

Self-ownership and Spontaneously-Evolved Order. The Core of the Max Stirner's Individualist Anarchism

Autopropiedad y orden espontáneamente desarrollado. El corazón del anarquismo individualista de Max Stirner

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Abstract

Author of the article argues that in spite of a subjectivist nature of Max Stirner's thought which is distinct from libertarianism, there's a strong intellectual affinity between anarchist wing of it and Stirner's conception. This position is based on three crucial arguments. First, Stirner's opus magnum *The Ego and Its Own* is one of the most zealous declarations of social individualism based upon the idea of self-ownership. Second, the Archimedean point of both analyzed political philosophies is the idea of spontaneous order, i.e. the conviction that the efficient cooperation between egoistic individuals – and thus not mediated by any external constraints - is possible. Third, there are important historical connections between Stirner's conception and representatives of individualistic or libertarian anarchism.

Keywords: Max Stirner, egoism, spontaneous order, individualist anarchism.

Resumen

El autor de este artículo argumenta que, a pesar de la naturaleza subjetivista del pensamiento de Max Stirner, en este sentido distinto del libertarismo, existe una fuerte afinidad intelectual entre la rama anarquista del libertarismo y la concepción de Stirner. Esta tesis se basa en tres argumentos esenciales. En primer lugar, la obra principal de Stirner, *El único y su propiedad*, representa uno de los más entusiastas pronunciamientos en favor del individualismo social basado en la idea de autopropiedad. En segundo lugar, la clave de bóveda de las dos filosofías políticas

analizadas es la idea del orden espontáneo, es decir, la convicción de la posibilidad de una cooperación eficiente entre individuos egoístas sin mediación de coerciones externas. En tercer lugar, hay conexiones históricas importantes entre la concepción de Stirner y los representantes del anarquismo individualista o libertario.

Palabras clave: Max Stirner, egoísmo, orden espontáneo, anarquismo individualista.

An approach to Stirner's thought presented by libertarians is deeply ambivalent. It is, without the doubt, the subjectivist nature of his conception, which bears the particular responsibility for this ambivalence.¹ However, unless I am mistaken, this subjectivism should be explained primarily by a polemical context of his philosophy, i.e. by Stirner's radical opposition to an anti-individualist ideology (Hegelianism) and oppressive practice of authoritarian Prussian state (the so-called "bureaucratic absolutism" and militarism).² Therefore, this subjectivism results from an intellectual climate of Stirner's thought, deeply rooted in the convention of German young Hegelianism, which was unfamiliar to libertarian rhetoric – objectivist and based on natural law theory. However, I am convinced that despite this dissimilarity, there exists a deep intellectual relationship between Stirner and libertarianism. I can present four underlying reasons supporting this thesis. First, the main Stirner's work entitled *The Ego And His Own* (Eng. trans: 1907), (orig.: 1846, *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum*), is without a doubt one of the most zealous declarations of social individualism based on the idea of self-ownership in the history of political and social philosophy at all.³ The individualism based on the idea of self-ownership also constitutes a basis of libertarian thought.⁴ Second, the "Archimedean point" of both of these political philosophies is the idea of spontaneous order – i.e. a conviction that free cooperation between egoistic individuals can be efficient and possible. Third, there are obvious historic connections between Stirner's conception and representatives of individualist - as well as libertarian - anarchism (for example: J. H. Mackay, J. Walker, B. R. Tucker).⁵ And finally Stirner's subjectivist standpoint is radically weakened

¹ A. Rand, *Virtue of Selfishness. A New Concept of Egoism*, New York, Signet, 1964, p. 129.

² For further details see: M. Chmieliński, *Max Stirner: Jednostka, społeczeństwo, państwo* (*Max Stirner. An Individual, a Society and the State*), Kraków, Księgarnia Akademicka 2006, p. 45.

³ On the individualism in general see e.g.: S. Lukes, *Individualism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973.

⁴ E. g. M. N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*, New York and London, New York University Press 1998, p. 113; *idem*, *For a New Liberty. A Libertarian Manifesto*, New York: Macmillan 1978, p. 28; D. Boaz, *Libertarianism. A Primer*, New York, The Free Press, 1997, p. 97. Still one of the most interesting polemics with the libertarian thesis of the self-ownership remains: G. A. Cohen, *Self-ownership, Freedom and Equality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁵ John Henry Mackay discovered Stirner, Benjamin Tucker published the first English translation of *The Ego and His Own*, James L. Walker was the first person to introduce Max Stirner's ideas to

by his conception of the “unions of egoists” (*Verein der Egoisten*), which requires a mutual cooperation in the achieving necessary common goals, like for example – security and therefore has to make his conception of egoism more “objectivistic”.⁶

In this article, I pay no attention to issues of purely historical nature, mentioning them only in footnotes and only if necessary. Whereas, I will consider those elements of Stirner’s conception, that enable capturing substantive affinities between his conception and libertarianism, as well as the most important differences between them. Thus, I will start with discussing (1.) the anti-metaphysical concept of freedom formulated by Stirner, then I will present his (2.) idea of self-ownership and its external expansion and (3.) the vision of spontaneous order. Concluding I would also like to comment on the fundamental point of the libertarian criticism of Stirner’s conception, i.e. on the charge of subjectivism.

