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Contents

account, out of pure altruism. Kunigunde does the same with Kuno. So we have the perfect couple for a fools' marriage, who have taken it into their heads to love each other out of pure devotion, without even enjoying each other. Kuno Fischer can keep such a sublime philosophical love for himself, or search for his counterpart in a madhouse. We other "raw," "particular" subjects want to love, because we feel love, because love is pleasing to our hearts and to our senses, and in the love of another being, we experience a greater self-enjoyment.

Furthermore, our critic gets entangled in his own contradictions. The "state-eliminating egoism of the unique" is at the same time "the most reasonable association of moderation," "in truth the grounds of the most shameless despotism," whose "clanging, fateful sword" the critic already hears. The "clanging sword" would no longer be "fateful" for us, if we did not make it our fate, and entrench ourselves in his steel shibboleth through foolish enterprises, giving the sword power, wanting to enslave ourselves to the "idea."

We can't follow this further. We hope that one can be honest enough not to expect us to read more than one page from a book like *Rationality and the Individual* ,[15] let alone to listen to a critique of it. But we want bring it to Mr. Kuno Fischer's attention that the author of *Rationality and the Individual* has written a critique of himself in the Protestant church newspaper. But perhaps Mr. Kuno Fischer is more familiar with this burlesque behavior of a man, who wants to become famous at any price, than we are.

[15] A reference to Karl Schmidt's *Das Verstandesthum Und Das Individuum* , a work that attempted to trace the history of the philosophical movement of the young Hegelians from beginning to end in order to be done with it. By considering Stirner as a philosopher, he inevitably misunderstood Stirner.

person. This Stirner speaks in a negative way with his sharp, irresistible critique, with which he analyzes all the illusions of idealism, and reveals all the lies of unselfish devotion and sacrifice. Indeed his glorious critics have understood this critique as the epitome of blind self-interest, of "duped egoism," which brings an entire people under its possession, to win a few pennies from it. Stirner himself described his book as a sometimes "awkward" expression of what he wanted. It is the painstaking work of the best years of his life; and yet he called it sometimes "awkward." He had to struggle so much with a language that was corrupted by philosophers, abused by believers in the state, in religion, in whatever else, and which had made ready a boundless confusion of ideas.

But back to our critics. When Stirner says: "Love is my feeling, my property," etc., or "My love is only my own when it exists completely within a selfish and egoistic interest; consequently the object of my love is actually *my* object or my property" and the same being assumed in a love affair, from the one who loves back, the stated love object, so our idealist triumphantly rises: "Thus, really, the Dalai Lama cult! that is, consuming twice. I eat my own beingeaten." "Thus, Max and Marie[13] belong in the natural history of love for ruminants."

Well, since Mr. Kuno Fischer is so personal and picturesque, we would also like to turn the thing back. Kuno loves Kunigunde[14] and Kunigunde loves Kuno. But Kuno does not love Kunigunde, because he finds his pleasure in this love, he does not enjoy his mistress for his own pleasure, but rather out of pure self-sacrifice, because she wants to be loved; he doesn't allow any suffering for her love, because love for her is adequate compensation for him, thus not for these selfish reasons, but all without taking them into

[13] Marie Dähnhardt, to whom Max Stirner was married at the time and to whom he dedicated his book.

[14] This is the German version of *Cunégonde*, a character from Voltaire's *Candide*. As spelled in French, the name is a pun on the Latin and French words for the female genitals. I strongly suspect that Stirner had this in mind in this passage.

A Response to Kuno Fischer's "The Modern Sophists"[1]

A prolific painter, working in his studio, was called to lunch by his wife. He answered: "Wait just a moment; I only have twelve life-size apostles, a Christ and a Madonna to paint." Such is the way of the philosophical reactionary Kuno Fischer — I chose this phrase, because one must not appear in the drawing room of philosophy without the tailcoat[2] of a philosophical phrase — he deals with the difficult titan's work of modern criticism, which had to storm the philosophical heaven, the last heaven under the heavens, in broad brushstrokes. He depicts one after the other. It is a joy to see. Strauss, Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, Stirner, the Greek sophists, the Jesuits, the sophists of romanticism, all get depicted using the same stencil.

The good man goes after sophists the way that our *Lichtfreunde*[3] and German Catholics go after Jesuits. He posts a warning against them; vilify someone as a "sophist!" and every respectable philosopher will make a cross before him. Already Hegel has drawn attention to the fact that what little is still left to us from the Greek

[1] Kuno Fischer, still a student when he wrote his criticism of Stirner's book, was to later become known for his work in the history of philosophy, and particular for inventing the distinction between the "rationalists" and the "empiricists" in Enlightenment era philosophy.

