Union of Egoists

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*

EGO

(Incorporating MINUS ONE)

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NIETZSCHE - ANTICHRIST?

S.E.Parker

(All quotations from Nietzsche, unless otherwise stated, are from the edition of The Antichrist published by Haldeman-Julius in 1930)

"There have been many great attacks upon Christianity, strong and effective in their different ways, and one hesitates to distiguish any one of them by the superlative 'greatest', but if I were to use this superlative - especially with respect to sheer blasting force of inspired denunciation - I should apply it to The Antichrist of Friedrich Nietzsche.....One is not only impressed intellectually, but one is thrilled and moved to the depths by the splendid, sweeping fervour of his attack."

It is with these words that the renowned American freethinker and publisher, E. Haldeman-Julius, begins the introduction to his 1930 edition of The Antichrist. That Nietzsche is anti-Christian - that is, anti-the Christian Church - is apparent to anyone who has read him. The question I want to ask, however, is he really anti- Christ as he claimed to be? Before giving my answer it may be useful to briefly outline the way in which Nietzsche viewed Christianity.

Nietzschedoes not primarily concern himself with the usual questions regarding the dating of the Christian gospels, their consistency or inconsistency, or whether Christ did or did not exist. In other words, the validity of the documentary evidence for Christianity. Nor does he concern himself with the arguments for or against the existence of God, although he calls himself an atheist. He adopts what he describes as a "psychological" approach which revolves around the question: Does Christianity enhance or depreciate life? He writes:

"What is good? - everything that increases the feeling of power, the will to power, and power itself, in men. What is evil? - everything based in weakness. What is joy? - the emotion of power increasing, of a resistance overcome. Not contentedness, but more power! Not peace at any price, but war! Not 'goodness', but more ability!.....The weak and the misbegotten shall sink to the ground: that is our humanitarian slogan; and they should be helped to sink. What is the most harmful vice? - pity, shown to the misbegotten and the feeble - Christianity."

Nietzsche argues that the attacks made upon Christianity up to his time have not only been timid but false. Christianity is a crime against life and the problem of its "truth" is of no value unless it leads to a consideration of the validity of its morality.

Christianity attempts to reverse natural selection. The Christian is a sick and degenerate individual who tries to thwart the natural course of evolution and wants to make the unnatural into law. He seeks to preserve the physiologically botched, those who are weak, and to strengthen their instinct to preserve each other. Those who do not regard this attitude as immoral belong to the same sickly crowd.

If S.E. Parker loved or at least respected his readers he would offer them print of much higher quality. As it is, he hardly gives a damn for their comfort & opinions. Reminds me of my stand towards listeners in open air speaking centres - & my handwritten notes. J.Z. 12.11.97.

"Genuine love of mankind," he writes, "exacts sacrifice for the good of the species: it is hard, full of self-control because it needs sacrifice." He adds:

"Neither as an ethical code nor as a religion has Christianity any point of contact with .....things as they actually are. It is concerned with purely fantastic causes...and purely fantastic effects. It communes with purely fantastic creatures...it professes a fantastic science, a fantastic psychology....this world of pure fantasy is to be differentiated, to its disadvantage, from the world of dreams, for the dream-world at least reflects actuality, whereas the other falsifies, slanders and denies actuality."

All religion is born of fear, but the Christian religion is essentially a product of servile mentalities. The slaves were in fear of their masters and wanted revenge for their inferiority. Christianity sprang from their resentment and had as its aim the undermining of the confidence of the ruling castes by means of guilt-inducing ideas of sin and pity. It was a levelling doctrine like its offspring socialism. The result of this triumphant slave revolt was the destruction of the intellectual accomplishments of the ancient world. The scientific method, the art of reading, the sense for fact - all were in vain. They were "buried in a night. Not trampled to death by German and other heavy feet! But brought to shame by crafty, stealthy, anemic vampires. Not conquered - merely sucked dry!"

