



Lawrence Stepelevich  
Ken MacLeod  
Svein Olav Nyberg



---

*»Did you ever contribute anything to the happiness of Mankind?«*

*»Yes, I myself have been happy!«*

*--John Henry Mackay*

---

**Editor**

Svein Olav Nyberg  
i@i-studies.com

**Associate Editor**

Lawrence Stepelevich

**Editorial advisors**

Chris Sciabarra  
Thomas Gramstad

**Published by**

http://i-studies.com

**Subscription**

*i* is provided for free  
at the i-studies web page.

**Our address**

*i* / i-studies  
c/o Svein Olav Nyberg  
Langhaven 7B  
4878 Grimstad  
NORWAY

All text is covered by a  
Creative Commons licence:

**Reproduction**

of this issue in whole or in parts  
is hereby granted, on condition  
that you include the URL  
www.i-studies.com

Front page photo  
© 2010 May Elin Aunli

**ISSN**

1892-185X

**Publication date**

9th March 2011

## *Editor's Word*

---

Svein Olav Nyberg

---

Welcome to the first issue of *i* – or as many of you are already calling it: *i-studies*. The name *i* is at a lucky crossroads of many meanings. Perhaps most familiar will be the *i* of individualism, picking up on Max Stirner's post-hegelian individualism. Other honorary words are *integrity* and *intuition*.

But *i* also stands simply for the personal pronoun, lower-cased to an unassuming, simple fact rather than capitalized like a royal presumption. This because i have found genuine individualists to be far less self-promoting and assuming than what is the general norm, an *i* from the inside and out rather than by name and appearance.

Finally, the name is a pranky mathematical joke on the name of Sid Parker's old 'zine, since  $i = \sqrt{-1}$

Editor's Word .....	3
Lawrence Stepelevich	
<i>Beyond Atheism</i> .....	4
Ken MacLeod	
<i>Max Stirner's Dialectical Egoism, A New</i>	
<i>Interpretation</i> by John Welsh (book review) .....	17
Svein Olav Nyberg	
<i>Goodbye, Non Serviam</i> .....	19

Starting out is nothing less a review of Max Stirner as the philosopher who by going beyond all ideologies went beyond his fellows the critical critics and atheists among young hegelians by also going *Beyond Atheism*. This is a fitting baptism for this new journal going beyond its previous incarnations and into unchartered territory.

Next out is a review of a new book that promises to be *the* book on the philosophy of Max Stirner from here and on.

Keeping in line with these new beginnings, we end the this issue on a note of why our *i-studies* has both a new name, a new appearance and a new direction.

The front page picture to illustrate these spring breaks was taken with frozen but patient fingers by my friend May Elin Aunli.

*Svein Olav Nyberg*

# *Beyond Atheism: Max Stirner*

By Lawrence Stepelevich

Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*,<sup>1</sup> which appeared in November of 1844, had the central intention of presenting the atheistic humanism of such as Feuerbach and Bauer as being nothing more than a deceptive restoration of the very religious faith which they claimed to reject. For Stirner, their humanistic atheism, their "humane Liberalismus", was in fact nothing more than a word-game in which the term "God" was concealed under the names of "Mensch" or "Menschlichkeit. In short, that they had not transcended the religious consciousness. Stirner devoted an opening page of his work to setting out his intention:

"Man is to man the supreme being",  
says Feuerbach.

"Man has been discovered", says  
Bruno Bauer.

Then let us take a more careful look at this supreme being and this new discovery [Sehen Wir Uns denn dieses höchste Wesen und diesen neuen Fund genauer an].<sup>2</sup>

As to Feuerbach, it was not long after his response to Stirner that he lost interest in his own campaign to promote a "Philosophie der Zukunft". In 1845, shortly after the first appearance of *Der Einzige*, the usually prolific Feuerbach only wrote one short item

– his reply to Stirner.<sup>3</sup> I have earlier argued,<sup>4</sup> that this change in Feuerbach's thought followed shortly after he became aware that he was unable to refute Stirner's critique.<sup>5</sup> Certainly more than one scholar, such as Eugene Kamenka, has agreed with the judgment of Simon Rawidowitz, that "Max Stirner's critique... appears to have impelled him [Feuerbach] to take a further step, to advance from anthropology to naturalism".<sup>6</sup> In short, he turned from his humanistic program to ultimately agree with the crude naturalism of Jacob Moleschett. At the same time, the young Marx, then known as a follower of Feuerbach, suddenly reversed course and became his critic. He set forth his reasons in his 1845 sketch, the "Theses on Feuerbach". It has been argued, by Nicholas Lobkowitz,<sup>7</sup> that Marx radically

---

1 Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995); *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (Stuttgart: Reclam: 1991). Hereafter: Ego; Einzige.

2 "Der Mensch ist dem Menschen das höchste Wesen", sagt Feuerbach. "Der Mensch ist nun erst gefunden", sagt Bruno Bauer. Sehen Wir Uns denn dieses höchste Wesen und diesen neuen Fund genauer an".

---

3 "Über das Wesen des Christenthums in Beziehung auf den "Einziger und sein Eigentum"" Wiegand's Vierteljahrschrift, II 193-205.

4 On Feuerbach's reaction to Stirner, see Lawrence Stepelevich, "Max Stirner and Ludwig Feuerbach," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39 (July-Sept, 1978), No. 3, 451-463.

5 A fine recent study reconsidering the relationship between Stirner and Feuerbach is to be found in Todd Gooch's "Stirner and the Apotheosis of the Corporeal Ego," *Owl of Minerva*, vol. 37, no. 2, 159-190, Spring-Summer 2006.

6 Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach* (New York, 1970) 156; Simon Rawidowitz, *Ludwig Feuerbachs Philosophie: Ursprung und Schicksal* (Berlin:Walter De Gruyter, 1964), 163.

7 "Karl Marx and Max Stirner", *Demythologizing Marxism* (Boston College Studies in Philosophy: 1969) Vol II, 94-95.

revised his humanistic programs after he had read Stirner. In that same summer of 1845, Marx and his new-found friend, Engels, set about writing *The German Ideology* -- an unexpected and exhaustive refutation of Stirner, whom they had barely mentioned in their first joint work, *The Holy Family*. However, in contrast, *The German Ideology*, which remained unpublished until Soviet sponsorship, devoted more pages to criticizing *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* than are to be found in that work itself. Even Franz Mehring, the usually admiring biographer of Marx, had difficulty in finding any merit in this “super polemic”. He was forced to conclude that *The German Ideology* was characterized by “hair-splitting and quibbling, some of it of a rather puerile character”.<sup>8</sup> Stirner seems to have hit a nerve.