[2] For those who miss this sarcastic reference, think of a "white tie and tails" affair.

[3] A Protestant group aiming to create a rationalist version of Christianity as opposed to the dogmatic evangelical version that dominated at the time in Germany. Literally "Friends of the Light."

sophists, shows how far superior they were to Greek idealism whose full glory we get from Plato's works. In the end, Hegel is also a "sophist." Bring your stencil, Mr. Kuno Fischer, I have the urge to call Hegel a "sophist." But let's hear our glorious sophist-hunter himself: "Sophistry is the mirror-image of philosophy — its inverted truth." Thus, wholly the same truth, but in the opposite position? Oh, the position doesn't matter to us. We look at the picture from above and call it a "sophist"; we look at it from below and call it a "philosopher" "*tel est notre plaisir*."[4]

"The sophistic subject, which makes itself into the master, the despot of thought, and with it reveals the *tel est mon plaisir* to the objective powers of the world, can't possibly be the thinking subjectivity." "Master, despot of thought," whose thought? My thought? Your thought? Or thought in itself? If the "sophistic subject" makes itself the master of my thought, or of thought in itself, a thing that makes no sense, nonetheless, it is probably mightier and so entitled to it; for it can only seize thought for itself by thinking, and that is still certainly an honorable, gentlemanly weapon. But if it is master of its own thought, this is nothing special. If you aren't, then you're a lunatic, the plaything of you fixed idea. However slowly, here come the "objective powers of the world," a sublime bunch. Who are you? Are you the light, "that breaks through stained-glass windows," and colors my nose blue whether I like it or not, when I'm standing in a Gothic church? Yes, even my praying neighbor, filled with the objectivity of the present God, has to laugh at the blue nose. Or are you the destructive power of a falling body, discharged electricity, the quick expansion of evaporating material? No! Not all that. I see the philosopher smile. Should mindless nature be an objective power of the world? Nature, which "is" not, when I don't "think" it, which is only a "thing of thought." No! Because up to now, this is mightier than the philosopher, and there-

[4] In French in the original. Literally , "such is out pleasure," in other words, "as it pleases us."

for all. You want to make the "principle of vulgar equality" into the norm for my life. Principle upon principle! Demand after demand! I oppose you with the principle of egoism. I only want to be myself; I despise nature, humanity and its laws, human society and its love, and I cut off all compulsory relationships with them, even that of language. To all the impressions of your duties, all the expressions of your categorical judgments, I oppose the "ataraxia"[11] of my I; I'm already quite accommodating when I make use of language, I am the "inexpressible." "I only show myself." And aren't I as right with the terrorism of my I, which pushes back everything human in just such a way, as you with your terrorism of humanity, which immediately brands me as an "inhuman monster" if I sin against your catechism, if I don't let myself be disturbed in my self-enjoyment?

Is it hence said that Stirner with his "egoism" wants to deny everything universal, to make out as nonexistent all the characteristics of our organism which no individual can take away, to clear them away through mere denial? That he wants to give up all companionship with human beings, and suicidally hide himself in his cocoon? Certainly, this misunderstanding is no less awkward than that of the German liberals and conservatives who still today are outraged by Börne's[12] remark: "If you don't like your king's nose, he'll hunt you down for it," as if it had ever occurred to Börne to make a king's nose into a crime against democracy. One must actually be ashamed, to make the likes of the lords of the councils of confusion comprehensible.

But there is a weighty "therefore," a powerful implication in Stirner's book, often, indeed, to be read between the lines, but which entirely escaped the philosophers, because they don't know actual human beings, or themselves as actual human beings, because they always only deal with "humanity," "the spirit" in itself, *a priori* , always only with the name, never with the thing and the

[11] Emotional tranquility.

[12] Karl Ludwig Börne (1786–1837), a German political writer and satirist.

