope and limits) of possible forms of expression (in thought and deed) of human nature.

Sartre's denial of biological constraints or internal conditions, and his emphasis on the external conditions of our situation, follows from his radical view that men produce their own natures as a product of their free (undetermined) choices and actions. (Deciding or choosing what to do - choosing silence or deciding to do nothing, for example - is itself a mode of acting, for Sartre.)

In Sartre's words:

"... everyone in the eighteenth century thought that all men had a common essence called human nature. Existentialism, on the contrary, maintains that in man - and in man alone - existence precedes essence. This simply means that man first is, and only subsequently is this or that. In a word, man must create his own essence: it is in throwing himself into the world, suffering there, struggling there, that he gradually defines himself. And the definition always remains open ended: we cannot say what this man is before he dies or what mankind is before it has disappeared... existentialism is nothing but a certain way of envisaging human questions by refusing to grant man an eternally established nature.."

And he concludes:

"All I can say - without wanting to insist too much on the similarities - is that it isn't too far from the conception of man found in Marx. For is it not a fact that Marx would accept this motto of ours for man: make, and in making make yourself, and be nothing but what you have made yourself."

(A More Precise Characterization of Existentialism 1944.)

(It isn't possible to discuss here the relations between the thought of Sartre and Marx at each stage of Sartre's intellectual-political development. To anticipate my final thesis, however, I would argue that Sartre's unsuccessful efforts to be (simultaneously) an orthodox and an original-creative Marxist in his later work, no less than his 'pure' Existentialist works, are essentially forms of expression of his fundamental underlying intellectual and political Anarchism.)

Returning to Sartre's radicalism, I haven't space to discuss the details of the remaining radical features of Sartre's Existentialist theory of human nature: his view of situated men as always free to choose and act; his theory of the mind as essentially conscious, a la Descartes; his account of relations between persons, and specifically between the sexes; or his radical theory of responsibility: we are not only causally and morally responsible for all our acts. Whenever we choose and act, as we continuously must, we choose a whole world, for the whole world, for everyone. By our cowardice or courage, as expressed in our patterns of work and love, culture and consumption, no less than in our more overt political practice, we choose to allow the existence of concentration and extermination camps and neutron bombs, genocide in East Timor and mass starvation in Kampuchea. I can be free only if all are free.

In deliberately using these themes from Sartre's pure Existentialist phase to illustrate his Radicalism, I am not suggesting either that the post-1945 Sartre's philosophical, psychological, literary and political works are less radical; or that Sartre has not (more or less) radically revised his views; still less that I am uncritical of them. It's obviously impossible to attempt such a detailed critical analysis here. It must suffice to say that I would agree with the - only apparently paradoxical - self-assessment offered by Sartre on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. All his errors, personal and political, 'pure' and 'applied', derive from his failure to be as radical as he could-hence should - have been:

"In general, it always comes back to not having gone as far as possible in my radicalism. Naturally in the course of my life I have made lots of mistakes, large and small, for one reason or another. But at the heart of it all, every time I made a mistake it was because I was not radical enough."

...Libertarianism...

So far I've discussed Sartre's Rationalism and his Radicalism. Now I want to focus on his Libertarianism. By Sartre's constant, life-long libertarian views on human nature and society, I mean first, his insistence that human thought, experience and behaviour is free - ie, undetermined, by either internal-biological or external-social causes. All men have - hence should be free to exercise - the capacity for free thought and action. Even in his most extreme, almost comical efforts to do the impossible and turn himself into what he thought was a good orthodox Marxist, Sartre never abandoned this libertarian conception of human nature. (I pass over in silence the fact that this libertarian theory of human nature presupposes precisely what Sartre denies or plays down: assumptions concerning the existence and attributes of biologically given mental and physical capacities.)

However, even in Being and Nothingness, Sartre recognized that the social and natural conditions in which men are situated, more or less severely limit our freedom of action. (The "Marxist" Sartre will attempt to characterize these conditions in terms of class relations and relations of material scarcity.) The essential point is that for Sartre a theory of human freedom must have human liberation not merely as its subject, but as its object or aim: "a theory of freedom (must) explain what the forms of alienation are - to what extent freedom can be manipulated, distorted, turned against itself..." (Self-Portrait at Seventy).

Thus it is that, throughout all his developmental stages, Sartre conceives of human liberation from (men-made) causes of unfreedom as his fundamental concern. The point of understanding the world is to change it. The condition for the freedom, equality and just treatment of each is the freedom, equality and just treatment of all:

"If man is an object, it is for another man's use. And it is these two ideas - ... man is free, man is the being through whom man becomes an object - which define our present status and allow us to understand oppression... Our liberty today is nothing except the free choice to fight in order to become free. And the paradoxical aspect of this formula simply expresses the paradox of our historical condition."

(Reply to Albert Camus.)

...Anarchism.

