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Stirner and Nietzsche
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Since Rohde adds that his friend is cordially in agreement with him on these important points, we have the right to say that Nietzsche saw in the theories laid out by Lange a justification for his instinctive sympathy for Schopenhauer's doctrine. All of German philosophy, from Kant to Schopenhauer, seemed to give new strength to two propositions he had always admitted:

i. Man is the measure of all things, which as Hellenists Rohde and Nietzsche both knew via the Greek Sophists

ii. The will is prior and superior to the intelligence, which is obvious for a dsicple of Schopenhauer

In summary, it doesn't appear that Stirner had a decisive influence on Nietzsche. He perhaps contributed to keeping Nietzsche for a time within the realm of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. He was doubtless little by little forgotten afterwards.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there was a reaction against individualism. The most widespread moral theories, for example those of August Comte in France, John Stuart Mill in England, and Schopenhauer in Germany, had the common characteristic of preaching altruism. Was it that the philosophers wanted to maintain Christian morality at a moment when they renounced belief, or did they think themselves obliged, as Nietzsche maintained, to show themselves to be more disinterested than the Christians themselves? Whatever the case, they condemned egoism and the isolation of the individual. In the same way, in politics the national and social ties that united individuals were insisted upon and solidarity was preached.

But in Germany around 1890 people began to talk about two philosophers who admitted neither moral altruism nor social solidarity. Stirner, who in his lifetime had enjoyed but an ephemeral glory, had been revived by a fanatical disciple, J.H. Mackay, who saw in the author of "The Ego and Its Own" the theoretician of contemporary anarchism. In addition, Nietzsche, so long "untimely" made an impression on public opinion at the very moment when illness definitively triumphed over his reason, and little by little he became one of the favorites of the European fashion that he had so harshly judged.

It was natural that the names of these two philosophers whose ideas were so contrary to contemporary thought should be linked together. People became used to viewing Stirner as a precursor of Nietzsche. But there is room to question whether this habit is justified. In the first case, is it true that Stirner influenced Nietzsche? And then, is it correct to consider their philosophies as two analogous systems animated by the same sprit? Is there really reason to connect Nietzsche to Stirner and to speak of an individualist, anarchist, or immoralist current?

Did Nietzsche Know Stirner?

We don't encounter Stirner's name either in the works or correspondence of Nietzsche. Mme. Forster-Nietzsche, in the meticulous biography she dedicated to her brother, doesn't speak of the author of "The Ego and Its Own." In any event, the work was almost completely forgotten up until the time J.H. Mackay set out to celebrate it. J.H. Mackay himself tells us that he only read Stirner's name and the title of his book for the first time in 1888: this is the very year that Nietzsche descended into madness. In 1888 Mackay found Stirner's name in Lange's "History of Materialism," which he read at the British Museum in London. A year then passed before he again encountered this name, which he had carefully noted. Until that date, Stirner was thus truly dead: he is indebted to Mackay for his resurrection.

It is nevertheless certain that Nietzsche recommended the reading of Stirner to one of his students in Basle. In consulting the register of the Basle library it's true that we don't find Stirner's book in the list of books borrowed in Nietzsche's name. But we see that the book was borrowed three times between 1870 — 1880. In 1872 by the *privat-dozent* Schwarzkopf (Syrus Archimedes), in 1874 by the student Baumgartner, and in 1879 by professor Hans Heussler. M. Baumgartner though, son of Mme Baumgartner-Kochlin, who translated the "Untimely Meditations" into French, was Nietzsche's favorite student: in his correspondence the philosopher calls him his *"erzschuler."* M. Baumgartner, who is today professor at the University of Basle, says that it was on Nietzsche's advice that he read Stirner, but he his certain that he never loaned the book to his teacher.