Essence of Christianity and his lesser works, even out of his "philosophy of humanity"; that means, we understand his mysterious "powers," "reason," "will," "heart" and their realizations: "knowledge," "character," "love," as psychological representations of the skills and qualities which are immanent in the *real* human species as such, in human organization, apart from historical changes and complications, so tremendous progress is already made in Feuerbach; he shows, going back to the simple, large lines of our organization, already sufficient, how absurd it is to give so much weight to one aspect, to one characteristic, such as the intellect, or thought, that it threatens to devour the others; in short, he wants *the whole of humanity* in equal entitlement to all of its characteristics, including the senses and willpower. But having gotten this far, he forgets that "the human being" doesn't exist, that it is an arbitrary abstraction. He sets it up as an ideal. It's no wonder, when it becomes an impersonal, mysterious species being, that it behaves as polytheistically as the Greek gods of Zeus. Consequently, a "*should*" comes in; you should be *the human being* . The "inhuman monster" operates against the "human being." But no one holds that an "unbestial monster" is not a "beast." It would be just as difficult for Feuerbach to prove that an "inhuman monster" is not an actual "human being." An "inhuman monster" is and remains an actual "human being," encumbered with a moral anathema, cast out by the human community with a feeling of disgust — who call him "inhuman monster."

Stirner opposes this phrase "humanism" with the phrase "egoism": How? Do you demand of me that I should be a "human being," more precisely, I should be a "man"? Well! I was already a "human being," a "naked little human being," and a "man" in the cradle; I am indeed that; but I am more than that, I am what I have become through me, through my development, through appropriation of the external world, of history, etc.; I am the "unique." But that's not what you really want. You don't want me to be an actual human being. You don't give a damn about my uniqueness. You desire that I should be "the human being" as you have depicted it, as a model

fore he disavows it; but his phrase-adorned God, that garlanded golden calf, is an "objective power of the world." Past history is null and void, insofar as it doesn't show the dialectical process of his distinctive thinking, and the future — he has already "designed" it. Thus, "the sophistic subject," "the despot of thought," "can't possibly be the thinking subjectivity." "The thinking subjectivity!" If it were still called "the thinking subject," then the simple nonsense of this sentence would exist nakedly, that "the sophistic subject is not thereby the thinking subject, that it is master of thought, and therefore thinks, but perhaps because it is thought by a thought, because it is the will-less organ of the absolute Spirit, or however these wise definitions may otherwise fall out." But so the "thinking subjectivity" has become a many-headed hydra of nonsense.

"The subject, who distinguishes himself as independent from his thought, is rather the particular, the random subject, who sees nothing in thought but a plausible means for his purposes, and only understands the natural and moral world under this category."

I distinguish myself from my thoughts, and I do not distinguish myself from them; there my thoughts fulfill me so much that no feeling, no sensation can produce a difference between me and my thoughts. — But I'm using the clumsy language of my opponent — so then can I speak of "thought" at all? A "thought" is something finished, something thought, and from these thing I always distinguish myself, like the creator from the creature, the father from the son. From my thoughts, which I have thought, or will come to think, I most certainly distinguish myself. The former are objects to me, the latter — unlaid eggs. Therefore, I am just "the particular, the random subject." But the one who seems to be "necessary subject" to himself, legitimizes himself as such. He may get the legitimation from the moon. An absurd question, whether a subject is random or necessary, whether it is "a" subject or "the" subject. It is necessary, because it is there, and if it makes itself necessary; random, because no rooster would crow at it if it were not there. The greatest conceivable necessity of a world conqueror, a scholar

controlling the time, or a statesman, is still only illusory. For "particular" interests, as "plausible means to their purposes," all of them bind the passions and ideas of the time to their triumphal chariots. Their "purpose" may be something *more real* , or an *idea* ; it is always *their* idea, a particular idea, which they love, with which they hurl the anathema on the one, in whose contrariness and unbroken character they clearly discern that they are still only "random, particular subjects." As concerns the understanding "of the natural and moral world," I confess that I don't understand how one can grasp the natural world other than as a natural, "particular" subject. I gladly leave your "moral world" to you; this always only stood on paper, is the perennial lie of society, and will always shatter on the rich variety and incompatibility of strong-willed individuals. We leave this "lost paradise" to the poets.

Now, in a flash, our hero takes a ride through history. "Hurrah! the dead ride fast."

"The idealism of thought of the Eleatics[5] stimulated Greek sophistry." Oh, that is great praise for the Eleatics. As if no headshrinker was ever stimulated by "the idealism of thought" of his lunatics, especially if there is "method in their madness."

"The sophistry of Catholic Christianity was Jesuitism. Catholic dogma, that stands externally to the believing subject, brought the same, thus, externally into its power." "Externally" probably, but also in actual fact? Or haven't Loyola's students perhaps always controlled the Vatican? *Legitime* in Austria and Bavaria, *Sans-culottes* in Belgium, communists[6] in France always draw the much-skilled away from the masses on the fool's rope of a popular idea.