Unlike Feuerbach, who had immediately and publicly responded to Stirner’s criticism, Bauer remained silent. Only one follower of Bauer, writing under the pseudonym “Szeliga”, responded publicly to Stirner,<sup>9</sup> but Stirner refused to take this response as even coming from Bauer himself, and dismissed it as merely coming from “out of the masses [aus der Masse]”.<sup>10</sup> However, later in 1845, an anonymous article, “*Characteristiks Ludwig Feuerbachs*” appeared in the young Hegelian quarterly journal, *Wiegands Vierteljahrschrift*.<sup>11</sup> It was published in the

same issue that Stirner had responded to his critics.<sup>12</sup> *The Charakteristik* has been taken as written by Bauer. As its title indicates, it is directed against Feuerbach, with only two of its sixty pages dealing with Stirner. The criticism of Stirner is similar to what others had directed against Stirner, criticisms based upon how they decided to define Stirner’s “Ego”. In the article attributed to Bauer, Stirner’s “Ego” is “substance at its hardest, ‘the spook of all spooks [ist die Substanz in ihrer härtesten Härte, das Gespenst aller Gespenster]’.” This “spook of all spooks” phrase had also appeared earlier in Szeliga’s response to Stirner. The polemics of Szeliga, as well as in the bitter criticism of Moses Hess, also found echo in the pages attributed to Bauer. Here, Stirner’s “Ego” is but an “I that needs hypocrisy, deceit, external force, and petty persuasion to support its egoism.” This rather insulting response, if indeed coming from Bauer, does not easily accord itself to the fact of their deep and continuing friendship.<sup>13</sup> Be this as it may, Stirner did not reply to Bauer’s [anonymous] brief criticism found in the *Characteristik*.

For Stirner, all of his critics seemed unable or unwilling to accept that the “*Einzigiger*”, the “*Unique One*” was simply beyond definition – being neither a “substance” nor an “idea”. The unique concrete individual simply eludes generic definition.

---

8 Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (Ann Arbor: Michigan Press, 1962) p. 110.

9 Franz Szeliga Zychlin von Zychlinski, “*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*.” *Norddeutschen Blätter für Kritik, Litteratur und Unterhaltung*.” March, 1845.

10 Max Stirner, *Kleinere Schriften*, (Stuttgart: Frommann-holzboog, 1976) , 376. Stirner has ironically recalled Bauer’s own term “*Masse*” which he employed to label an easily lead and deceived mob. See Bauer’s 1844 essay, “*Die Gattung und die Masse*”.

11 Wiegand’s *Vierteljahrschrift*, III 124-25.

---

12 *Kleinere Schriften*, “*Recensenten Stirners*”, 343-396.

13 The well-known Berlin artist, Ludwig Pietsch, wrote a touching account of the scene on the day of Stirner’s death. He was asked by Bauer if he would sketch a portrait of Stirner. Bauer offered what money he had, but Pietsch knowing Bauer’s poverty, did not accept it and finished the portrait. See Ernst Barnikol, *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*. (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1989), 141.

In continuing his response to Szeliga, Stirner then turns to a clarification of a term that is commonly taken to signify sociopathic tendencies: “egoism”. In his rebuttal, Stirner proposes, and supports through some examples, the thesis that self-interest, which suffers under the pejorative label of “egoism”, actually generates more actual love and communality than the self-denying performances of the weak and unassertive ego which has fallen under the dominating ideals of another.

In looking over the extensive bibliography of Bauer’s works as compiled by Professor Hans-Martin Sass, I could not help noticing that the last work that Bauer dedicated to the project of the “reinen Kritik” was published in early 1845<sup>14</sup> It will be recalled that Stirner’s work appeared in November of 1844. Bauer’s sudden cessation of activity was noted by Professor Sass, who wrote:

“Bruno Bauer’s campaign of pure criticism, which had begun in 1838, reached its highpoint in 1844, and its strategy of increasing the intensity of its criticism had broken through on all fronts. The campaign ended shortly thereafter. It ended, not because one side had defeated the other, but because Bauer’s criticism had left the field peacefully [die Kritik kampflos das Feld räumt]. It had simply faded away. As Ernest Barnikol writes, ‘All of its intellectual

strength faded into an empty and impotent criticism.’”<sup>15</sup>

Even Bauer, in 1853, admitted that insofar as his criticism was absolute it had “negated itself in its critical process”.<sup>16</sup>

Now, a question: Might it be possible that Bauer, just as Feuerbach and the Young Marx, also found reason to conclude the “Campaign of Pure Criticism” [“Feldzüge der reinen Kritik”],<sup>17</sup> after reading *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*?

Certainly something had made Bauer, and not only himself, but his brother Edgar and his follower, Szeliga, to suddenly take leave of their “Campaign” and then, unexpectedly, join forces with their opponents. Bruno, turning to historical studies, would later serve as the Editor of a conservative Prussian journal, the *Wagener’schen Staats- und Gesellschafts-lexikon*. He then went on to edit the even more conservative *Kreuzzeitung*.<sup>18</sup> His loudly atheistic brother

---

14 Bruno Bauer, *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, ed. Hans-Martin Sass (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1968), 269-278. The same absence of any further citations of works by Bruno Bauer after 1844 is to be found in the *Literaturverzeichnis of Godwin Lämmerman’s work, Kritische Theologie und Theologiekritik: Die Genese der Religion-un Selbstbewusstseinstheorie*: Bruno Bauers (München: chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1979).

---

15 *Feldzüge*, 263. [Bruno Bauers *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, die 1838 begonnen hatten, erreichten ihren Höhepunkt and die strategisch von der Kritik, wie sie meinte, vorbereitete letzte Zuspitzung der Fronten im Jarhe 1844; -- bald danach is der *Feldzüge* beendet, nicht etwa weil der beiden Seiten die andere besiegt hätte, sondern weil die Kritik kampflos das Feld räumt, sie is plötzlich weg – verpufft. ‘Alle geistige Kraft verpufft in leerer wirkungsloser Kritik’ schreibt Ernst Barnikol.]

16 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, trans. David E. Green (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 108; *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche* (Stuttgart: Kolhammer, 1958) 125.

17 Bruno Bauer, *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, ed. Hans-Martin Sass (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1968).

18 Issued from Berlin 1848–1939. Known as the *Kreuzzeitung* or *Kreuz-Zeitung*, its emblem being the Iron Cross. It was established during the 1848 German revolution by Herrmann Wagener, and was a leading advocate of Prussian conservatism.

Edgar, whom Engels had earlier described as “blood-thirsty”,<sup>19</sup> converted to Catholicism, and became the editor of a Catholic journal, *Kirchlichen Blätter*. Szeliga abandoned his pseudonym, and went by his full name “Franz Szeliga Zychlin von Zychlinsky” when he went on to become a Prussian General. He ended up writing military studies, among them being the two volume history of the Prussian 24th Infantry Regiment.<sup>20</sup>

No doubt there were practical grounds for these unexpected antithetical turns, but there might well be theoretical grounds as well – such as Bauer’s own realization that he had witnessed “the end of philosophy”.<sup>21</sup> Stirner would agree that with Hegelianism philosophy has come to an end: it is “the Triumph of Philosophy. Philosophy cannot hereafter achieve anything higher” [“und mit ihm der Triumph der Philosophie. Höheres kann die Philosophie nicht mehr leisten”].<sup>22</sup>

Most Political Scientists and historians are, expectedly, not too interested in speculative philosophy, particularly Hegelianism, and much of what is known of the “Young Hegelians” has been drawn from a Marxian viewpoint, such as the recollections of Frederick Engels, written in 1888, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy. It would not be unexpected that most political scientists, fixed upon “Scientific Socialism”, would simply view the contemporaries of the young Marx, such as Moses Hess, Feuerbach, Bauer, or Stirner, as being of interest mainly for having once and briefly

impinged upon the development of Marxist theory. It is then not surprising, as pointed out in recent work on Bauer, that most of his works “remain inaccessible”,<sup>23</sup> with almost all remaining untranslated. However, if this not surprising, then it is surprising that Stirner’s *Der Einzige* has been published in over 100 editions, and translated into over 10 languages,<sup>24</sup> with the latest, last year, being a new Dutch translation.<sup>25</sup> The first English translation was published in 1907, and has never been out of print. However, although hundreds of articles have been written concerning Stirner, he has received little attention from academic philosophers.<sup>26</sup> One possible reason for this neglect is the evident difficulty his commentators have in coming to a general agreement upon defining Stirner’s philosophy.<sup>27</sup> More than a few of the labels are conflicting: other than being a “Bourgeois”, “Petit Bourgeois”, or “Fascist”, favorite titles pasted upon him by various Marxist commentators, he has also been labeled a nihilist, an anarchist,<sup>28</sup> an

---

19 MEW, *Ergänzungsband*, Zweiter Teil. (Berlin: Dietz, 1967) , 300.

20 *Feldzüge*, 264.