The question then is finding out where Nietzsche encountered the name of Stirner. It's possible that the name was spoken in front of him at Richard Wagner's house. Wagner had perhaps heard mention of Stirner at the time of the revolution of 1848, perhaps from his friend Bakunin. It is also possible that Nietzsche read Stirner's

As much as possible I want to try to do the same in our Abdere, for though I don't understand anything, it always serves to purify the soul of the dust of the working day, and particularly to calm the restive will. They will doubtless not allow us to intoxicate ourselves with the Wagnerian philter in Hamburg. Since I am only one of the profane, I risk approving that music only within myself, but it makes such an impression on me that I feel like I'm strolling in moonlight in a garden of magical perfumes: no sounds of vulgar reality penetrate there. And so it is with absolute indifference that I see the so wise Messrs Schaul, etc. demonstrate that this music is unhealthy, lascivious and who knows what else. As for me, to use your perfect expression, it sweeps me away and that is enough. In any case, I increasingly understand the wisdom of the old sophist who, despite all the objections of the healthy people of his time, affirmed that man was the measure of all things. Lange's book — which I will soon return to you — contributed in no small amount in confirming this idea for me. During the course of my trip it constantly kept me within the sphere of elevated ideas. Without any doubt, Lange is right in taking as seriously as he does the discovery we owe to Kant of the subjective character of the forms of perception. And if he's right, is it not perfectly reasonable that each of us chooses for himself a conception of the world that suffices for him, that is, that satisfies the moral need that is, properly speaking, his essence?

> "A philosophy then that insists on the profoundly, fiercely serious character of the object that remains absolutely unknown to us, answers to my inner tendencies, and it is thus that I tried so hard to convince myself that every speculation was just a vain fantasy. Schopenhauer's doctrine has maintained its value for me, which also confirms the fact that the will is stronger, more basic than the intelligence, which weighs all sides of every argument."

wants to efface the borders that till now have limited individuality in order to allow everyone the right to choose his ideal as he wishes. This is an error: every ideal, whether it is chosen by the will, proposed by the intelligence, or imposed by an external power, in Stirner's eyes is nothing but an idée fixe. It is remarkable that Lange speaks less of the negative portion of Stirner's system than of the positive one that he could have added. Stirner, though, doesn't admit a positive portion in the sense that the historian of materialism intends it. And in fact Lange demands a positive portion in order "to go outside the self," but Stirner doesn't want us to do so. In supporting a theory of knowledge Lange seeks to plead the cause of metaphysical speculation; Stirner sees in every metaphysics a kind of madness. Lange attempts to save the essence of religion by insisting on the educational virtue of faith; Stirner considers disinterested education a dupery. As Nolen said in his introduction to the French translation of the "History of Materialism:" "No one has better understood than Lange that weakening the sense of the ideal means strengthening that of egoism." This is precisely what Stirner also understood; but while Lange wants to strengthen the sense of the ideal in order to weaken that of egoism, Steiner, on the contrary, in order to strengthen the egoistic sense, wants to weaken the sense of the ideal.

Nietzsche thus doubtless saw, via Lange's analysis, a Stirner who was quite different from what in reality was the author of "The Ego and its Own." He considered that work as a kind of introduction to the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and this is what explains the apparently paradoxical fact that Nietzsche spoke of Stirner during his first period, when he was a fervent disciple of Schopenhauer, while he no longer speaks of him during his second period, the critical period, when he in a sense was closer to the ideas of "The Ego…"

In Erwin Rohde's letters to Nietzsche there is a passage that appears to confirm this interpretation. On November 4, 1886 Rohde wrote to Nietzsche: "This winter you must be swimming in music.

name in a chapter of Eduard von Hartmann. The latter affirms, in fact, that Nietzsche must have been struck by the analysis of Stirner's ideas that are found in the second volume of "Philosophy of the Unconscious." Nietzsche criticizes at length the chapter of this book where Hartmann spoke of Stirner, particularly in the ninth paragraph of the second "Untimely Meditation."Nietzsche forcefully attacks the evolutionist theories of Hartmann, borrowing his quotations especially from the pages where the author of the "Philosophy of the Unconscious" speaks of humanity's third period. It is precisely at the entrance to this third period that Hartmann marked Stirner's place. But it seems that what Hartmann says about Stirner didn't encourage Nietzsche to study "The Ego and Its Own" with sympathy, for Nietzsche combats precisely the theories of "Philosophy of the Unconscious" because they seem those most apt to strengthen that egoism which, according to Stirner, characterizes the mature age both of humanity and of the individual. Nietzsche opposes the enthusiasm of youth to this egoist maturity. It would be quite surprising if Nietzsche, who didn't take Hartmann's "parody" seriously, would have decided at that date to study the works of Stirner, where he would have found theories even more paradoxical in his eyes than those of "Philosophy of the Unconscious." In any event, Hartmann's argument doesn't prove that Stirner directly influenced Nietzsche.