1. “Absolute coercion” and “absolute freedom”. The anti-metaphysical vision of freedom in Stirner’s conception

The ultimate goal of Stirner’s work *The Ego and his own*, which can be seen even as his obsession, is to describe the fundamental conditions, which let the unique and original individual life free from each outside coercion⁷. In Stirner’s opinion: “He who is infatuated with *Man* leaves persons out of account so far as that infatuation extends, and floats in an ideal, sacred interest. *Man*, you see, is not a person, but an ideal, a spook”.⁸ Thus, “No, community, as the “goal” of history hitherto, is impossible. Let us rather renounce every hypocrisy of community, and recognize that, if we are equal as men, we are not equal for the very reason that we are not men. We are equal *only in thoughts*, only when “we” are *thought*, not as we really and bodily

English-speaking anarchists (and others) in Benjamin Tucker’s publication, *Liberty*. In his book *The Philosophy of Egoism*, Walker summarized his understanding of egoism as drawn from Stirner. They are the main representatives of individualist anarchism and often are seen as the pioneers of libertarianism. See: J. L. Walker, *The Philosophy of Egoism*, Denver, Katherine Walker, 1905; *idem* (under pseudonym TAK KAK), “Stirner on Justice”, in *Liberty*, Vol. IV, No. 18, Boston, March 26, 1887; J.H. Mackay, *Max Stirner. Sein Leben und sein Werk* (Reprint der 3. Aufl.), Freiburg/Br, Mackay Gesellschaft, 1977, B. R. Tucker, *Instead of Book. By a Men Too Busy to Write One*, New York, B. Tucker, 1897. About the complicated relations between Stirner and Anarchists, see: J. F. Welsh, *Max Stirner’s Dialectical Egoism. A New Interpretation*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2010, p.117, B. Laska, “Die Individualanarchisten und Max Stirner”, in H. J. Degen (ed.), *Lexikon der Anarchie*, Bösdorf, Verlag Schwarzen Nachtschatten, 1996, p. 11.

⁶ In the sense of philosophy of “objectivism” of Ayn Rand, the philosophy of which is Rand famous for and which reflects another value of Newtonian physics, which is objectivity.

⁷ Hence the motto of the main work of Stirner entitled *The Ego and His Own*, which is : “All Things are nothing to me” (“Ich hab mein Sach uf Nichts gestellt”) and it means a lack of external constraints for thinking and attempting to (challenging and ill-fated anyway) think extra-conceptually, which signifies thinking in as concrete categories as possible. For further details, see: (M. Chmieliński, *op. cit.*, p. 155)

⁸ M. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, New York, B. Tucker, 1907, p. 52.

are. I am ego, and you are ego: but I am not this thought of ego; this ego in which we are all equal is only *my thought*. I am man, and you are man: but “man” is only a thought, a generality; neither you nor I are speakable, we are *unutterable*, because only *thoughts* are speakable and consist in speaking”.⁹ And therefore, he researches any possible sources of coercion with all the depth of abstract thinking, which was characteristic for the 19th century German speculative philosophy. Thus, Stirner doesn’t limit his conception of coercion to the objective, common-sense character of it, present i.e. in the formal authority of the State’s power. He finds sources of coercion much deeper, in a subjective plane of individual’s existence. The coercion is for Stirner everything, what limits an individual and subjects her or him to an external will, even if it is simply an objective vision of a proper conduct, which is inherent in social conventions, contracts or other social institutions. What’s more, according to Stirner the source of coercion can be even your own idea or opinion, if it is strong enough, that you can’t emancipate yourself from it when needed. Therefore, the source of coercion is for him not only the State and its institutions but also morality, religion, natural law - paradoxically – the freedom itself can become it, if it is understood as an “*idée fixe*”, the idea at implementation of which one should necessarily aim.¹⁰ In other words, all what gives you no possibility of change can be the source coercion.

If the area of coercion is by Stirner widened so radically (almost *ad absurdum*), so the area of emancipation from it has to be outlined equally wide.¹¹ Thus freedom

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 414.

¹⁰ “Under religion and politics man finds himself at the standpoint of *should*: *he should* become this and that, should be so and so. With this postulate, this commandment, every one steps not only in front of another but also in front of himself. Those critics say: You should be a whole, free man. Thus they too stand in the temptation to proclaim anew *religion*, to set up a new absolute, an ideal – to wit, freedom.” (*Ibidem*, p. 125).

¹¹ Such widening of borderlines of freedom is pointedly ridiculed by Isaiah Berlin, who writes: “If I use the word ‘yellow’ I want to mean by it what I meant by it yesterday and what you will mean by it tomorrow. But this is a terrible yoke, this *is* a fearful despotism. Why should the word ‘yellow’ mean the same thing now and tomorrow? Why cannot I alter it? Why should twice 2 always make 4? Why should words be uniform? Why cannot I make up my own universe each time I begin? But if I do that, if there is no systematic symbolism, then I cannot think. If I cannot think, I go mad. To do him justice, Stirner did duly go mad. He ended his life very honourably and very consistently in a lunatic asylum as a perfectly peaceful harmless lunatic, in 1856.” (I. Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, Princeton - New Jersey, Princeton University Press 2001, p. 144). Disregarding Berlin’s total ignorance as far as biographical issues are concerned (from this information only the date of death is correct), you need to pay attention to poor knowledge of Stirner’s conception. Stirner does not fight with universalia in the medieval nominalists fashion, i. e. for refutation of a conviction about real existence of abstracts. However, he points to the existence of supraindividual institutions, through which authority is exercised over human: ideology, propaganda and Utopian vision of future paradise, which “here and now” requires personal sacrifices, that is Stirner actually points to similar issues that Berlin does in his famous singling out the concept of positive liberty.

means for him freedom from all, what externally or internally limits our individual will, and at the same time - freedom to all that, what is needed by the individual. In this view freedom means the pre-ethical attitude to stay in accordance only with one's own, individual needs. It is neither Rousseauian "civil liberty"¹² nor Kantian rational freedom¹³, nor Lockean conception of freedom limited by freedom of other people¹⁴, i.e. by the natural rights of others. To paraphrase Robert Nozick's famous sentence, the freedom of an individual is, according to Stirner, the freedom "to place a knife in somebody's abdomen". Its scope is limited only by the power of the concrete individual (Ger. *Macht* or *Gewalt*, Eng. "might"). "My freedom becomes complete only when it is my – *might*"¹⁵ "(...) for the means that I use for it are determined by what I am. If I am weak, I have only weak means".¹⁶ According to the German thinker, who has more power, is simply more free.