21 Bruno Bauer, *Russland und das Germanium* (1853), 44. See Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, 105; *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche*, 122.

22 *Ego*, 69; *Einzig*, 80.

23 Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*. (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 1.

24 Laska, Bernd. *Stirner-Bibliographie* . [www.max-stirner-archiv-leipzig.de](http://www.max-stirner-archiv-leipzig.de).

25 *De enige en zijn eigendom* (Bruxelles: Archief-en Bibliotheekwezen, 2008).

26 The *Philosopher’s Index* lists 14 English language articles, and 16 foreign language articles relating to Stirner which were published in the last 40 years.

27 See Bernd A. Laska’s *Ein dauerhafter Dissident*, (Nurnberg: LSR-Verlag, 1996).

28 It did not help toward the understanding of Stirner when Engels, after briefly considering him a Benthamite, went on to link him to Bakunin. It was thereafter taken as axiomatic among political scientists that Stirner was an “anarchist” – even if he did present a irrefutable argument against Proudhon’s slogan that “Property is Theft” (*Ego*, p. 222 ff). On this, George Woodcock in his extensive work *Anarchism* (Cleveland: World

existentialist, a solipsist, an anti-Benthamite or Benthamite, and either a Capitalist or an anti-Capitalist.<sup>29</sup> A recent title was affixed upon Stirner by the political scientist, Saul Newman, who understands him as a “proto-poststructuralist”.

But despite the difficulties of identifying Stirner’s thought, there is a consistent agreement that Stirner be taken as the last of the “Young Hegelians”. In this regard, most commentators have agreed with Frederick Engels, who had Stirner concluding the “decomposition process” of the Hegelian School.<sup>30</sup> In the words of a later commentator, David McLellan, Stirner was “the last of the Hegelians”.<sup>31</sup> Franz Mehring, Marx’s biographer, also held the same view: Stirner was “the last offshoot of Hegelian philosophy”.<sup>32</sup> Kurt Mautz, who, in 1936, wrote a comprehensive study of the relationship between Hegel and Stirner, described Stirner as “the last metamorphosis

of German Idealism”.<sup>33</sup> For Fritz Mauthener, Stirner had drawn “The ultimate consequence of the Hegelians” [“die allerletzten Folgerungen aus der Hegelieci”].<sup>34</sup> But perhaps the French scholar Henri Arvon stated the matter most elegantly, for him Stirner was “le dernier maillon de la chaîne hégélienne”.<sup>35</sup> More recently, in proposing that Stirner influenced Nietzsche, Gilles DeLuzé observed that:

“It is clear that Stirner plays the revelatory role in all this [i.e., the revelation of the nihilism inherent in German philosophy against which Nietzsche struggles]. It is he [Stirner] who pushes the dialectic to its final consequences, showing what its motor and end results are.”<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, even before he met Bauer, Stirner had already elected himself to that final position – since, as he wrote: “the true tendency of the Hegelian system” [“die wahre Tendenz des Hegelschen Systems”] was to obtain “the autonomy of free men” [“die Autarkie des freien Menschen”].<sup>37</sup>

All this would suggest that Stirner’s philosophy might well be logical consequence of Hegelianism. The historian and Hegelian, Johann Erdmann, thought this to be the case, and noted that “Max Stirner is the one who really represents the culminating point of the tendency begun by

---

Publishing, 1972), noted that Stirner influenced “only a few marginal groups of individualists” (p. 105). In another study by David E. Apter and James Joll, the 274 page work, *Anarchism Today* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), Stirner is only briefly (and barely) mentioned – at one time linking him to Bergson! David Leopold, in the abstract of his article in *The New Hegelians* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995) asserts that “Stirner is rightly characterised as an anarchist, since he holds that the state is illegitimate.” That “legitimacy” would serve as a criterion for Stirner is a rather odd reading of his work, which is in toto, set against “higher ideals” of any sort -- let alone “legitimacy.”

29 For a large spectrum of the labels affixed to Stirner, see Kathy E. Ferguson’s “Saint Max Revisited: A reconsideration of Marx Stirner.” *Idealistic Studies*, XII, No. 3. (1982): 276-292.

30 Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach. 17.

31 *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (London: 1969), 119.

32 *Karl Marx* (Ann Arbor, 1962), 104.

---

33 *Die Philosophie Max Stirners im Gegensatz zum hegelschen Idealismus* (Berlin, 1936), 75.

34 *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*, 117.

35 *Aux Sources de l’Existentialisme: Max Stirner* (Paris: PUF, 1954), 177

36 *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF: 2005), 184-187.

37 *Kleinere Schriften*, 19ff.

Hegel”.<sup>38</sup> His view was also that of Karl Löwith, who wrote that:

“Stirner’s book, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* has usually been considered the anarchic product of an eccentric, but it is in reality an ultimate logical consequence of Hegel’s historical system, which – allegorically displaced – it reproduces exactly. Stirner himself admits this derivation from Hegel in his discussion of Bauer’s *Posaune*”.<sup>39</sup>

I believe that Erdman and Löwith are correct, and I have earlier argued this point - that Stirner is not simply, in a historical sense, “the last of the Hegelians”, but that his philosophy is the realization of what is entailed in “being a Hegelian”.<sup>40</sup> In short, he is more than merely a reader or commentator upon Hegel’s philosophy as was the case with the academic “Old” Hegelians. Nor was he, as Bauer, dedicated to the “Good Cause”<sup>41</sup> of atheism. Indeed, he rejected Bauer’s invitation to contribute to *Christianity Revealed [das entdeckte Christentum]*,<sup>42</sup> one of the most polemical of attacks upon religious faith that has ever been composed. Stirner did not “use” Hegel as either an object of scholarly exercise (the “Old” Hegelians) nor as a theoretical support for a practical end (the “praxis” of

the “Young” Hegelians). He merely followed out the personal consequences of what was entailed in “being a Hegelian”.