, Nietzsche ends The Antichrist with an idictment of Christianity as "the one great curse, the one intrinsic depravity, the one black impulse of resentment, for which no subterfuge is too vile, or too furtive, or too underhand, or too mean. I say the thing is the one indelible blot on the achievement of man....."

Despite the fierceness of Nietzsche's indictment, however, his case against Christianity is incomplete. As Benjamin de Casseres has pointed out: "The Antichrist....is an evasion. It was a tremendous onslaught - the greatest ever made - on Christianity. But Christianity and Christ are identical." (I Dance With Nietzsche)Nietzsche, in fact, lets Christ off lightly, focussing his hatred on St. Paul whom heregards as the real intellectual founder of the Christian creed. Nietzsche accuses Paul of sacrificing "the Saviour; he nailed him to his own cross." He even blames the disciples for possessing the "most un-Christly desires for revenge,"as ifthe numerous threats of hell and damnation attributed to the Christ of the New Testament could be construed as anything else but a very Christly desire for revenge! Later he claims that these threats were "put into the mouth of the Master"by "these trivial people." And in another place he complains that "The character of the Saviour, his teaching, his way of life, the meaning of his death, and even the sequel to his death - were all altered until nothing in the record even remotely approximated to fact." Just what this alleged "fact" was and how he knew it differed from "the record" Nietzsche does not say. Indeed it would seem that here he was contrasting his own private fantasy about Christ with the public fantasy of the Church.

Nietzsche's famous statement that "there was only one Christian and he died on the cross" is yet another example of the reverential way he approached the Christ myth. Even such an ardent Nietzschean as Oscar Levy admits that "We are confronted here with a weakness in the strong mind of Nietzsche who, with all his deep insight, was more of an anti-Christian than an anti-Christ and who had, from his ancestral stock, a remnant of veneration for the Saviour in his blood." (The Idiocy of Idealism)

But there is more to Nietzsche's reverence for Christ than the influence of his ancestral stock. If "Christ" is taken as a symbol for the "redemption of mankind" then Nietzsche would have felt a strong affinity with him, for he too wished to redeem mankind with his gospel of the Superman despite his statement in Ecce Homo that "The very last thing I should promise to accomplish would be to 'improve' mankind. I do not set up any new idols: may old idols only learn what it costs to have legs of clay."

Here, for example, is the messianic Nietzsche in full flight:

"Ye lonesome ones of today, ye seceding ones, ye shall one day be a people: out of you who have chosen yourselves shall a chosen people arise - and out of it, the Superman.

"Verily a place of healing shall the earth become! And already is a new order diffused around it, a salvation-bringing odour - and a new hope!" (Thus Spake Zarathustra)

This salvationist strain in Nietzsche's thinking was clearly brought out in The Philosophy of Nietzsche by Georges Chatterton-Hill:

"Those who represent the Overman as an incarnation of selfishness are grievously mistaken. It is not his own pleasure that the Overman seeks, but the justification of eternal Becoming, which is the eternal world process....the redemption of humanity through suffering, through great and intense suffering. And out of this intense suffering emerges precisely that supreme object and work of art which is the Overman, who by his deeds shall justify all that which is miserable and pitiable in life, and raise it to a pinnacle of beauty. The Overman modelled in the school of suffering shall in turn reflect his own glory on the whole of life: and life viewed in the wondrous light shed on it by the glory of the Overman shall be redeemed and affirmed and sanctified and justified."

It is a characteristic of all religious and messianic dotrines that they demand the submission of the individual to some supra-individual entity or goal. The Christian views the individual as an instrument of his God, the Marxist views the individual as an instrument of the Dialectical Process, and Nietzsche, in his turn, views the individual as an instrument for the realization of the Superman. Having declared "the death of God" he became obsessed with the problem of finding a new goal for "mankind". His answer was the creation of the Superman. The godless were to have a new god.