According to Stirner, such an understanding of freedom is a well established or common fact which cannot be called into question. Stirner's conception of freedom has not the normative character, but descriptive one. In his thinking about rationale and motives of human's behavior Stirner is close to political realism. According to him, there are no convincing empirical evidences that freedom is internally limited in any way, and if so, then we have to understand freedom in its negative aspect in the simplest way, that is actually as a lack of any restraints¹⁷. An assumption of the internal limits of freedom always adopts a metaphysical fiction, which clouds the real picture of human's conduct. Conceptions of "civilized", "rational" freedom, or "freedom limited by the freedom of others" are for Stirner metaphysical fictions covering some form of its external limitation. They are used for various motives: sometimes in order to set a noble ideal for human's behavior, to create a moral anchor - principles preventing from violations of other people's freedom; sometimes it

¹² Rousseau describes the difference between civil and natural liberty as follows: "Let us draw up the whole account in terms easily commensurable. What men loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to everything he tries to get and succeeds in getting; what he gains is civil liberty and the proprietorship of all he possesses. If we are to avoid Mistake in weighing one against the other, we must clearly distinguish natural liberty, which is bounded only by the strength of the individual, from civil liberty, which is limited by the general will" (J. J. Rousseau, "Social Contract", in *Philosophy and Theology*, E. Rhys (ed.), London, Dent; 1923, p. 19).

¹³ I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 185.

¹⁴ J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960, p. 269.

¹⁵ M. Stirner, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

¹⁷ Similarly understands freedom Thomas Hobbes, for whom: "The right of nature, which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man hath to use his own power as he will himself for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything which, in his own judgment and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto." (T. Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Form & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, London, Green Dragon, 1651, p. 79).

is simply a form of encouraging himself when somebody is enslaved (e.g. Epictetus and the stoic idea of inner freedom).

But Stirner's conception of freedom should not, however, be interpreted as a postulate to deprive freedom of all constraints. He is concerned rather with not masking them with any metaphysical fictions suggesting that there exists some alleged form of freedom, which already in its substance is different from that, which we commonly conceive as freedom. Hence, in my view, a significant part of Stirner's radical and strongly exaggerated statements should be explained by his politically realistic standpoint, which express itself in excluding each metaphysical fiction and aiming for authenticity of statement. For him this authenticity is clearly missing in the speculative political philosophy of his times and in practice of the Prussian State.

Thus, the borders of freedom are for Stirner necessary, but they must have a libertarian character. The libertarian character of it manifests itself in a postulate that as many of the limitations of freedom as possible has to be a result of free decisions or mutual voluntary agreements. Stirner knows that the communities without any limitations of its members are impossible and inefficient, because using freedom with no regard for others, is contrary to common sense and inefficient. Also the power of an individual, on which its freedom is dependent, is for him not a purely physical advantage but above all an energy serving human to handle various life situations. Whereas, they usually require cooperation.¹⁸

2. Self-ownership and its external expansion

Similarly as in the tradition reaching back to John Locke, freedom is for Stirner connected with property in such a manner, that an individual is free within boundaries of his or her ownership. As noted above, freedom and ownership are not understood by Stirner in categories of a natural law theory, which assumes some a priori limitations of freedom by the freedom of others (thus in opposition to the Locke's tradition). It is rather a "Viking's freedom", that expresses itself in ability of the individual to appropriate all that, what is possible regarding the power of individual and with no pre-established restrictions (for instance Lockean proviso). The each individual's property is determined only by the power of this individual. Moreover, according to Stirner it is this ability to appropriate, which creates the positive aspect of freedom. Without this positive aspect however we cannot imagine the freedom of a particular individual¹⁹: "I have no objection to freedom, but I wish more than

¹⁸ M. Stirner, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

¹⁹ The similar approach to freedom seems to be represented by such contemporary authors like G.A. Cohen and Matthew Kramer. See: (G. A. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 92; *idem*, *History, Labour and Freedom. Themes from Marx*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 286; I. Carter, M. Kramer, H. Steiner, *Freedom. A philosophical Anthology*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007, p. 4; M. Kramer, *The Quality of Freedom*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 3).

freedom for you” – says Stirner - “you should not merely *be rid* of what you do not want; you should not only be a “freeman”, you should be an “owner” too”²⁰. Stirner defines this unity of freedom and appropriation as “ownness” - *Eigenheit* (a compound of two German words: freedom – *Freiheit* and ownership – *Eigentum*).²¹ Thereby he comprehends ownership as everything that, over which an individual has control and what is a subject of its use. First of all, it is a human himself/herself, whose self-ownership “emanates” in a natural way on objects of the external world. Thus, the appropriation embodies the essence of man’s relationship to the world of things and the world of people. Both things as well as people are mainly objects, they have instrumental value, they are used for meeting needs and implementation of objectives. For Stirner it is a fact similar to this, that freedom is strictly dependent on the power of an individual; thus, it is a fact, with which there is no point to argue. For Stirner calling this obvious fact into question on the one hand can serve maintaining or strengthening the symbolic power over people by various public authorities (the State, churches, moral authorities), or on the other hand is equate with belief in useless fictions. In this first case, the public authorities impose on the individual obligations, which are useless and unnecessary from this individual’s point of view, and which this individual will never impose on itself, because it contradicts its interests. The second reason for the questioning of the power-dependent nature of property is to be very often an integrity or finesse of an ethical system, but that Stirner is not concerned on.²²

Therefore, according to Stirner, it is this instrumental relationship that inter-personal relations should be built on. Any other ways of creating relationships between really existing individuals are based on a wrong or false image of the human world. According to Stirner, the conscious instrumental relation is – paradoxically – the most authentic relation. It is not mediated by a false respect for a man’s dignity and humanist ideals, yet it takes its origin from respect for this benefit, which we can reap from this or that particular man. “For me you are nothing but –my food, even as I too am fed upon and turned to use by you. We have only one relation to each other, that of *usableness*, of utility, of use”.²³ Then his point of view is definitely anti-Kantian, anti-humanist and contrary to the natural law theory. In Stirner’s approach a man is evaluated by others like a good table or a good horse; there is any place for an universal, unconditioned or internal value, and the only measure is the benefit for others, or – the utility, which he represents for other man. Stirner again expresses here his conviction, that we should stop invoking false sentiments and stereotypes. However we have to remember, that for Stirner this strictly instrumental character of

²⁰ M. Stirner, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

²¹ J. P. Clark, *Max Stirner’s Egoism*, London, Freedom Press 1976, p. 59.