The fact that Stirner was very well versed in Hegel’s thought is seldom discussed in regard to what effect it might have had upon his philosophy. During his boyhood, it seems likely that Stirner might have first encountered Hegelianism during his school years at the prestigious Imhof Gymnasium in Bayreuth. George Andreas Gabler was then its Rector, the same Gabler who finally assumed the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin that was vacated upon Hegel’s death. Upon graduation from the gymnasium, Stirner entered directly into the University of Berlin as a student of Philosophy, and not Theology, as was the case with Bauer and Feuerbach. He remained at the university for the next four semesters until September of 1828. In this period he, unlike Strauss, Marx, or Engels, had the opportunity to hear Hegel lecture upon his system. He attended Hegel’s lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, the History of Philosophy, and, in the winter of 1827, the lectures on the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit. During his stay at the university he also attended the lectures of the Hegelian theologian P. K. Marheineke on the subjects of Dogmatics, Theology, and Christian Symbolism. In the fall of 1828, Stirner (who was, as Feuerbach, without money) was forced to leave the University of Berlin to study at University of Erlangen, where he could live with relatives. In that fall semester Stirner attended the lectures then being presented by the Hegelian philosopher Christian Kapp. In 1832 Stirner returned once again to Berlin, where he would spend the rest of his life. There, continuing his philosophical studies, he attended a two semester course on Aristotle conducted by the Hegelian philosopher Karl L. Michelet (1801-93). This formal acquaintance with Hegelian philosophy was much more extensive than that obtained by any of the Young Hegelians. Informally, among the

---

38 German Philosophy Since Hegel, trans. Williston S. Hough (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1899), 100.

39 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, trans. David E. Green (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 101; *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche* (Stuttgart: Kolhammer, 1958), 118.

40 Lawrence Stepelevich, “Max Stirner as Hegelian,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 46 (1985), No. 4, 597-614.

41 Bruno Bauer, “Die gute Sache der Freiheit und meine eigene Angelegenheit,” *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, 153-174.

42 *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*, 61-62.

radical non-academic circles which gathered in Berlin during the 1840s, Engels, Engels, then Stirner's "düzbruder",<sup>43</sup> noted that "[Stirner] had obviously, among the 'Free Ones' the most talent, independence, and diligence."

It cannot be denied that Bauer also knew Hegel, and appreciated him: "Hegel was the only German of recent times who knew where to find men, and to learn something from them."<sup>44</sup> However, he mainly employed Hegel to support his own passionate atheistic agenda. It is not necessary here to debate whether or not Bauer's reading of Hegel as an atheist is correct. There has always been a constant argument among Hegelians as to his "orthodoxy", a debate which continues to this day.<sup>45</sup> In any case, Bauer seems to have had no doubt that Hegel was an atheist. Bauer's rationale for his atheistic reading of Hegel is fully expressed in "The Trumpet of the Last Judgment against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist: An Ultimatum" ["Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen: Ein Ultimatum"].<sup>46</sup> However, amid the many supporting citations drawn from Hegel's

writings, he never cites from what might be taken as a fundamental work: the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. For the purposes of his argument, it was not an important matter. However, this absence of reference might be of some importance for Hegelians interested in Bauer, those who would reflect upon whether or not Bauer had perceived, in the *Phenomenology*, that there was indeed a dialectical passage from his critical consciousness to Stirner's uncritical "egoism". I would maintain that there is such a passage. If Bauer understood this to be the case, he might well have sensed that Stirner had gone beyond him and so had put an end to criticism, which would mean not only the abandonment of the missionary "Campaign" but a turn to his own self-interests – a right turn that was also taken by Szeliga and his brother Edgar.

Seen in the perspective of the *Phenomenology*, Bauer is an exemplar of the Enlightenment [Aufklärung] consciousness. He took Voltaire as a "Propheten"<sup>47</sup> of the new age, and passionately adopted his demand to *Écrasez l'infâme*. He became, as Ruge had it, "des Messiah des Atheismus"<sup>48</sup> and he took upon himself the mission of saving Germany from the curse of Christianity. Bauer's atheistic mission, his *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik* is anticipated and clearly discerned in Hegel's own lengthy discussion, found in the *Phänomenologie*, of "The struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition [Der Kampf der Aufklärung mit dem Aberglauben.]"<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Hegel's description of what was involved in that *Kampf* reads as if Bauer might have written it:

---

43 MEW, (Letter of Engels to Marx, Nov. 19, 1844), XXVII, 13.

44 *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, 255 [Hegel war der einzige deutsche Mann der neuern Zeit der da wußte, wo man Männer findet and von Männern etwas lernen kann]."

45 For an example of the present state of debate see *The Owl of Minerva: Journal of The Hegel Society of America*, (Spring/Summer 2005) which devoted a full issue to William Desmond's critical work, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

46 (Leipzig: Otto Wiegand, 1841); *The Trumpet of the Last Judgment against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist: An Ultimatum*. Translated, introduced, and annotated by Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).

---

47 *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*, 44ff..

48 *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*, 78.

49 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: University Press, 1977), 329-349; *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1952), 385-407. Hereafter: *Phenomenology*; *Phänomenologie*.

“The masses are the victims of the deception of a priesthood which, in its envious conceit, holds itself to be the sole possessor of insight and pursues its other selfish ends as well. At the same time it conspires with despotism, which, as the synthetic, non-notational unity of the real and this ideal realm ... stands above the bad insight of the multitude and the bad intentions of the priests, and yet unites both within itself. From the stupidity and confusion of the people brought about by the trickery of priestcraft, despotism, which despises both, draws for itself the advantage of undisturbed domination and the fulfillment of its desires and caprices, but is itself at the same time this same dullness of insight, the same superstition and error”<sup>50</sup>

But as one might expect from Hegel, this bitter Kampf of the Aufklärung Kritik, between, as Bauer has it, the “Mob of theological worshippers” [“Schar der theologischen Anbeter”]<sup>51</sup> and the Enlightenment critic, is finally resolved in an armistice. Both come to realize that “both sides are essentially the same” [daß beide wesentlich dasselbe sind].<sup>52</sup> Both are the antithetical aspects of the religious consciousness -- faith and skepticism. In the final section of his description this struggle between the twin poles of faith, Hegel comes to “The Truth of the Enlightenment [Die Wahrheit der Aufklärung]”. The truth, in this case is that both sides emerge from a shared religious consciousness, at that, in time, in the course of the development of self-consciousness, both find themselves in fundamental agreement: “The two worlds are reconciled, and heaven is transplanted to earth below [Beide Welten sind versöhnt,

---

50 Phenomenology, 330; Phänomenologie, 386.

51 Feldzüge der reinen Kritik, 173.

52 Phenomenology, 330; Phänomenologie, 387.

und der Himmel auf die Erde herunter verpflanzt].”<sup>53</sup>

Stirner well understood this truth: that the unconscious tendency of Bauer and the other “critics” of religion was, in the last analysis, nothing more than the final religious effort to transplant Heaven to Earth – to simply turn Man into a new God. The truth of the Aufklärung, found behind its blustering cover, was nothing more than a “time of dependence on thoughts, the Christian time.” The “heaven-storming actions” - [“Himmelstürmende Tätigkeit”]<sup>54</sup> of the Aufklärung were but a superficial “clearing off” which ultimately restored, in a new guise, the old domination of heaven of over earth – if albeit a modern “humanistic” heaven. The atheistic humanists had merely set about

“to wreck all customs in order to put new and -- better customs in their place -- their act is limited to this. It [this “heaven-storming”] storms heaven only to make a heaven again, it overthrows an old power only to legitimate a new power, it only – improves”.<sup>55</sup>

Stirner, in following Hegel, well understood the incomplete character of the humanistic atheism of such as Bauer, or those “beautiful souls” who, after a their critical “Campaign” had finally ended, had yet to obtain the final shape of consciousness: Absolute Knowing.

