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Union of Egoists

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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*

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In his biography of Max Stirner John Henry Mackay refers to the help given to him by Hans von Bulow, the famous conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, who "had known Stirner personally and had been, ever since, an enthusiastic admirer of his works." Mackay quotes from two of von Bulow's letters to him. One, dated February 17, 1892, speaks of "the deep-rooted reverence which I gave to the elevated spirit of the last and clearest Hegelian (clear even to the destruction of his predecessors)." Another, dated July 21, 1892, mentions "our beloved philosopher."

Looking through an English translation of a volume of von Bulow's early correspondence that I discovered in a local public library, I came across a letter he had written to Madame Laussot dated December 28, 1854. Here he expresses views akin to those of Stirner:

"I have gradually learned...to renounce my reverent worship of the 'Spirit of Universality', of the god 'Humanity' of certain pantheistic French socialists and of Feuerbach who preceded them. Yes, I confess it openly, I hate the ideal police-god...At present I am by belief an 'individualist'... a methodical idealism becomes coarse, heavy and measurable where it does not become simply absurd. So I, for my part, confess to a feeling of respect only for that fraction of the 'Spirit of Universality' to which I myself belong."

Nearly forty years later, in a speech in which he compared Stirner to Bismarck, von Bulow repeated his youthful views:

"Mankind is essentially an abstraction, a phantom, and finally mankind has become a pantheistic straw puppet, which a German philosopher, unfortunately unknown to his own time and forgotten to posterity, has pulled to shreds for us; the philosopher was Max Stirner, who died in 1856."

It would be an interesting historical exercise for someone with a knowledge of German to go through von Bulow's writings to see to what extent Stirner had influenced him. I have been limited in my references to what I have discovered in English translation. His letter to Madame Laussot was written while Stirner was still alive and visiting the salon of Baroness von der Goltz. Did von Bulow meet him there? Mackay is silent here, although Kurt Zube, in his life of Mackay, states that von Bulow "had ...been able to give Mackay very precise information about his personal acquaintance with Stirner."

Perhaps the answer lies in the archives of the Marx-Engels Institute (if it still exists) in Moscow to which Mackay sold all his Stirner material...

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In his posthumous work, *The Philosophy of Egoism*, James L Walker refers to certain of his libertarian critics who "show absolutely no understanding of egoism. It is an affair of objective classification, they suppose. Thus if I have an apple and eat it, that is egoism, they suppose. If I give the apple to my friend, that is altruism, they suppose. How simple! Then I, being an egoist, and liking to see some of my friends eat my apples, must not indulge this pleasure unless I can stand certain persons' charges

of inconsistency. Let me give them a point: I select my friends. My apples are not for everybody to help himself. Let me give them another point: the man who eats his own apple, not because he likes it, but because he thinks it egoistic to eat it- not to talk of duty - is only a deluded egoist, by which I mean he has missed being an egoist in the definite sense in which I am using the word in these concluding pages."

A most apposite response to those who try to impose upon egoists a categorical imperative according to their conception of what an egoist ought to be....

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1995 sees the appearance of a new edition of Stirner's masterpiece. Published by the Cambridge University Press, it is edited by David Leopold under the title of *The Ego and Its Own*. Leopold has rightly dropped the subtitle unnecessarily added to the Libertarian Book Club 1963 edition and repeated in both the Dover edition and the Rebel Press edition, but his claim that the use of 'Its Own' instead of 'His Own' is not a piece of "political correctness" is not very convincing, particularly since he feels obliged to label as "racist" Stirner's "racial analogue of history."

Despite the very high price of £16.95 (PB) this is the best of all the recent editions in appearance. As well as a 21 page introduction, Leopold has provided 51 pages of "biographical and other notes on the text and an index. Why, however, was it necessary to include it in a series entitled 'Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought'? Stirner undoubtedly makes many references to politics, but his work is outstandingly one of philosophy and his scorn for "political man" is evident. A previous, abridged edition also emanated from Cambridge University as part of a series called 'Roots of the Right'. Academics seem incapable, with one or two exceptions, of confronting Stirner as Stirner.

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Was Stirner a hereditarian? Consider the following passage:

"What one can become he does become. A born poet may well be hindered by the disfavour of circumstances from standing on the high level of his time and, after the great studies that are indispensable for this, producing consummate works of art, but he will make poetry, be he a plowman or so lucky as to live at the court of Weimar. A born musician will make music, no matter whether on all instruments or only on an oaten pipe. A born philosophical head can give proof of itself as university philosopher or village philosopher. Finally, a born dolt, who, as is very well compatible with this, may at the same time be a crafty lad...always remains a blockhead, let him have been drilled and trained into the chief of a bureau, or let him serve that same chief as a bootblack. Indeed the born fathead indisputably forms the most numerous class of men. And why, indeed, should not the same distinctions show themselves in the human species that are unmistakable in every species of beasts? The more gifted and the less gifted are to be found everywhere."

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