[5] A school of pre-Socratic philosophers who rejected the validity of sense experience as a source of knowledge and instead took logic and mathematics as the basis for truth.

[6] Though these are obvious references to radical movements of the time, I could find no information about the *Legitime* of Austria and Bavaria and very little about the Belgian *Sans-culottes* (only that there is a brewery in Belgium that uses that name in honor of them).

But the trick is just one of Kuno Fischer's tricks; in Stirner's book itself one finds nothing of this. Stirner's book was already completed before Bruno Bauer had turned his back on his theological critique as something that had been settled, and the proclamation of "absolute critique" in the public literary paper only mentions Stirner in an addendum, that doesn't, of necessity, belong in the structure of the complete work.

Feuerbach's humanism, that in the German communists and socialist had achieved a more general influence, was much closer to a realization that clearly enough the "inhuman" of "humanism" brought to light the underlying contradictions in the system. Hence Stirner devoted the greatest effort to the battle against humanism. Feuerbach replied in Wigand's quarterly journal, 1845, volume III, and Stirner refuted this response. Kuno Fischer seems to know and be aware of nothing of all this; otherwise he would have spared himself the effort of making the following ingenious discovery.

"The egoism of the unique is not just any thought; rather it is objective; it exerts a dogmatic violence; it is a bat in the belfry, a spook, a heirarchical thought, and Max Stirner is its priest." "Stirner is the dogmatist of egoism." "In the objectivity that Stirner gives to *absolute* egoism," (not a trace of any "absolute" egoism is to be found in Stirner's book) "there is a conceptualization that has become a dogma."

If Mr. Fischer had read the article[10] , he would not have come to this comical misunderstanding, finding in Stirner's "egoism" a dogma, a seriously meant "categorical imperative," a seriously meant "should," like the one "humanism" provoked: you should be "human being" and not "inhuman monster," and thereon constructed the moral catechism of humanity. There Stirner referred to "egoism" itself as a "phrase"; but as the last possible "phrase," it is appropriate for bringing the rule of phrases to an end. We cut out the categorical imperative, i.e.,the positive intention, from Feuerbach's

[10] "Stirner's Critics".

But one sample of the ideal, ethereal manner of language, which brings a not "clumsy," "necessary," "world-shattering" subject.

"The sophistic subject, which feels itself degraded over and over again from its despotic arrogance to a eunuch, *finally pulls back the foreskin of its individuality*" etc.

After Kuno Fischer honored with such a broad exposition "the philosophical prerequisites of modern sophistry, Hegel, Strauss, Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach," a process of philosophy that has already historically come to be, but that is still too close, to be exposed in such a trivial way again as a bit of news, he come to speak about Max Stirner himself. As for Stirner's inclusion among the sophists, a name by which he would neither consider himself insulted nor flattered, it may be enough to set an opinion of the same about the Greek sophists against it. "To be sure, the principle of sophistry had to pass away, in that the most dependent, blindest slave of his desires could still be a splendid sophist, and with lucidity line everything up in favor of his raw heart, and stop short. What it gives well, not discovering a 'good reason' for it, and what it wouldn't struggle through."

I have already often observed that critics who have examined and analyzed the objects of their critique with great talent and keen understanding, indeed get crazy about Stirner, and every one has often been carried away by the different consequences of their misunderstandings to genuine stupid mistakes.

Thus, Kuno Fischer makes the useless effort to display Stirner's egoism and uniqueness as a consequence of Bauer's self-consciousness and "pure critique." The subject that "in this process pure critique does not bring to an actual sense of sovereignty," becomes in Stirner the "definite nothing of all world-shaking thought." And this trick is accomplished through the "demolition of the critical relationship on the illusions against which it fights."

texts, dubiousness. Knowing how Stirner plays with words, this last meaning might also hold some significance here.

Even in the interior of Asia, where the hunger of the desert and the superior strength of the wild nomads made all expeditions fail, their intrepid foot has wandered through. Today a Jesuit pupil sits on the papal throne, and governs in the spirit of religious and political liberalism; and Catholics and Protestants cheer for him.