Finally there is Sartre's Anarchism. But surely - you may ask - however else one may choose to describe Sartre's efforts to understand and change the world - Totalitarian, Fascist, Communist, Romantic, Irrationalist, Idealist, Nihilist, Marxist, Existentialist ... are just some of the labels applied to Sartre - he is not an Anarchist. On the contrary, though Sartre's Anarchism has passed through various phases and forms of expression, underlying and uniting all his efforts to criticize and change society has been an unconditional opposition to all forms of centralized or even unequal possession and exercise of power. This is the source of Sartre's opposition to authoritarian State "socialism", and in particular, to Stalinist ideology and practices, no less than to the forms of "bourgeois democracy" and the institutions of capitalist society.

Throughout, Sartre has been an anarchist in the sense specified by Adolph Fischer: "every anarchist is a socialist but not every socialist is necessarily an anarchist." Clearly, Sartre's libertarian socialism is intimately related to his radical egalitarian and democratic views, views which are expressed in his plays no less than (for example) his role as Executive President of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal on "allied" conduct in Indochina. In Sartre's own words,

"I have never allowed anyone to hold power over me, and

I have always thought that anarchy - which is to say, a society without powers - must be brought about."

(Self-Portrait at Seventy)

True, Sartre has vehemently criticized apolitical "anarchists" who invoke the ideal of Purity 'as an excuse for doing nothing' (recall Hoederer's bitter denunciation in the 1948 play, *Dirty Hands*), perhaps because as a young man his own anarchistic thought and behaviour was initially of this kind (compare the second volume of Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs). The young Sartre feared that socialism might be incompatible with individual freedom and his radical egalitarian and democratic views. In the course of his intellectual and political development, however, he soon convinced himself that socialism - ie, libertarian, not authoritarian - State "socialism" - was rather the condition for individual (hence collective) freedom and equality.

It is this fundamental, life-long Anarchism which underlies and expresses itself in Sartre's work in philosophy, psychology, politics and literature - in his Existentialism no less than his criticisms of Stalinist Marxist ideology and practice, in his support for radical Anti-Psychiatry no less than in his post-May 1968 so-called "ultra-left" politics. Sartre recognised this explicitly himself after the events of Paris, May 1968 when he stated: "If one rereads all my books, one will realize that I have not changed profoundly and that I have always remained an anarchist."

These, then are the four essential attributes or determinants of Sartre's life and work: his Rationalism, his Radicalism, his Libertarianism and his Anarchism. They are also what make him, for me, one of the few great men of our time.

Pat Flanagan.

BABYLON: more than a film review

FILM reviews rarely, if ever, question the validity of a film in social and political terms. They are merely preoccupied with a synopsis of the plot, a few comments on the script, and an appraisal of the acting. They are, after all, being used to sell, (or not sell), a film to their readers. "Babylon" has tried to force out of these sterile commentators more than just the usual 'critique' and asked them to condone or condemn message. The 'liberal' papers, sensing their credibility threatened, have therefore had nothing but praise, though limiting it as much as possible to the framework of an objective, even aesthetic, review. A brief mention, almost in passing, of its merit as a social documentary, and swiftly onto the next film review, before a conclusion needs to be drawn. After all social comment is not supposed to be their job. (Maybe it should be, for they are the ones who spend hours in the darkness examining the workings of one of society's most potent propaganda weapons.) What we need though is more than a film review.

Many readers will already be familiar with the story line and background to the film as it is currently being heavily publicised. Suffice it to say that it deals with one week in the life of a young, black, West Indian man, in one of London's closest equivalents to a racial ghetto, Brixton. Into that week is condensed almost every facet of life normally 'associated' with young blacks. Reggae music, Rastafarianism, ganga, police brutality, mugging, white racism and fascism, family troubles, confusion, alienation, oppression and a great amount of frustration. By all accounts it is an accurate picture of what it is like to be a young black in Britain.

All this is seen through the eyes of one young black, it is spoken in their dialects (sub-titles are used extensively), and played to their rules. It does not wholly condemn nor exonerate any part of the society it deals with. The police are merciless and brutal, though in their eyes a young black wandering the streets at 5am. must seem like a fair target for 'sus'*. The white fascists/racists are sparked off by the incessant, and loud, reggae music that disturbs their sleep. The young blacks themselves indulge in petty theft, a mugging (very much disapproved of by the main character), and are often a considerable nuisance. Though one's sympathies are directed overwhelmingly in one direction the fact that what is presented is a social problem, experienced by and affecting all, and not the individual actions of 'good guys', and 'bad guys', is never forgotten.

The film is merely stating that for young blacks in today's Britain, life is hard and unjust and that this frustration and oppression causes people to react in ways that are anti-social. (in any society). Nothing new to be sure, but it was stated on celluloid in a manner it has never been stated in before. It looked and felt real.