But I would ask why does my life need to be "justified" and "redeemed", "purified" by suffering and the creation of the Superman? To me, all this is simply the old Christian rubbish given a new coat of paint. One of the reasons that I am an atheist is because I reject any belief that demands I serve it. I want my beliefs to serve me. If I am told by Nietzsche that Christianity is a servile creed, a permanent whine from those who are not strong enough to face reality, then I agree with him. But if he goes on to say that I must live my life for the coming of the Superman, I then classify his words in the same category as I do those of the Christian and his Christ: mystifying spookery! I live my life for my sake, not for the sake of a goal set by someone else and transcending me. Nietzsche himself aptly observed that

"The man of faith, any kind of 'believer', is necessarily subservient to something outside himself: he cannot posit himself as an end, and he cannot find ends within himself. The believer does not really belong to himself, he is only a means, he needs to be used, and he needs someone

to use him. His instinct accords the highest place to a morality of abnegation; and everything within him - his prudence, his experience, and his vanity - prompt him to espouse this morality. Any kind of faith is an expression of self-denial, and of estrangement from self..."

Had Nietzsche taken his own words to heart and applied them to his own faith he would have freed himself from all religion. Then indeed he would have been more than anti-Christianity, he would have been anti-Christ.

(Since writing the above I came across the following passage in another work by Benjamin de Casseres: The Muse of Lies. Although de Casseres was an ardent admirer of Nietzsche what he writes supports my theme:

"Nietzsche's doctrine of the 'Eternal Return' was best illustrated in himself, for he preached the ideal of sacrifice and a living for a 'Beyond'. He was the last great Christian. The will to create the superman, the Beyond-Man, orders one even to sacrifice one's friends, says Nietzsche in one of his aphorisms. Is this not the ecclesiastical furor par excellence? Can you not see the cowled fanatic in that? Can you not smell the fagots and the pitch-pile? Can not we nihilists and mockers see the psychologic germ of the new Torquemada in that sacrificial admonition? The Eternal Return! Indeed thou wert a Return, o thou dancing, Dionysiam forerunner of an Inquisition.")

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

Pride of place must be given to two new editions of Max Stirner's masterpiece The Ego and His Own. The first has been published by The Rebel Press (Box R, Aldgate Press, 84B Whitechapel High St., London E.1. Price £4.50) with a new introduction by myself. Unfortunately the publishers have seen fit to abridge and, in places, rewrite my original introduction so what appears is not what I wrote. Fortunately these mutilations have not substantially altered my text,, but I hope readers will keep this fact in mind. The second has been published by Western World Press (P.O.Box 366, Sun City, CA 92381, U.S.A. Price: 6 dollars, 95 cents (U.S.)) This is a straightfoward reprint of the 1963 Libertarian Book Club edition which was edited and introduced by James J. Martin.

Carl Watner has sent me the first two pamphlets in The Voluntaryist Series (Box 5836, Baltimore, MD 21208, U.S.A. Price 1 dollar (U.S.)) No 1 is Party Dialogue by George H. Smith and discusses whether or not libertarians should follow political or non-political strategies to achieve a "free society". Smith thinks they should not. No 2 is Voluntaryism in The Libertarian Tradition by Carl Watner and is a brief history of voluntaryist ideas from Etienne de la Boetie to Thoreau. The series has apparently been launched in the fond belief that the mob can be educated in "freedom" and inspired to civil disobedience to realize it - a belief I do not share.

Not many at the age of 89 can be as active with their pens as Enrico Arrigoni. His latest works are three short playlets (part of a projected series of seven) satirising the nonsense of "Biblical fairy tales." They are When God Woke Up From His Eternal Slumber, Cain And Abel: The Unintentional Murder!, and God's Folly: The Great Flood. No prices or publisher is given, but no doubt copies can be obtained from the author c/o The Libertarian Book Club, Box 842, G.P.O., New York, N.Y., U.S.A., 10001.)