²² M. Stirner, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

the inter-individual or interpersonal relationships does not exclude strong emotional relationships and even sacrifice for others. This is key thesis of the Stirner's subjectivist approach to egoism, which says that even the sacrifice for others or a "selfless love" is motivated solely by selfish needs. In this probably logical untenable stance of Stirner, every conduct and action, which isn't determined by an external factor or motivation, but comes immediately from the inside – i.a. from the individual's needs and wants itself – has the selfish character. Already the autonomous decision that is freely made by an individual determines the selfish character of such an action. In this sense, also love for other person, friendship and sacrifice is evaluated as egoistic.²⁴

Stirner's assumption of the instrumental treatment of others does not mean then a proto-nazist or fascist justification for "converting them into soap".²⁵ On the contrary, Stirner wants in this way to eliminate hypocrisy and falsity from human relationships. He points out that instrumentalization cannot be avoided in direct relationships, as for one man the other one is always subject of concern, feelings or goals: a

²⁴ Though, this explanation of egoism seems to resemble the Aristotle's explanation included in *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he convinces that also those, who sacrifice for others and grant them favors do so not out of altruism, but above all for fulfillment of their own need to help others, so out of egoism. "If, therefore, we should grasp how each side is speaking of the self-lover, perhaps the matter would become clear. Now, then, those who bring self-love into reproach call "self-lovers" those people who allot to themselves the greater share of money, honors, and bodily pleasures, for the many long for these things and are serious about them on the grounds that they are what is best; hence too such things are fought over. Those who grasp for more of these things gratify their desires and, in general, their passions and the nonrational part of their soul. Such is the character of the many. Hence too this familiar term of reproach has arisen from the case that mostly prevails, which is indeed base. Those who are self-lovers in this way, therefore, are justly reproached. It is not unclear that the many are accustomed to saying that those who allot such things to themselves are self-lovers. For if someone should always take seriously that he himself do what is just, or moderate, or whatever else accords with the virtues, and, in general, if he should secure what is noble for himself, no one would say that he is a "self-lover" or even blame him. But this sort of person would seem to be *more* of a self-lover; at any rate, he allots to himself the noblest things and the greatest goods, he gratifies the most authoritative part of himself, and in all things he obeys this part. Just as a city and every other whole composed of parts seem to be their most authoritative part above all, so too does a human being." (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 200/201). The prevailing part of current interpretations of the political philosophy of Aristotle are today communitarian, but there are some Authors, who are founding in Aristotle foundations of the individualism. See: T. Machan, *Classical Individualism, The Supreme Importance of Each Human Being*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998, p. xiii.

²⁵ Hans G. Helms presents the view that Stirner created "the first consistent formulation ... of the ideology of the middle class' and further that Hitler articulated a specifically middle-class ideology and that Stirner-ism and National Socialism are both variations upon the same fascist demons." (H. G. Helms, *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft*, Köln, DuMont Schauberg, 1966, pp. 1-5, 481); to explain the macabre mental short-cut used by me, I will only remind that during World War II in concentration camps the Germans committed barbaric practices consisting among others in manufacturing of soap from human fat, pallets from human hair or lamp shades from human skin with tattoos, what is an obvious example of a radically instrumental treatment of a human.

particular employer instrumentalizes an employee, who becomes for him an instrument to carry out some work, a friend instrumentalizes a friend, who is a receiver and a subject of his or her friendship, a loving man – instrumentalizes the object of his or her love. Egoism is for Stirner an synonym for the authentic interest, authentic relationship and it is not “(...) an opposite of love, opposite of thinking, an enemy of a sweet sex life, enemy of commitment and sacrifice, an enemy of great cordiality, nor an enemy of criticism, an enemy of socialism; in short, an enemy of a real interest: it does not exclude any interest. It is only directed against unselfishness and that what is selfless: not against love, but against sacred (Ger. *heilige*) love, not against thinking, yet against sacred thinking, not against socialists, yet against saint socialists etc. “Exclusiveness” of an egoist, which you would like to explain as “isolation” (*Isoliertheit*), “alienation” (*Vereinzelnung*), “solitude” (*Vereinsammung*), is quite the contrary a full *participation* [M. Stirner emphasizes] in the interest through – exclusion of that, what is selfless”.²⁶ Thus, every man is a subject only for himself or herself, and relationships where some individual interest doesn’t exist are for Stirner too abstract to be real and authentic inter-individual relationships. What all the people, i.a. men living in France and in Australia or Inuits and an inhabitants of Central Africa, have in common is of course the humanity, but this is too abstract fundament to build authentic relationship between them.

What is more, Stirner believes that only perception of individual as a concrete, bodily and spiritual wholeness²⁷ enables him to bear full responsibility for his actions and exclude justification of it neither by relating to noble reasons or objectives nor by relating to obedience to orders and standards. Differently than in the significant part of the previous ethical tradition, the autonomous decision of an individual is for Stirner also a decision made on the basis of emotional reasons and dictated by beliefs and faith. If I perceive myself in concrete categories of interest, then e.g. as an inquisitor I cannot justify taking part in a crime by the service of God, and as

²⁶ “Egoismus ist kein Gegensatz zur Liebe, kein Gegensatz zum Denken, kein Feind lines süßen Liebeslebens, kein Feind der Hingebung Und Aufopferung, kein Feind der innigsten Herzlichkeit, aber auch kein Feind der Kritik, kein Feind des Sozialismus, kurz kein Feind lines wirklichen Interesses: er schliesst kein Interesse aus. Nur gegen die Uninteressiertheit und das Uninteressant ist er gerichtet, nicht gegen die Liebe, sondern gegen die heilige Liebe, nich gegen das Denken, sondern gegen das heilige Denken, nich gegen die Sicialisten, sondern gegen die heiligen Socialisten u.s.w.. Die “Ausschliesslichkeit” des Egoisten, die Man für “Isolirtheit, Vereinzelnung, Vereinsammung” ausgeben möchte, ist im Gegentheil volle Btheiligung am Interessanten durch – Ausschliessung des Uninteressanten.” This citation comes from published by J. H. Mackay in 1914 collection of Stirner’s articles entitled “Max Stirner’s Kleinere Schriften Und Seine Entgegnungen auf die Kritik seines Werkes ‘Der Einzige Und sein Eigenthum’ aus den Jahren 1842-1848”, that was not translated into English language (M. Stirner, *Max Stirner’s Kleinere Schriften und seine Entgegnungen auf die Kritik seines Werkes “Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum” aus den Jahren 1842-1848*, 2. Aufl., Treptow bei Berlin: Bernhard Zack’s Verlag, 1914, p. 144).