Coming back to the job of a reviewer. Some one at Rank**, feels that, to quote, "This film needs you and you need it." This must of course refer to all the radical/alternative papers that were probably also invited along. Can it be that the film

needs the seal of approval from the anarchists and the left, to help restore film companies' credibility after the onslaught of trash that currently engulfs our cinemas, and get us to cough up the exorbitant entrance fees once again? Maybe in "Babylon's" case, yes, for those that will appreciate it will be the liberals and radicals, and, more than anyone else, the young blacks whose life-styles it depicts. (It has been given a totally unwarranted "X" certificate in a political move to try and stop anyone under 18 from seeing it.) So are we being asked to help Rank Distribution sell a film? After all it is not an anarchist film, unless you count as such any film that decries the present state of affairs. It offers no answers, no solutions and a confused conclusion. (Why should it). But all in all it is a good film, a film worth seeing, a film that graphically portrays just what is wrong for certain sections of our community, though it also a film that does not tell us how we might consider changing that society.

If people start to think, or re-think, after seeing it and go on to act, then it will have succeeded. If masochistic liberals fill the aisles and come out with pained consciences and nothing else, it will have failed. If you need spurring to action or merely want to have the pleasure of having a problem you know exists and are fighting against, vividly stated, go and see it. If you only want to sympathise with oppressed young blacks in a sick society, then go home and forget about it, stay away!

*'sus' is a law enabling the police to stop people in the street, it is usually used to harass young blacks.

**Rank Distribution is handling the film in Britain.

Stefano.



Blue, the main character, being chased by the police

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A MISCELLANY

James Hinton: The First Shop Stewards Movement. The shop stewards movement from c. 1910 - 1920's. 352pp cloth. £15.00 (75p).
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*The North American Anarchist. October/November 1980. £0.25 (14p). You can subscribe to this via Freedom Bookshop if you wish for £4.50 per year (12 issues).
*The First International Symposium on Anarchism. February 17-24 1980. at Lewis and Clark college. Portland. Oregon. USA. Schedule of events. 22pp. ppr. £0.10 (10p).
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A paper presented at the aforementioned symposium.

IN ITALIAN

Camillo Berneri: Epistolario Inedito, Volume Primo. 157pp. ppr. £2.75 (26p). Published by the Archivio Famiglia Berneri Pistoia, Italy.
Fabio Santin and Elis Fraccaro: La Rivoluzione Volontaria: Biografia per immagini di Errico Malatesta. 102pp cloth. large format. £6.95 (£1.21). Text in Italian - a story in pictures of the life of Errico Malatesta. Beautiful graphics on every page.

Through the Anarchist Press

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NORTH AMERICAN ANARCHIST. Vol. 1, No. 7, Oct/Nov. 25p. "The Newspaper Dedicated to Direct Action", also looks at Poland. Plus "Theological Ecology" and "Anarchism and Organisation."
SOLIDARITY FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION. No. 14, Oct/Nov. 25p. "The Left - Who Gives a Damn?" plus MASSIVE pull-out feature on, you've guessed, Poland.
LIB.ED. No. 29. Autumn. 40p. "Bias in Books" and "Women on Women".

NEW PUBLICATIONS

NEWREALITY KQM IX, 1st issue, 45p. Available from Freedom Bookshop or direct from NRK, Box A, c/o 14, Southgate, Bradford, BD21 2DF for 45p + 10p postage.
PAGAN CHRISTMAS CARDS. Ten for £1.50 from Norman Iles, 381 Marine Road, Morecambe, Lancs.
THRILLING TALES OF WORLD WAR III - a two colour poster 17" x 23" - 40p plus 20p postage from Luddite Enterprises, 4 Agamemnon Road, London NW6.

Big Red Error

THE Big Red Diary has become a left-wing institution since it began six years ago. It is in fact a little socialist diary, published by the Trotskyist Pluto Press, which normally contains some political material at the beginning, a political directory at the end, and a series of entries on some particular theme scattered through the year. It was a good idea, it is always well done, but it is always disappointing, and the 1981 edition (now available from the Freedom Bookshop at £2) is typical.

As usual, it is beautifully produced. The introductory section describes "Britain under the Tories" in detail, but strangely omits "defence", and ends with an attack on the Labour Party which most Trots supported at the last election and will support at the next one. This year's theme is "Utopias", and there are fifty-odd entries on various real and imaginary utopian ideas and experiments during the past two or three thousand years. A few libertarian items are included, mostly inaccurately as might be expected, and what is almost incredible is that there isn't a single reference to the English Peasants' Revolt, the first known utopian experiment in this country, whose 600th anniversary will be widely celebrated next year.

The directory is mostly as useful as usual, but its treatment of anarchist material is ridiculously out of date. Most of the organisations listed have ceased to exist or changed their addresses several years ago, and there is no reference at all to FREEDOM or the Freedom Press, though the Freedom Bookshop is at least included.

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