“At the entrance of the modern time stands the "God-man." At its exit will only the God in the God-man evaporate? And can the God-man really die if only the God in him dies? They did not think of this question, and thought they were through when in our days they

---

53 Phenomenology, 355; Phänomenologie, 413.

54 A German idiom for destructive radicalism.

55 Ego, 65; Einzige, 82.

brought to a victorious end the work of the Illumination, the vanquishing of God: they did not notice that Man has killed God in order to become now -- "sole God on high." The other world outside us is indeed brushed away, and the great undertaking of the Illuminators completed; but the other world in us has become a new heaven and calls us forth to renewed heaven-storming: God has had to give place, yet not to us, but to -- Man. How can you believe that the God-man is dead before the Man in him, besides the God, is dead? "<sup>56</sup>

And so, Bauer's radical atheistic criticism, as understood by the Hegelian Stirner was nothing more than a mere Schein, an illusory revolution, in which the content of the Religious Consciousness was not only retained but now would be the total content of Consciousness. Arnold Ruge, then friend of Marx, had sighted the surfacing of this religious consciousness in Bauer:

---

58 "An dem Eingange der neuen Zeit steht der „Gottmensch“. Wird sich an ihrem Ausgange nur der Gott am Gottmenschen verflüchtigen, und kann der Gottmensch wirklich sterben, wenn nur der Gott an ihm stirbt? Man hat an diese Frage nicht gedacht und fertig zu sein gemeint, als man das Werk der Aufklärung, die Überwindung des Gottes, in unsern Tagen zu einem siegreichen Ende führte; man hat nicht gemerkt, daß der Mensch den Gott getötet hat, um nun – „alleiniger Gott in der Höhe“ zu werden. Das Jenseits außer Uns ist allerdings weggefegt, und das große Unternehmen der Aufklärer vollbracht; allein das Jenseits in Uns ist ein neuer Himmel geworden und ruft Uns zu erneutem Himmelsstürmen auf: der Gott hat Platz machen müssen, aber nicht Uns, sondern – dem Menschen. Wie mögt Ihr glauben, daß der Gottmensch gestorben sei, ehe an ihm außer dem Gott auch der Mensch gestorben ist?" Einzige, 170; Ego, 139.

"Certainly, Bauer is the completed and thus the final Heretic, but he also, as such, the last Theologian. He denies all Theology, and hates nameless Theologians, and persecutes them terribly; but also, on the other hand, he does this with theological fanaticism; he is fanatic for Atheism, he is superstitious of disbelief [er ist fanatisch für den Atheismus, er ist abergläubisch für den Unglauben...]."<sup>57</sup>

In tracing the path of Hegel's treatment of that resolved consciousness, its next move is its advance into the realm of "Absolute Freedom and Terror [Die absolute Freiheit und der Schrecken]". This later section of the Phenomenology suggests Bauer's own "Terrorismus reiner Theorie".<sup>58</sup> For Engels, Bauer was indeed a "Robespierre".<sup>59</sup> However, Stirner simply dismissed these revolutionary atheists as but a recrudescence of the old order: "Robespierre and St. Just were priests through and through", and as the "servants of a highest essence are one and all – pious people, the most raging atheist not less than the most faith-filled Christian."<sup>60</sup> Terror and oppression would always to be visited upon any particular individual, any "Einziger", who resisted the domination of the a "higher essence" be it either the idea of a distant God or Bauer's newly discovered "Man".

In the very first sentence of the final chapter of the Phenomenology, "Absolute Knowing" prepares the dialectical ground for its appearance by briefly describing a penultimate, vorletzte shape of consciousness: "The Spirit of the revealed

---

57 Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz, 78 - 79.

58 MEW, (Bauer to Marx, March 28, 1841) XXVII, 13.

59 Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz, 45.

60 Ego, 71; Einzige, 83.

religion [der Geist der offenbaren Religion].” For Hegel, before Absolute Knowing can be reached, the Spirit of Revealed religion must be superceded:

“The Spirit of the revealed religion has not yet surmounted its consciousness as such, or what is the same, its actual self-consciousness is not the object of its consciousness; Spirit itself as a whole, and the self-differentiated moments within it, fall within the sphere of picture-thinking and in the form of objectivity. The content of this picture-thinking is absolute Spirit; and all that now remains to be done is to supersede this mere form]”<sup>61</sup>

For Stirner, Bauer’s *Feldzüge* was but the negative reflection of positive religion, and as such still dialectically linked to and dependent upon the religious consciousness. This dependency upon the “Geist der offenbaren Religion” rendered him incapable of going beyond atheism, beyond religion. In short, what now had to be done, as Hegel had it, was to supercede the whole of religious consciousness. This is what Stirner intended.

If the end of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* can only be reached by overcoming its penultimate form, by going beyond the fixed religious consciousness of the “pious atheists”, then Stirner might be said to have advanced to “Absolute Wissen”. I would propose that Stirner’s thought is congruent with and reflective of this final state of

---

61 *Phenomenology*, 479; *Phänomenologie*, 549 [Religion hat sein Bewußtsein als solches noch nicht überwunden, oder, was dasselbe ist, sein wirkliches Selbstbewußtsein ist nicht der Gegenstand seines Bewußtseins; er selbst überhaupt und die in ihm sich unterscheidenden Momente fallen in das Vorstellen und in die Form der Gegenständlichkeit. Der Inhalt des Vorstellens ist der absolute Geist; und es ist alien noch um das Aufheben dieser blossen Form zu tun].

consciousness which reaches beyond the “truths” of all previous shapes of consciousness, and has thereby superceded the fixed thoughts and definitions of all previous “Geistesgestalten”. At this point Stirner’s thought would reflect this final state by establishing itself beyond definition and fixed ideas – beyond the highest “truths” of the past. As noted earlier, Karl Löwith also understood Stirner’s work as “an ultimate logical consequence of Hegel’s historical system, which – allegorically displaced – it reproduces exactly”.<sup>62</sup> The question would then be just what does this “allegorisch entsetzt” mean? I would propose that it is merely Löwith’s way of understanding Stirner’s philosophy as the *Aufhebung* and completion of Hegelianism itself.

This understanding suggested itself to Karl Marx, who wrote, that Hegel

“... defines the task of the new philosophy ... to supercede [aufzuheben] ‘fixed and determinate thoughts’ This, he ordains, completes ‘the dialectic’, of the *Phenomenology*... Stirner differs from Hegel in that he accomplishes the same without dialectic.”<sup>63</sup>

Stirner took himself at standing “at the boundary of a period”,<sup>64</sup> and concurred with Hegel’s request that “The task nowadays consists ... in freeing determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal... [Jetzt besteht darum die Arbeit ... das Aufheben der festen bestimmten Gedanken des Allgemeine zu verwirklichen

---

62 Von Hegel zu Nietzsche, 118.

63 MEW, III, 176. “Hegel... bestimmt die Aufgabe des neuen Philosophen ... ‘zu machen’ – die ‘festen, bestimmten, fixen Gedanken aufzuheben’ Dies, fügt er hinzu, vollbringe ‘die Dialektik’ [der], ‘Phänomenologie... Stirner unterscheidet sich von Hegel dadurch, daß er dasselbe ohne Dialektik vollbringt.”