"In romantic sophistry the particular subject stormed the absoluteness of the Fichtean I" hear, hear! you romantics, you art-enthused Schlegel and Tieck, you brilliant Theosophist, Novalis, hear it in your graves, you are also only utterly common "particular" subjects. Indeed! With phrases one can make everything into everything. "Sophistry emancipates the subject from the power of thought; so — the sophistic subject is *the thoughtless*, the crude, particular subject, that crawls away behind thought's back to keep its power at bay." So because *I* have thoughts and thoughts don't have *me*, because I think freely and don't ape a thought already thought, am I a "thoughtless," "particular," even "crude" subject? Certainly not! The sophists are not "thoughtless," they are even "philosophical" more or less "the mirror-image of philosophy," but in what way? "The clumsy subject breathes philosophical air; that gives him this peculiar oxygen, from which it gets dialectically inspired to a formal eloquence." Do you philosophers actually have an inkling that you have been beaten with your own weapons? Nothing buy an inkling. What retort can you hearty fellows make against it, when I again dialectically demolish what you have just dialectically put up? You have shown me with what "eloquence" one can make all into nothing and nothing into all, black into white and white into black. What do you have against it, when I turn your neat trick back on you? But with the dialectical trick of a philosophy of nature, neither you nor I will cancel the great facts of modern natural research, no more than Schelling and Hegel did. Precisely here the philosopher has revealed himself as the "clumsy" subject; because he is as ignorant in a "clumsified" sphere in which he has no power, as a witless Gulliver among the giants.

The "sophist" is the the "stable," the "random" Subject and belongs to the "reactionary" "already conquered viewpoints in philosophy," and is "depicted" yet again in Kuno Fischer's abundance. It has probably not understood the philosophers, since "the natural man knows nothing of the Spirit of God." But we would like to see how Mr. Fischer has understood these ones that he has philosophically depicted, so that we can at least admire his "eloquence." "In this process 'pure critique' does not bring the subject to an actual sense of its sovereignty; it remains in illusion, against which it fights, relating to it critically." Only this absurd accusation hereby made against "pure critique," that it is merely critique; because how could someone criticize a thing without "relating to it critically"? The question is surely only to whose advantage this relationship is settled, i.e., whether the critic critically overcomes the thing or not. "This critical relationship demolishes the subject; it is the definitive nothing of all world-shaking thoughts; they have expired in the absolute egoism of the unique. Peter Schlemihl[7] has lost his shadow."

How unfortunate, when someone chooses an image by which he is most clearly defeated. Peter Schlemihl's shadow is the image of his uniqueness, his individual contour, used metaphorically, the knowledge and sense of himself. Precisely when he loses this, he becomes the unfortunate prey of gold into which he has transferred his essence, of the opinion of the mob that he doesn't know to despise, of the love of a foolish girl that he doesn't know to renounce; he is the game ball of a demon, who is only terrifying to him so long as he fears him, so long as he remains in a contract relationship with him. He could just as well be the prey of philosophy.

But lets leave the images. In the same way as Mr. Fischer above, Bauer's literary paper talks about it in the eighth volume.

[7] The central character of story about a man who sells his shadow to the devil for a bottomless wallet, only to find that a person without a shadow is shunned by everyone.

"What clumsiness and frivolity, to want to solve the most difficult problems, carry out the most comprehensive tasks, through *demolition*."

To this Stirner replied:

"But do you have tasks if you do not set them for yourself? As long as you set them, you will not forsake them, and I have nothing against the fact that you think and in thinking create a thousand thoughts."

Does "the unique" *demolish* the thought process here? No! He lets it quietly run its course; but also doesn't let it *demolish* his uniqueness, and he laughs at criticism as soon as it tries to force him to help solve a problem that he has not posed, laughing at your "earth-shattering thoughts." The world has languished long enough under the tyranny of thought, under the terrorism of ideas; she is waking from the heavy dream, and the day of joyful *self-interest* follows. She is ashamed of the contradiction in which the church, the state and the philosopher held her captive, the contradiction they placed between *self-interest* and *principle* . As if one could have a principle in which he had no interest, an interest that didn't become for the moment a principle. But you should, you must have a "pure" principle, self-interest is "dirty." You must only behave "philosophically" or "critically"; otherwise you are a "clumsy," "crude," "random," "particular" subject.

Listen, naturalist, when you observe with pleasure the becoming of the chicken in the incubating egg, and don't think to criticize it; listen, Alexander, when you chop apart the Gordian knot that you did not tie. You have to die as a young man at Sais[8] at the hands of the priests, because you have "thoughtlessly" dared to lift the holy veil of serious thought[9] ; and the priests still have the impudent gall to say, "the sight of the Godhead has killed you."

[8] A reference to Novalis' book, *The Disciples at Sais*

[9] I have here translated "unbedanklich" as "thoughtlessly" and "Bendanklichkeit" as serious thought, to emphasized Stirner's play on thought and thinking. Generally, "Bedanklichkeit" means simply seriousness or, in other con-