S.E.P.

CHARLES-AUGUSTE BONTEMPS AND SOCIAL INDIVIDUALISM

Veronica Vaccaro

According to Ch. Aug. Bontemps anarchism is a constant, not an end. Thus it is something that requires the whole engagement of the person. Individualism, on the other hand, rises naturally and spontaneously when we apply in our daily and material lives the anarchist ethic in its practical antiauthoritarian consequences.

Because we live in a society based upon vexation, oppression and violence this means, whether we want it or not, undergoing a substantial detachment from it when we adopt in our own lives anarchist principles and when we allow in ourselves the course of evolution which completes the character and ideals. This detachment will be accompanied by the strengthening of the critical faculties towards all that which surrounds us. That means that the capacity for an autonomy of thought and judgement will grow. And so we will be more capable of referring directly to the facts and also to distinguish between the true and the false. We will no longer be diverted by social commonplaces which regale us with vain gratifications and ambitions and which divert attention from real problems.

By reason of the profound and conscious individual revolution the individual finds himself in a social milieu which is backward in comparison with his self-realisation. But because he can never completely separate himself from social life he must confront this detachment in order to positively resolve it. How overcome it? How will it be possible to live with others? Bontemps replies with a double morality. That is to say, with a fictitious morality when we have to behave socially and which permits one to seem to adapt and conform oneself to social norms (often very strict). And with a true, intimate anarchist morality on the part of the individual by himself when he has to take all those decisions that concern him personally and privately.

Helped by this double morality, and with the aim of surmounting all detachment between the anarchist and the non-anarchist, it is necessary to carry the others to the same degree of anarchism, it is necessary to submerge oneself as much as possible in the social milieu, from which no person can escape and before which it is necessary to assume a suitable face. That is to say, to operate within it by using the faculties acquired by one's own revolution.

Then one will employ one's critical sense, one's autonomy of thought and judgement where it will be possible. But naturally and above all in those social milieux where the effort will bear the most fruit. Thus one will throw rays of light into the grey darkness of the common social view. Here will be revealed the spirit closest - whether consciously or not - to anarchism stimulating others to a similar capacity for individual reflection.

It is not very important that the pure unite with the pure, that is to say, anarchist with anarchist. The seed of anarchism must be apread and enriched with the education of the social milieu and not become impoverished by a sterile self-fecondation.

(The works of Clarles-Auguste Bontemps can be obtain from Les Cahiers Francs, 4 rue Gustave-Rouanet, 75018 Paris, France)

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Bontemps advocacy of a "double morality" appears to be a long-winded

way of stating that hypocrisy can be a useful expedient when confronted with powers stronger than oneself. If that is the case then why dress it up in a moralistic disguise? Because, it would seem, that Bontemps was yet another would-be social saviour seeking to bring "the truth" to everyone by "stimulating" them to a "similar capacity for individual reflection" as he thought himself to posses and thus reach the same conclusions that he had.

The trouble with Bontemps' dream - and with the anarchist dream in general - is that it assumes that each individual is capable of being self-determining, an assumption for which there is no evidence whatsoever. Not only this, it assumes that when all individuals reach this "capacity" they will all want to pursue the same goal. In other words, out of the diversity of "individual revolutions" will arise the unanimity needed to achieve the anarchist "ideal". This nonsensical conclusion can only be reached by a process of reading one's own wishes into other individuals, rather like the Christian or the Marxist reading their own wishes into the Universe.

I think it ft time that individualists freed themselves from the constraints of anarchism as they have done from those of other social creeds. All doctrines of social redemption aim at determining the "true" life for the individual. I, however, can only be my unique self by my own determination in spite of the demands of the sociocentric - even when presented in the name of "individualism".

S.E.P.