64 Ego, p. 282; *Der Einzige*, p. 358.

und zu begeistern].”<sup>65</sup> In taking up this task, Stirner would press beyond the “pious atheism” and humanistic liberalism of such as Feuerbach and Bauer, beyond those whom Hegel described as “beautiful souls” [“die schöne Seele”]. These souls, fixed in the painful shape of a religious consciousness were unable to reconcile their inward ideals to the truths of the given world. For Hegel “This ‘beautiful soul’ ... being conscious of this contradiction in its unreconciled immediacy, is disordered to the point of madness [zur Verrücktheit zerrütet] ...”<sup>66</sup> In short, it is the mind of the frustrated revolutionary idealist and reformer, who, driven to seek an ideal “better world”, must nevertheless live in the actual world. It might begin in a benign idealism but if pursued, will lead to revolutionary terror and final madness. It is a mind of the adolescent grown old, unable to surmount its infatuation with “Ideals”<sup>67</sup> For Stirner the mind of the violent revolutionary and the mild humanist are one and the same, a mind which revealed itself in the grandiloquent declaration of Heinrich Heine, who “did not consider himself a disciple at all [of the Saint-Simonian Félicien David] but rather the servant of an idea: “We seize upon no idea, rather the idea seizes us, and enslaves us, and drives us into the Arena, that we, as forced Gladiators, struggle for it [Wir ergreifen keine Idee, sondern die Idee ergreift uns, und knechtet uns, und peitscht uns in the Arena hinein, dass wir, wie gezwungene Gladiatoren, für

sie kämpfen].”<sup>68</sup> Stirner would term Heine insane, as one being possessed by a unquestionable truth, a “fixed idea”: “What is then a “fixed idea”? An idea that has subjected the man to itself. When you recognize, with regard to such a fixed idea, that it is a folly, you shut its slave up in an asylum.”<sup>69</sup>

“Absolute Wissen”, as the conclusion of Hegel’s phenomenological Bildungsroman would not then be an “idea”, but rather a state of self-consciousness resting at the exhausted term of the dialectic which had generated definitions, “fixed ideas”. It was the end of the “love of wisdom” in the possession of its object. In 1853, less than a decade after he had given up his critical project, Bauer noted “The catastrophe of Metaphysics is undeniable. For the last twelve years it can be seen that philosophic writing has forever been closed and finished.”<sup>70</sup> Bauer understood that the narrative history of consciousness had concluded, and nothing more could be said – except the endless retrospective analysis of the academic “Old Hegelians”. Such exhaustive reflections upon past thought might bring to mind Foucault’s Archaeology, a view of the issue which leads directly to Gilles Deleuze, and his understanding of Stirner’s significance as “he who pushes the dialectic to its final consequences”.<sup>71</sup> In this termination of philosophy would be found the reasons for the inability to simply “define” Stirner’s philosophy. As the Protagonist of Hegel’s “voyage of discovery”, he has reached the end of the

---

65 Phenomenology, 20; Phänomenologie, 30.

66 Phenomenology, 407; Phänomenologie, 470.

67 On the madness of “The Beautiful Soul” see Daniel Berthold-Bond, *Hegel’s Theory of Madness* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995). The parallel views of Hegel and Stirner on the adolescent and reforming mind see the author’s article, “Ein Menschenleben” in *The New Hegelians* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995)

---

68 E.M. Butler, *The Saint-Simonian Religion in Germany: A Study of the Young German Movement* (Cambridge: University Press, 1926) 153.

69 Ego, 43; Einzige, 46.

70 *Russland und das Germanthum* (1853); Cf. Karl Löwith, *Die Hegelsche Linke* (Stuttgart: F. Frommann, 1962) 100.

71 Nietzsche et la philosophie , 184.

“Path of Doubt” which reaches beyond atheism. He might well be the first to state what was entailed in reaching that final knowledge. Absolute Knowing, being fully independent the constraint of a defining other, beyond the last form of relating to another, would be indefinable. In Stirner’s words:

“With the Unique One [Einzigem] the Kingdom of Absolute Thoughts, of thoughts which carry their own meaning, their own content, comes to an end... the Unique [Einzigem] is the highest, the most undeniable and most revealing -- phrase; it is the final capstone of our world of phrases, of this world, in which ‘the beginning was the Word.’”<sup>72</sup>

In the final paragraph of *Der Einzige*, Stirner concludes his own Phenomenology:

“In the unique one the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, of which he is born.” [“Im Einzigem kehrt selbst der Eigner in seine schöpferisches Nichts, zurück, aus welchem er geboren wird.”]<sup>73</sup>

In the final paragraph of the Phenomenology, Hegel concludes his narrative in a similar manner, a conclusion in which self-conscious Spirit, as

“absorbed in itself, it is sunk into the night of its self-consciousness; but in that night its vanished outer existence is preserved, and this transformed existence –the former one, but now reborn of the Spirit’s knowledge – is the new existence, a new world and a new shape of spirit.”<sup>74</sup>

---

72 Kleiner Schriften, “Recensenten”, 347

73 *Ego*, 324; *Einzigem*, 412

74 Phenomenology, 492; *Phänomenologie*, 564. [In seinem Insichgehen ist er in der Nacht seines Selbstbewußtseins versunken, sein verschwundnes Dasein aber ist in ihr

For both Hegel and Stirner, the long and painful story of the travails of *der Erfahrung des Bewußtseins*<sup>75</sup> comes to a happy ending when consciousness recovers itself from out of its ideal worlds, from out of “der Nacht seines Selbstbewusstseins” and enters into “eine neue Welt”, a world well beyond the dreams of the beautiful souls, and the “humane liberals.” As understood by Alexandre Kojève, Absolute Wissen is the term of the history of consciousness, the ending of philosophy, and so beyond the ideals of such entities as Bauer’s Mensch – or Nietzsche’s Übermensch. It would be the time of Nietzsche’s “Last Man”, the Man without any ideals beyond himself -- the time of a Stirner.<sup>76</sup>

But if this happy ending made the narrative of consciousness a comedy for Hegel and Stirner, it was a tragedy for Nietzsche. For him, the new world was the

---

aufbewahrt; und dies aufgehobene Dasein, – das vorige, aber aus dem Wissen neugeborne, -- ist das neue Dasein, eine neue Welt und Geistesgestalt].

75 An original subtitle to the *Phänomenologie*. See Meiner, “Zur Feststellung des Textes”, 575-581.

76 An answer is suggested here to the long-debated issue of Nietzsche’s relationship to Stirner. Rüdiger Safranski, in his work *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, trans. Shelly Frisch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), takes up the issue of why Nietzsche consciously decided to act as if he knew nothing of Stirner. It would seem that Nietzsche, through his known admiration of Bruno Bauer, had indeed read Stirner, but what he discovered was an unacceptable justification of “the last man”, and so the notorious Stirner was left unmentioned. This would not be the only instance wherein a knowledge of Stirner was, for one reason or another, suppressed – as it was with such as Edmund Husserl, Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, and others as documented in the work of Bernd Laska, *Ein dauerhafter Dissident* (Nürnberg, LSR –Verlag, 1996).

world of the “Last Man”, and Stirner would surely qualify for that role. Stirner, being quite at home with himself, was set to enjoy himself in the here and now:

“My intercourse with the world consists in my enjoying it, and so consuming it for my self-enjoyment. Intercourse is the enjoyment of the world, and belongs to my -- self-enjoyment.”<sup>77</sup>