²⁷ Welsh, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

an executioner – by the service to the State. Of course it has the consequence, that even as a saint or a national hero I cannot demand common gratitude, because in the perspective presented by Stirner, both of these attitudes are grounded on subjectivistically understood egoism.²⁸

3. Spontaneous order in the society of egoists

Therefore, the subjectivistically understood egoism not only does not break up inter-human relations, but it simply establishes them. Similarly to philosophical tradition starting from Mandeville, through Hobbes, Holbach, Helvetius, Smith and Bentham to Ayn Rand, Stirner defines egoism also as a self-preservation instinct and a will of providing oneself with as good conditions of existence as possible.²⁹ In this realistic tradition, a human is understood as interested above all in himself or herself, his or her own survival and good, and in the second place and alternatively – in survival and good of other people. Apart from Hobbes's case, who adds a Machiavellian element to it, the assumption of egoism in this tradition does not imply an universality of murderous instincts (leading to continuous “war of every one against every one”) and an necessary social atomization³⁰. “What in the whole world” – asks Stirner – “does the egoism have in common with “isolation” (*Isolirung*)? Do I (Ego) become an egoist owing to the fact that I avoid people? Yes, I isolate and alienate myself, but I am not egoistic because of that not by inches more than Others, who stay among people enjoying their company”.³¹ In other words, egoism does not

²⁸ J. Jenkins, “Max Stirner’s Egoism”, in *Heythrop Journal* 50(2), 2009, p. 247.

²⁹ The view regarding egoism as a main reason of human’s action and a sign of a healthy self-preservation instinct, that leads to cooperation and constitutes a bond of intra-human relations is characteristic mostly for the tradition of Anglo-Saxon empiricism, on which rely also such libertarians as for example Ayn Rand. See e. g. T. Hobbes, “De Corpore Politico”, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury in XI Volumes*, Vol. IV, London, John Bohn, 1839-45, p. 83; B. de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, New York, Capricorn Books, 1962, p. 41; A. Rand, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Hobbes combines conviction about egoistic nature of a human with Machiavellian assumption that a human is in fact evil and prone to violence: “Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.” (T. Hobbes, *Leviathan...*, *op. cit.*, p. 77/78).

³¹ “Was in aller Welt hat aber der Egoismus mit der Isolirtheit zu Schaffen. Werde Ich (Ego) dadurch z.B. ein Egoist, dass Ich die Menschen fliehe? Ich Isolire oder vereinsame Mich allerdings, aber egoistischer bin Ich dadurch nich um ein Haar mehr als Andere, die unter den Menschen bleiben und Ihres Umgangs sich freuen”. M. Stirner, *Max Stirner’s Kleinere...*, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

prevent people from being at the same time a capable of cooperation social beings (what is seen even at Hobbes – social contract is a formula of cooperation).

For Stirner an egoistic individual is simultaneously a social being and it is egoism that encourages him or her to seek for authentic closeness of another man. Therefore, likewise as Aristotle, Stirner convinces “Not isolation or being alone, but society, is man’s original state. Our existence begins with the most intimate conjunction, as we are already living with our mother before we breathe; when we see the light of the world, we at once lie on a human being’s breast again, her love cradles us in the lap, leads us in the go-cart, and chains us to her person with a thousand ties. Society is our *state of nature*”.³² Community is our natural instinct, natural need and necessity. It provides us not only with fulfillment of spiritual and emotional needs, which all of us have, but also allows us to multiply our strength so that we can achieve those goals, which we would have never achieved alone. Associations established for reaching such objectives, that we spontaneously create within the framework of free social practice, Stirner defines as “unions of egoists” (*Verein der Egoisten*).

These are collectivities of an utilitarian nature, professing the reciprocity principle and strategy “tit for tat”: “(...) I would rather be referred to men’s selfishness than to their ‘kindnesses’, their mercy, pity, etc. The former demands *reciprocity* (as thou to me, so I to thee), does nothing ‘gratis’, and may be won and—*bought*”.³³ Every member of such an association simultaneously uses and is being used. Joining the “association” individuals agree to such exploitation. However, if such an association ceases to fulfill ends, with which an individual identifies, then the association is no longer useful for him/her and he or she resigns from the association. A sine qua non of the “union of egoists” is a voluntary character of participation in it. “For who has seen that egoists associated anytime there, where one of them was a slave or an owner of the body of the other one? Indeed, egoists exist in such a community and in so far it could be seemingly called an “egoistic union”; however, slaves joined this association undoubtedly not out of egoism and in their egoistic hearts they are rather against this “beautiful” association. (...). Societies, in which the needs of ones are met at the expense of others, in which for instance ones can fulfill the need for calm by the fact that others must work to the point of fainting, or they live a prosperous life thanks to others’ living in poverty and dying of hunger; or they lead a wanton lifestyle since others are so stupid to live in misery (...) are religious societies, communities held in sacred respect by law, statute and all formalities or ceremonies of justice”.³⁴ “Free riding” is eliminated in such unions by their ad hoc and dynamic

³² *Idem, The Ego...*, *op. cit.*, p. 406/407.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 413.