The most likely hypothesis is obviously that presented by Professor Joel. It is probable that Nietzsche remarked, like Mackay, Stirner's name in Lange's "History of Materialism." Nietzsche read this book very carefully, as is shown by his correspondence with Baron Gersdorff and Erwin Rohde. And in fact, on February 16 Nietzsche wrote to Baron Gersdorff: "I am again obliged to praise the merits of a man who I already spoke to you about in a previous letter. If you want to really know the contemporary materialist movement, the natural sciences with their Darwinian theories, their cosmic systems, their dark room so full of life, etc, I see nothing more remarkable to recommend to you than Friederich-Albert

Lange's "History of Materialism" (Iserlohn, 1866), a book which gives infinitely more than the title promised, and which we can browse through over and again as a real treasure. Given the direction of your studies I see nothing better to recommend to you. I have promised myself to get to know this man, and I want to send him my work on Democritus as testimony of gratitude."

Lange only dedicates a dozen lines to Stirner, but one can't help but believe that they strike the reader, since they were the determining factor in the conversion of J.H. Mackay, who has since become Stirner's fanatical disciple. There is, in this brief analysis, a portion which must have fixed Nietzsche's attention. Lange declares, in fact, that Stirner might remind us of Schopenhauer. "The man who, in German literature, preached the most absolute egoism in the most absolute and logical fashion, Max Stirner, stands in opposition to Feuerbach. In his famous work "The Ego and Its Own" (1845) Max Stirner went so far as to reject any moral idea. Anything which, in one way or another, either as a simple idea or as an external force, places itself above the individual and his whims is rejected by Stirner as an odious limitation of the self. It is a pity that this book, the most exaggerated one we know of, was not complemented by a second, positive part. This task would have been easier than that of finding a positive complement to Schelling's philosophy for, in order to escape from the limited self I can, in turn, create a space for idealism as the expression of my will and idea. In fact, Stirner grants the will so much value that it appears to us as the fundamental force of the human being. It reminds us of Schopenhauer. It is in this way that every coin has two sides. In any event, Stirner was not sufficiently influential that we should occupy ourselves with him any further."

Let us compare these texts to the passages where Nietzsche speaks about "The History of Materialism." In September 1866 the philosopher writes to Baron Gersdorff, "What Schopenhauer is for us has again been proved to me with precision by another excellent and instructive work of its kind "The History of Materialism and

a Critique of Its Value in the Present period" by F.A. Lange, 1866. We are dealing here with a Kantian and an extremely enlightened naturalist. The following three propositions sum up his conclusion:

i. The sensible world is the product of our organization

ii. Our visible (corporal) organs, like the other parts of the phenomenal world, are only the images of an unknown object

iii. Our real organization remains for this reason as unknown to us as real external objects. We only ever have before us the product of the two

We thus not only don't know the true essence of things, the thing in itself, but the very idea of that thing in itself is nothing more or less than the final consequence of an antithesis relative to our organization, and about which we don't know if it has a meaning outside of our experience. Consequently, Lange feels that we should allow philosophers complete freedom, on the condition that they edify us. Art is free, even in the realm of concepts. Who would want to refute a phrase of Beethoven's or condemn an error in the Madonna of Raphael? You see that even in placing oneself at this point of view, even in admitting the strictest criticism, our Schopenhauer remains with us. Even more, we can almost say that he is even more ours. If philosophy is an art, all that is left to Haym is to hide himself before Schopenhauer; if philosophy must edify I know no philosopher who edifies more than our Schopenhauer."

We see that from Lange's book Nietzsche particularly retained the idea that philosophy is as free as art. Everyone thus has the right to admit the metaphysics that best responds to his sentiments: we can be Schopenhauerian in the same way that we are Wagnerian. Thus, if he was struck by the few lines that Lange dedicates to Stirner it is doubtless because Lange interpreted Stirner's theories in a way favorable to his thesis. In fact, Lange believes that Stirner