Unhappily Stirner’s defense of this self-accepting consciousness, one fully aware and satisfied with itself, immediately drove such humane liberals as the socialist Moses Hess to label Stirner a “Beast of Prey” [“Raubtier”].<sup>78</sup> From the beginning he has remained a diabolical “Nihilistic Egoist”,<sup>79</sup> and always fair game for moralizing idealists.<sup>80</sup> This notoriety would not surprise Stirner, who well understood that “Our Atheists are pious people” [“Unser Atheisten sind fromme Leute”].<sup>81</sup>

However, in this self-satisfaction, this Autarkie of the free individual, Stirner’s goal would accord itself with what Hegel had set forth as his own thought as to how the phenomenological “voyage of discovery”

would end. It would end at that moment when

“the separation of knowing and truth, is overcome [der trennung des Wissens und der Wahrheit is überwinden]. Being is then absolutely mediated; it is a substantial content which is just as immediately the property of the ‘I’ [der ebenso unmittelbar Eigentum des Ichs], it is self-like or the Notion. With this the Phenomenology of the Spirit is concluded.”<sup>82</sup>

Is it possible that Hegel’s “Eigentum des Ichs” anticipates Stirner’s “Einziges und sein Eigentum”? Perhaps.

Jean Hyppolite, in his study of the *Phänomenologie* understood that for Hegel, “The history of the world is finished; all that is needed is for the specific individual to rediscover it in himself”.<sup>83</sup>

Stirner rediscovered in himself that “specific individual”, the *Einziges*, and not in Bauer’s “new discovery” – the universal “Man”.

---

77 The Ego, 282; Der Einzige, 358 [Mein Verkehr mit der Welt besteht darin, daß Ich sie genieße und so sie zu meinem Selbstgenuß verbrauche. Der Verkehr ist Weltgenuß und gehört zu meinem – Selbstgenuß].

78 This and other uncomplimentary names affixed upon Stirner by Hess in his critique of *Der Einzige* can be found in his 1845 essay, *Die letzten Philosophen*. An English translation of the full work can be found in Lawrence S. Stepelevich, *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983) 357 -375.

79 R.W.K. Paterson, *The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner* (Oxford: University Press, 1971).

80 E.g., Santayana’s *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1915).

81 Ego, 166; Einzige, 203.

---

82 *Phenomenology*, p. 21; *Phänomenologie*, 32-33. [der trennung des Wissens und der Wahrheit is überwinden. Das Sein ist absolut vermittelt: -- es ist substantieller Inhalt, der ebenso unmittelbar Eigentum des Ichs, selbstisch oder der Begriff is. Hiermit beschließt sich die *Phänomenologie* des Geistes].

83 *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. S.Cherniak and J. Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974) 40.

*Max Stirner's Dialectical Egoism: A New Interpretation by John F. Welsh, Lexington Books 2010*

By Ken MacLeod

It seems apt that Stirner's work has found its greatest appreciation among the self-taught. Academic works that give so much as a fair-minded exposition of Stirner can be counted on the fingers of one hand. This book, a welcome addition to their number, reviews them all - as well as the more numerous others that give Stirner anything but a fair exposition - in a few pages. Stirner's place in intellectual history has likewise often owed more to imagination and indignation than investigation. Welsh traces Stirner's influence by a method so blindingly obvious that it has hitherto escaped even sympathetic academics: rather than tease out possible influences of and parallels to Stirner in the work of thinkers, activists and artists with individualist or egoist views, he looks at the work of people who *explicitly stated* that they were influenced by Stirner.

The structure of the book is clear and straightforward, as is its style. Part One deals with Stirner himself. The first chapter outlines Stirner's life, his historical and intellectual context, and his critical reception: from his contemporary Young Hegelians and their breakaways Marx and Engels, through later Marxists, existentialists, anarchists, and academics. The next two chapters, *Humanity - the new Supreme Being* and *Ownness and Modernity*, are a concentrated but lucid exposition of the major themes of *The Ego and Its Own*, firmly locating Stirner as a critical Hegelian, and carefully differentiating Stirner's concept of "ownness" from "freedom" in its many guises. These two chapters are the best guide available to Stirner's book, and significant original arguments in their own right.

The three chapters of Part Two discuss in turn three of Stirner's most influenced, and most influential, disciples: the individualist

anarchist Benjamin R. Tucker, the egoist philosopher James L. Walker, and the feminist and "archist" Dora Marsden. For anyone whose acquaintance with these has come primarily from the efforts (handsomely acknowledged by Welsh) of egoist websites such as this one<sup>1</sup> and anarchist or individualist small presses and little magazines, these chapters shed a flood of new light. Tucker, Walker and Marsden were much closer to what might be called the mainstream of the intellectual avant-garde than their present relative marginality suggests: Tucker's *Liberty* carried the first discussions and translations of Nietzsche in the United States, Walker was a prominent journalist and editor as well as noted atheist and anarchist publicist, and Marsden's journals published early works of Pound, Joyce, West, Lawrence and Eliot. Again, intellectual and historical context, clear and accurate exposition, and original development of the arguments, are combined and smoothly presented.

Part Three's first chapter examines the evidence for Stirner's alleged influence on Nietzsche, and, in finding it wanting, presents a survey of Nietzsche's thought and its contrast with Stirner's on numerous points. The final chapter of the book, *Dialectical Egoism: Elements of a Theoretical Framework*, lays out the toolkit for applying Stirner's approach, as analytical instrument and intellectual weapon, in the struggles and debates of today. This chapter has the potential, and no doubt the aim, of making egoism and dialectics available and accessible to students, scholars and activists seeking an alternative to the collectivism, statism and irrationalism in which critical theory is so

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://i-studies.com>, and formerly <http://nonserviam.com>

often shrouded and buried. Egoism, Welsh argues, can be prised from the hands of capitalism's partisans, and dialectics wrested from those of communism's. Given the truly shocking state of academic critical theory, some of whose authentic products are indistinguishable from their wickedest parodies, this aim is neither quixotic nor ignoble. The impulse to cut a dash, if nothing else, could incite many a young or old academic to cut a swathe with the dialectical egoist scalpel.

To sum up: any reader of this journal, and anyone who has ever tried to grapple with Stirner, will enjoy and benefit from this book. Scholars and students seeking a clear, honest, up-to-date introduction to Stirner need look no further. Individual-minded individuals outside the academy will also find this book of use: "Society, the state, and humanity cannot master this devil: the un-man, the individual, the egoist."

A few critical remarks:

First, and least: while the proof-reading and production are fine over-all, there are several sentences that baffle the reader until a dropped word is spotted.

In his first chapter, Welsh misses a key point in his discussion of Marx's critique of Stirner: the role of Stirner in the genesis of Marx's own distinctive viewpoint, historical materialism. As first argued by Nicholas Lobkowitz in his 1969 article *Karl Marx and Max Stirner*, subsequently expanded on by Chris Tame in his *Stirner in Context*, a 1984 commentary on Lobkowitz's article, and now entrenched by Gareth Stedman Jones in his scholarly introduction (2002) to the Penguin Classics edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, it was the challenge of Stirner that

made Marx a Marxist. The challenge, as Stedman Jones puts it, was twofold. Not only did Stirner implicate Marx in the humanistic religiosity of Feurbach, he also dissipated the Left-Hegelian sense of crisis. One reading of Stirner, after all, could be that the egoism of bourgeois society, against which Marx as humanist had inveighed, is the genuine culmination of history, and already *the best we can get!*

Here, Welsh's commendable, closely argued—and of course textually defensible—reading of Stirner as a radical social and political critic leaves him little room for considering possible conservative or cynical implications of egoism. The same blindspot occurs in his survey of Dora Marsden, where he regrets, and seems almost surprised, that she failed to develop as an egoist philosopher and social critic after her brilliant formulation of "archism". The reason, surely, is that she had nowhere to take it! Once acknowledge that the world is pretty much what you'd expect it to be if everyone - or at least, everyone with their head screwed on - were *already* an egoist, and there's very little point in arguing for egoism. It's casting pearls before oysters.