³⁴ “Haben sich die “Egoisten” vereint, wo Einer des Andern Sklave oder Leibeigener ist? Es sind zwar Egoisten in einer solchen Gesellschaft, und in sofern könnten sie mit einigen Anschein ein ‘egoistischer Verein’ genannt werden; aber die Sklaven haben wahrlich nicht aus Egoismus diese Gesellschaft aufgesucht und sind vielmehr in ihrem egoistischen Herzen gegen diese schönen ‘Vereine’(...).

character. Somebody, who wants to use strength of others without reciprocity, is simply expelled from the union in such a way that all others, who still want to cooperate, cease to enter into any relationships with him. Contrary to formalized social structures, e.g. a state, where relationships are maintained by the external coercion and imposed standards of behavior and consists in unilateral exploitation (for example taxes), in the union of egoists relationships between members are shaped only by the members themselves, by their individual interests and needs.

So it turns out that “the wild freedom to place a knife in somebody’s abdomen”, within the framework of the union of egoists will be practically excluded by the spontaneous self-limitation and socialization of its members. “But in reference to *liberty* State and union are subject to no essential difference” – asserts Stirner – “The latter can just as little come into existence, or continue in existence, without liberty’s being limited in all sorts of ways, as the State is compatible with unmeasured liberty. Limitation of liberty is inevitable everywhere, for one cannot get *rid* of everything”.³⁵ These limitations are forced by a will of effective implementation of goals by everyone. These individuals, who are incapable of imposing such restraints on themselves and consequently obeying to them, lose the ability to reach goals, which are impossible to achieve alone. Thus, they also lose a possibility of meeting many fundamental needs like for instance a need for security, fulfillment of which is only possible with the agreement with others. Stirner believes that joining such a union of security with somebody, who is incapable of obeying rules of security, is most often a result of an error of our assessment, correction of which is only a matter of time. Of course, similarly as in existing states, in the above described model of social relationships individuals can never feel fully safe. Nevertheless, according to Stirner, such a constant vigilance is a beneficial phenomenon that stimulates human activity and enterprise. Continuous competition in seeking new strategic alliances for effective fulfillment of your own needs and security enables individuals not to fall into stagnancy. So it is an psychological argumentation, in which competition is perceived as a beneficial factor of human development. Moreover, we can read this element of Stirner’s conception as a factor, which evolutionary game theory calls a “threat”, i. e. a threat necessary for shaping long-term cooperation strategies.

For Stirner spontaneously evolving “unions of egoists” constitute the most natural and at the same time the most perfect formula of collective human existence. The lack of coercion in the objective sense distinguishes them from the state. The lack of

Gesellschaften, in welchen die Bedürfnisse der Einen auf Kosten der Andern befriedigt werden, in denen z.B. die Einen das Bedürfniss der Ruhe dadurch befriedigen können, das die Andern bis zur Erschlaffung arbeiten müssen, ode rein Wohlleben dadurch führen, das die Andere kümmerlich leben, ja wohl gar verhungern; oder prassen, weil Andere so thöricht sind zu darben (...) vielmehr eine religiöse Gesellschaft, eine Ceremonien der Gerechtigkeit in heiligen Respect gehaltene Gemeinde ist.” *Idem*, *Max Stirner’s Kleinere...*, *op. cit.*, p. 163/164.

³⁵ *Idem*, *The Ego...*, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

coercion in the subjective sense – from the society. “The union will assuredly offer a greater measure of liberty, as well as (and especially because by it one escapes all the coercion peculiar to State and society life) admit of being considered as “a new liberty””.³⁶ In Stirner’s opinion, the society is also oppressive, which results among others from established, static rules and social norms, by which the society is governed. Therefore creation of moral standards in the “union of egoists” – distinguished from state and society - must be based on mutual agreements between its members, interested in pursuing their own interests and maximizing their own benefits. Stirner presents here an early form of the conception, which is now developed by such contemporary libertarian thinkers like David Gauthier. Gauthier’s ethically naturalist project, presented in *Morals by Agreement*, starts from the assumption of moral vacuum, from which - using compromises and logic of iterated “prisoner’s dilemmas” – emerges a contractual morality, being an result of permanent and free cooperation between members of society.³⁷ For Stirner such morality has always a dynamic and spontaneous character and its development never definitely stops, adapting its norms to the changing social conditions and goals of members of the union of egoists. It can be never definitely ossified and established, because it means an inability to change it according to will of its members and such an inability would convert the union of egoists in the state or society and ruin the sheer sense of its creation, which is a simplifying of relations between really existing individuals. Using the metaphor derived from new institutional economics, it can be said that the sole sense of developing of such a minimal moral standards may be the lowering of transaction costs of the mutual cooperation.

In this vision of minimal social organization, Stirner doesn’t find any place for social institutions exceeding these dynamic standards and rules of morality being the minimum necessary to cooperation. Looking from this deeply anarchic point of view the state and its oppressive statutory laws are of course completely excluded as the norms regulating behavior of the members in the union of egoists. What’s more, subjectivism of Stirner’s approach excludes not only obeying statutory laws but also natural laws, because they have a supra-individual, abstract and objective character, and as such they can produce excessive coercion. The norms of the natural law are generally independent from the will of the society members, who in fact have no direct impact on their content. It makes this norms imposed and authoritarian. However, Stirner’s conception is radically antiauthoritarian, and as such, anarchist in the basic meaning of the term of anarchism, because of the rejection of each supra-individual authority. It rejects not only the authority of statutory law, but also authority produced by social institutions such as natural law, morality and religion. From this point of view accepted are only limitations imposed by a voluntary deci-

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 409/410.