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DEATHS

Bert Beer

Albert (Bert) Beer died on Sunday, May 2, in the Royal Marsden Hospital, London, in his 82nd. year. Educated in a Catholic orphanage whose regime was so repressive that when he left he could neither read nor write (he taught himself later), Bert served in the Middlesex Regiment of the British Army from 1918 to 1921. After his discharge he was unemployed for some years. During this time he was staying in a workers' lodging house where he met an old man named Thomas Mahoney, a follower of Benjamin Tucker. Mahoney urged him to read The Ego and His Own, but it was not until 16 years later, in 1942, that he did.

In the meantime, Bert had to go through a phase of social idealism and in the 1930s he helped to form the Hammersmith Anarchist Group which carried out a vigorous open air propaganda campaign for several years, Bert being one of their "soapboxers". He was the author of a pamphlet published by the group during the 1935 General Election entitled Direct Action! The Only Way! 43 years later he wrote to me that on the whole he was "more than impressed" by it despite "the syndicalist balderdash which accounts for all the nonsense" it contained.

When World War 2 came along Bert decided that he did not want another dose of army life. He appeared before a "conscientious objection" tribunal where he stated his case in Stirnerian terms and won his exemption. After the war was over he took no further part in the anarchist movement, regarding the "social anarchist brigade" as "numbskulls".

I first met him in 1975 or 76 (although he remembered me from a visit to the Malatesta Club in the 1950s) having been told by Geoffrey Webster of an old friend of his who was always encouraging people to read The Ego and His Own (Typically, during the last weeks of his life,

he lent his copy of Stirner's book to his welfare worker). Before his powers of concentration began to decline, I was often impressed by the clarity and perception of his observations on life. To this he added a fund of humorous and often hilarious anecdotes about his clashes with the authorities and the adherents of the various religious sects whose meetings he attended for "free entertainment" (His story of how he made a donkey into his "guru" was a classical example of his subversive humour).

I last saw him at his home in Southall two weeks before he died. Although depressed by a nose cancer that was spreading across his face, he still managed to make me welcome and entertained me with an account of his clashes with a catholic priest during his stay in hospital. (After much cogitation the priest finally labelled Bert an "Epicurean"). A few days later he went back into hospital for the last time. On the Friday before he died he told another friend that the priest had tried to get him back into the Christian fold. Bert, however, refused his blandishments and sent him packing.

Without any service or ceremony Bert Beer was cremated on May 12 in the presence of a few friends and his son.

Scepticus.

Geoffrey Webster, who wrote for MINUS ONE for a few years under the pseudonym of "Scepticus", committed suicide in November 1981 at the age of 37. We quarrelled some time ago over his support for the Hare Krishna Sect and did not meet again. After he died some of this sect's representatives claimed that he had been a member for "over 10 years". Although he professed to be sceptical of their beliefs when I knew him it was clear that they had a great emotional attraction for him and that by the end of his life their claim may well have been correct.

S.E.P.

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THE INDIVIDUALIST (From The Individual Against Moloch, 1936)

Benjamin DeCasseres (1873-1945)

The human race, in all times, is divided psychologically into two classes: the Collectivist-Automatic being and the Individualistic-Self Reliant being. There are degrees of each, fine shadings and interlappings and overlappings; but as a perfect living equilibrium is inconceivable, one or other psychological chara cteristic will dominate every human being. It is a manifestation of the centripetal and centrifugal forces in psychic - and hence social and economic - life.

If the word progress has any meaning to me, it means this: Whatever tends to individualism, differentiation, contrast, clash, independent life, variety, is progressive.

1 Whatever tends to automatism, mass-movement, likeness, peace, parasitic life, unity, is retrogressive.

2 One is life; the other is death.

Individuality is character. Personality is artificial. Character is inherent, and, I believe with Schopenhauer, unalterable. Character is difference. The development of character is generally away from

Oh, the sheer quantity of nonsense that is also written in the names of anarchism, individualism & libertarianism! J.E. 5.9.97