Finally, and not so much a criticism as a pointer to further investigation: Welsh throughout uses "humanism" in Stirner's sense of a doctrine like Feurbach's (and the pre-Stirner-impact Marx's) in which "Man is the highest being for man". Modern secular humanists are—in too many instances to ignore—closer to Stirner than to Feurbach in their rejection of this particular spook, and their work is as well worth the egoist's time as this book is the humanist's.

But these are very small points, and this is a very good book.

# *Goodbye, Non Serviam*

By Svein Olav Nyberg

The philosophies of Young Hegelianism started from theology, and so did the old incarnation of *i* under the name *non serviam*. No less than a metaphysical declaration of rebellion, the name *non serviam* set the focus on serving nobody and nothing.

Decades later, looking back at it from the perspective of being a father myself, I recognize the youthful folly of abstract rebellion – against nobody and nothing. Individualists who have chosen fatherhood soon recognize that fatherhood very often involves literally being their children’s servant – and being so by choice. And so, ironically, the battlecry *non serviam!*—when clung to in this context—becomes servitude to inservitude. Fatherhood is of course not the only arena in which you may make such choices, but it is perhaps one of the most striking examples.

The difference between *own* choice and will on the one hand and the rebellious resistance to *other’s* choice and will that may have seemed like subtle nitpicking to the youth, but to the adult it is as obvious as the difference between “water” on the one hand and “non-flour” on the other is to a baker.

This personal development finds its parallel in the Young Hegelian development of and out of theology:

To the pious, God is the perfection of all that the pious man believes and wants himself to be: so full of judgmental love that he is its incarnation, and so almighty that he can make his pious will absolute law. This corresponds to the childhood faith of someone raised in a strict religious tradition.

The intellectual youth, the classical Hegelian, inherits this God from the child, but cleans him of the more monstrous deeds of the Old Testament, and of the similarly monstrous promises of the New Testament. In short: he makes God more *rational*, more – in the image of the youth himself.

And with the intellectual’s recognition of his God as nothing but his own perfected mirror image comes the realization of pure narcissism whereupon God becomes Man, and the youth’s task is simply to perfect himself into what he sees in his own mirror. New Hegelian atheism is simply the peak of the Intellect’s self-adoration.

At the end of adolescence, the intellectual youth realizes that his mirror image can be no more perfect than he himself is. The new God called Man—who may just as well have been called Reason or Intellect—is still outside him and is not him, and is a mere phantom of the Intellect’s mirror images and desires. At this point, the intellectual youth has seen through the Intellect’s pretenses at creating a Moral World order. He is no longer caught in the trap of finding his own imperfections by his difference with the moralist phantom, be it the traditional pietist phantom or the creation of the intellectuals. Often having read inspiring authors like Stirner, or maybe Nietzsche, he proudly waves goodbye to his previous moralism.

## **Goodbye, Immoralism**

But new-found liberation can be intoxicating, and exploring it to and beyond the limits can itself become a – fixed idea just like Karl Schmidt, a contemporary of Max Stirner, warned it would.

When rationality is no longer capable of providing any limitations on your actions in the form of moral commandments, then surely the rational thing to do is to shake off all such limitations. If you feel bad about nicking an apple, that just goes to prove that you received a tough indoctrination in your previous, moralist ages and stages. The same goes for stealing a book, a laptop, a car ... even for killing someone. Doesn’t it? For surely Max Stirner has said so, hasn’t he?

Anything looking like a morality is a sign of weakness, and perhaps even residual *slave morality* for those of us who indulged in too much Nietzsche before bedtime.

This the stage of Immoralism is very compelling in its own way, but instead of being the transcendence of morality, it is merely its defiant but servile shadow.

Imagine a man raised to classical Good Taste in art, with opera, Michelangelo and all the rest of the classics. He one day decides he has had enough of the fetters imposed by Good Taste. All good and well. But then he sets himself a new standard, a standard of liberation: He will deliberately seek out what is *not in Good Taste*. His measure will be that if it breaks sufficiently strongly with Good Taste—if it is Bad Taste—then he will adopt it as his new taste.

This man is the art world equivalent of the Immoralist, and we recognize his folly for what it is. He is not the new Picasso; he is the guy who dumps his trash at the steps of the Guggenheim museum and demands a million dollars for his art.<sup>1</sup>

The relief from intellectualism and moralizing does not lie in anti-intellectualizing and in anti-moralizing or in the subsequent social attempts to be “more liberated than thou” – more liberated than your friends and acquaintances.

But there are indeed those who misread Stirner to that effect, although Stirner’s own proposed solution is not the road of denial. His solution is rather to make use of your whole person: stretch your legs against an incessant thought. Dissolve the need to be an authority in the realization that you are a complete person and not merely a pawn or a head. Meet your lover’s stern demands by – letting her melt your heart. This is all quite different from sitting sourly on your holy hind quarters in an attempt to “stand your own ground” – or *sit* it, as it were.

---

<sup>1</sup> By all means; if he can pull that off successfully, he has met someone whose madness matches his and will live happily ever after. That happens more in fairy tales and government committess than in real life, though.

## Goodbye, Egoism

Stirner used the word “egoism” in two primary ways: First as a methodological concept to denote anyone who did the opposite of what “Man”, the moral ideal creature, would do. This is the Immoralist. The Immoralist’s function in Stirner’s philosophy is not to be a new ideal, the ideal of whoever does the opposite of morality. His function is merely as a counterexample to the ideal of Man – to prove that “Man” is but a mere phantom who is neither descriptive of nor binding on actual men.

The second way in which Stirner used the word “egoism” was as synonymous with the self-liberated man – the *Einzigste*. It is in this context he speaks of the *owner* and the *self-owner* – and of the *union of egoists*.

But these terms are terms easily misunderstood, and they easily become limiting rather than liberating these days if you lose sight of Stirner’s idiosyncratic use of the term “egoist”: Then the egoist becomes the Randian version at best, but more often just the cynical petty bourgeois or even Freudian versions of “egoist”

Following this, the *owner* becomes his own caricature in the possessive tightwad – the *self-owner* becomes the stone-faced loner always holding back his social presence lest he risk being influenced by anyone – and finally the *union of egoists* dissolves in the band of misers meeting at a pub, each of them hoping and scheming for someone else to pay for the next round.

So, for those of you who have been with me on this journey so far: join me in saying *no to egoism* as well. These days, there are better choices of name to be found. Let it perhaps be Max Stirner’s underappreciated term *personalism* – that of being and using your whole person rather than being tied up in a partial existence.

In your full self, not just intellect but not just its absence either, open the treasure chest of all your faculties, of intuition, of dreams and of stretching your legs to – let your blood flow more freely.