³⁷ D. Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968.

sion or agreement, being in perfect accordance with the own interest and needs of an individual. *Property rights*, if understood as an element of spontaneous order, i. e. the set of useful rules of conduct dynamically regulating the course of free inter-individual practices and serving protection of an individual's ownership, are accepted by Stirner. However, at the moment when these rules converts into abstract universal standards of behavior, being independent from the will of union members, they become another source of the external authority and excessive coercion. At the moment they are no more useful for members of the union of egoists. Thus, such an attitude towards *property rights* does not mean questioning their common validity, but only rejection of dogmatism in their understanding.³⁸

4. Conclusions

Stirner's conception could be perceived as a post-romantic correction, on the one hand, of a psychological utilitarianism, and on the other hand – of the dogmatism of these Enlightenment concepts, which are based on the natural law theory.³⁹ From the representatives of utilitarianism such as J. Bentham or J. S. Mill, Stirner adopts the assumption of maximizing benefits, but at the same time he rejects the utilitarian assumption, that human preferences, needs, goals and values can be expressed in the language of the universal, common and objective categories. For him, needs and preferences in the social sphere are changeable and impossible to define unambiguously and universally, and human conduct is dependent on variable, subjective, individual criteria and motives, which cannot be captured into any static principles and rules.⁴⁰ Therefore, he is convinced that there is no such possibility to determine positively any set of universal human goals and aspirations, and consequently, there is no possibility to define universally the human nature, as Enlightenment thinkers do. So if you can intuitively say about a human, that he or she aims to maximization of his or her own benefit, then you are not able to create a universal utilitarian calculus, and thus it is also impossible to establish any static and universal institution (e.g. properly organized state), that would provide such a maximization. Thus, if we want to institutionally guarantee this maximization, then the only way is to offer freedom to individuals, let them to conform to the principles and practices of "*laissez faire*".

However, we must remember that for Stirner freedom can be understood in a lot of various ways, and its positive content is dependent only on the subjective aspirations, goals, strengths and abilities of each individual. Consequently, there is no possibility to fall into Rousseau's paradox of "forcing to freedom", which is connected

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 326 ff.

³⁹ For more details see: M. Chmieliński, *Max Stirner. Jednostka, Społeczeństwo, Państwo* [Max Stirner. *The Individual, the Society, the State*], Kraków, Księgarnia Akademicka, 2006, p. 9.

⁴⁰ M. Stirner, *Max Stirner's Kleinere...*, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

with metaphysical (in Stirner's opinion - "theological") perspectives of positive freedom forcing us to act only in accordance with the "only true" content of it. This manner of understanding freedom – as a full liberty of choice of action, or not restrained decision-making autonomy of an individual, excludes putting it in the categories of natural law. Natural law theories assume for Stirner adopting the metaphysical categories and unnecessary fictions like for instance the assumption that freedom of the one individual is to be internally limited by the freedom of the other, whereas it is only the power, which limits it. In other words, it is ours everyday experience, which excludes such a metaphysical limitations of human behavior. It is assessed not only by war crimes but also by common, ordinary offences and everyday's violations of freedom. Hence, we adopt metaphysical conceptions of freedom which is limited by the equal freedom of others only *sola fide*, i. e. similarly to religious dogmas. Stirner does not want to continue this metaphysical, "religious" tradition in the defense of freedom of concrete individual (although as I have pointed above, his vision of an individual's freedom in the union of egoists must also be compatible with freedom of other individuals). That's why he adopts the assumption of subjectivist egoism and individual utility as only values being worthy of the unconditional maintenance and the same reasons are also behind his relativisation of any other values, including the value of freedom itself.

We can accuse this Stirner's stance of overlooking the fact that the defense of self-realization and good of human being appealing to the utilitarian category of the maximization of a subjectively understood individual utility, actually results in loosening these goals, which are objects of the defense. The subjectivistic egoism doesn't prevent enslavement of others by the enslaver, who fulfills in this way his or her own egoistic aspirations. It is today easy to imagine such a situation, in which to maximize of our own subjective benefit, we decide to be fully subjected to the power of the soft despotism (of the state or other "master"), because it can ensure the fundamental needs and goals of us (in present-day states we in fact often find ourselves in such a situation). Although such care will be surely tantamount to the enslavement, the majority of our individual needs may be really fulfilled in this soft or "benevolent" despotism. Thus, appealing to the subjective maximization of utility is a very imperfect tool of defense of freedom. Robert Nozick shows the weakness of such an argumentation in his figure of an "utility monster" (enslavement of others in the name of own egoistic desires) and "experience machine". Namely Nozick encourages us to imagine the "experience machine", which would give us the possibility to substitute for our real life by the identical to real, but imagined experiences, which we subjectively recognize solely as pleasant. Assuming that the highest human need is to maximize pleasure and avoid distress (as for example by J. Bentham or J.S. Mill but also by J.Locke)⁴¹, a life in such a machine would have to be the highest end of

⁴¹ J. Bentham, "Rationale of Judicial Evidence", in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, T. VI, Edinburgh,

each human being. Meanwhile, Nozick says, only very few of us would probably be interested in such a life.⁴² It is because it is impossible to reduce a human life to egoistic use based on the utilitarian principle of maximin.

Therefore, defending the real freedom of a particular human individual and avoiding the Rousseauian metaphysical trap of “forcing to freedom”, Stirner has fell into the trap of subjectivism, which consists in impossibility to universalize any postulates. Hence, they all must have subjective, and thus particular dimension. Thus, in his uncompromised striving for the defense of autonomy and self-ownership in the categories of individual utility, Stirner does not perceive that, what libertarians seems to see: that only a kind of the “metaphysical” dogmatism of natural rights theory enables the relatively effective defense of values such as life, freedom and property, which are central values from the egoist self-realization’s perspective. In other words, he does not recognize that even though the Platonic choice between truth and justice in the social sphere – in favor of primacy of dogma of justice – means “hypocrisy”, it is the minimum of hypocrisy being necessary for the protection of

William Tait, 1838-1843, p. 35, 257. Bentham unilaterally connects egoism with hedonism. Defining the notion of interest, he refers to the category of pleasure and distress. He believes that in order to understand what a motive is, you always should look at distress and pleasure. “With respect to goodness and badness, as it is with everything else that is not itself either pain or pleasure, so is with motives. If they are good or bad, it is only on account of their effects: good, on account of their tendency to produce pleasure or avert pain: Bad, on account of their tendency to produce pain, or avert pleasure” (*Idem, Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1823, p. 102). Mill is also convinced about the necessity of relating utilitarianism to psychological hedonism. He writes that “Those who know anything about the matter are aware that every writer, from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained the theory of utility, meant by it, not something to be contradistinguished from pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain; and instead of opposing the useful to the agreeable or the ornamental, have always declared that the useful means these, among other things.” Further he writes: “The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure. To give a clear view of the moral standard set up by the theory, much more requires to be said; in particular, what things it includes in the ideas of pain and pleasure; and to what extent this is left an open question. But these supplementary explanations do not affect the theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded – namely, that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain.” (J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism and On Liberty*, London, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p. 185, 186). According to Locke: “Things then are good or evil, only in reference to pleasure or pain. That we call good, which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain in us.” (J. Locke, “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding”, in *John Locke, Works in Nine Volumes*, Vol I, London, Rivington et al., 1823, p. 216). In my opinion, one of the best analyses of the logical structure of utilitarianism still remains: (J. Plamenatz, *The English Utilitarians*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, New York, Macmillan, 1949).

⁴² R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, New York, Basic Books, 1974, p. 42-45.

justice.⁴³ The justice in the case of libertarians is certainly strictly connected with the protection of freedom and ownership of each individual.

In my opinion, it does not mean that Stirner's project should be seen as a failure.⁴⁴ Similarly as libertarians, Stirner fights with the kind of a political philosophy, which subjects an individual to the state or holistically understood society and therefore makes he or she the slave of social and political institutions. Although, if the main enemy of libertarianism is an ideology supporting contemporary social state (e.g. Rawls) and justifying its "soft despotism", then Stirner's enemy is the absolute Prussian monarchy and connected with it - Hegelian state ideology.⁴⁵ This makes a big difference and determines a kind of used weapon.⁴⁶ We should remember that Hegelianism recognizes the state as a manifestation of higher ethical unity, the authority of which all the members has to be absolutely subordinated, and that this idea was in the beginning of the 20th century used as a source of inspiration i. e. by Italian

⁴³ H. Kelsen, "What is Justice?", in *Collected Essays by Hans Kelsen*, New Jersey, The Lawbook Exchange Union, 2000, p. 82.

⁴⁴ Otherwise: G. Keben, "John Henry Mackay und sein Philosoph", in *Monatsblätter. Organ der 'Breslauer Dichterschule'*, Bd. 16, Heft 12, Dezember, 1890, p. 174; R. W. K. Paterson, *The Nihilistic Egoist Max Stirner*, London-New York-Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 32.

⁴⁵ Hegel in his justification of Prussian monarchical absolutism wrote among others: "In the government — regarded as organic totality — the sovereign power (princiate) is (a) *subjectivity* as the *infinite* self-unity of the notion in its development; — the all-sustaining, all-decreeing will of the state, its highest peak and all-pervasive unity. In the perfect form of the state, in which each and every element of the notion has reached free existence, this subjectivity is not a so-called 'moral person', or a decree issuing from a majority (forms in which the unity of the decreeing will has not an *actual* existence), but an actual individual — the will of a decreeing individual, — *monarchy*. The monarchical constitution is therefore the constitution of developed reason: all other constitutions belong to lower grades of the development and realization of reason." (G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, § 542).

⁴⁶ It is worth mentioning that Stirner is one of few political German writers so unambiguously criticizing the tyranny and calling for granting individuals a right to resist. The vast majority of German authors, and here among others regarded as a liberal Immanuel Kant does not grant such a right to anyone. Mandt and Böhme write among others about sources of this phenomenon. Mandt perceives causes of this phenomenon on the German ground in the lack of knowledge about tyranny and right to resist suitable for e.g. for Anglo-Saxons (Tyrrannislehre, Widerstandsrecht). In connection with it, it has not developed in Germany, according to her, a conviction being one of the quality of a civil society, that within the framework of citizenship there exists also a right to speak against the tyrannical authority. Any objections towards the authority had thus partisan and extra-civic character. They were not perceived as a natural means of the defense of the society, but as means violating licensed social and political order and as such rejected. It is actually because of these reasons, in Mandt's opinion, uprisings were so rare in Germany, and any changes were made centrally, exactly on the initiative of people in power. (H. Mandt, *Tyrrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht. Studien zur deutschen politischen Theorie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt und Neuwied, Luchterhand, 1974, p. 108, 297 and n.; H. Böhme (hrsg.), *Prolegomena zu einer Sozial-und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Deutschland im 19 und 20 Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am M., Suhrkamp, 1968, p. 23).

fascists. It means that the state is evaluated by Hegel extremely highly. For him the state becomes the highest point of reference for the political sphere and therefore, the unique institution being able to dialectically unite two contradictory elements of the social/political sphere: the contractual, economic rationality of the civil society with the traditional, very often irrational elements of community (family). “The State is the self-conscious ethical substance, the unification of the family principle with that of civil society. The same unity, which is in the family as a feeling of love, is its essence, receiving, however, at the same time through the second principle of conscious and spontaneously active volition the form of conscious universality. This universal principle, with all its evolution in detail, is the absolute aim and content of the knowing subject, which thus identifies itself in its volition with the system of reasonableness”.⁴⁷ Thus, the state becomes in Hegel’s view an ultimate universe of the social and political sphere, by which morality, ethic and customs are dialectically absorbed and used for protection of its interests and power. For the consistent individualist like Stirner, this interests and power means of course interests and power of those people, who currently are staying in power or who, as Hegel, are formulating official justifications of power. Thus, we have to remember that the main enemy of Stirner is the philosophy and practice of the bureaucratic Prussian state in the half of the 19th century, which has created one of the most powerful bureaucratic ethos in Europe, one of the aspects of which was the absolute subordination of the individual to the *raison d’etat* and the monarch. It is this concrete Prussian social and political context, which makes Stirner write: “All Things are nothing to me”. Prussian militaristic and bureaucratic monarchy requires full sacrifice from an individual: either in a military or official service, or as a cantonal peasant and factory worker. The service has to be the most important element of life of the member of the Prussian state. The omnipresent, enslaving and oppressive atmosphere of this ethos causes that only a radical resistance against it is possible. The radical enslavement causes the radical resistance. The force of reaction is proportional to the force of action.

⁴⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *op. cit.*, § 535.