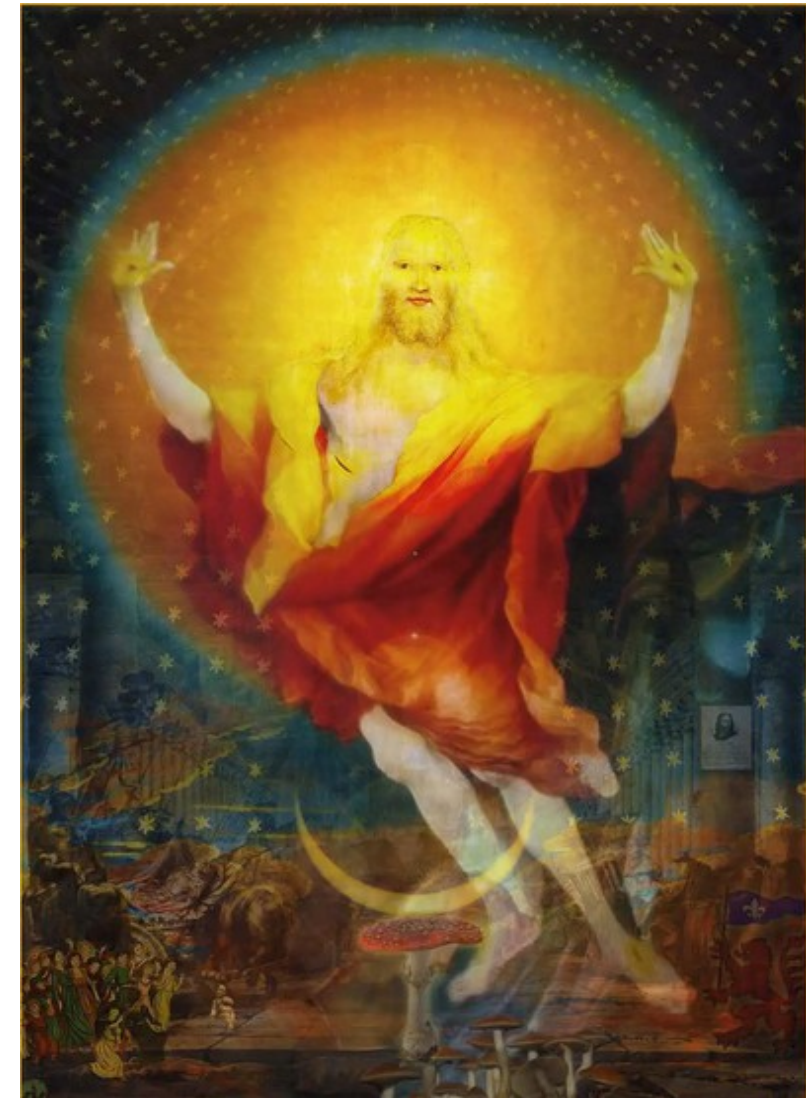


"SAINT MAX"?

The aim of Stirner's magick is to overcome ideas as phantasms so that one can then, if they so choose, use the ideas to enhance their lives and their self-enjoyment. I suppose it would be possible for someone to embrace Stirner's method and choose to continue having a God or gods in their life, but as their servants, their tools in their own self-creation and self-enjoyment.



Peter Lamborn Wilson

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indicated a perhaps unconscious magickal practice to me. And his statement (I believe from Zarathustra): "You have your way. I have mine. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist" is, to my mind, very Taoist in that a "right" way, a "correct" way, and "only" way would have to be able to be named and described. It would require nameable attributes to which one is to conform.

And what Stirner has to say about the unique (der Einzige) in Stirner's Critics is so similar to what the Old Man says about the Tao in the Tao Te Ching. It cannot be named. It is given a name, but the name does not name it. It appears to be a conception, but cannot be conceived. It is empty, without content, beyond thought or conception. Already, in Der Einzige Und Sein Eigentum, the deep parallels between Stirner's way of encountering his worlds and what can be taken from Taoism and Zen (or other forms of Buddhism) has been clear to me for decades. Stirner's Critics simply makes this similarity glaringly obvious.

But as I was creating my translation of Der Einzige, I saw some thing more in it...Der Einzige und Sein, I realized can also be read as a grimoire of spells for casting out the phantasm that can haunt one's mind. The thing is that Stirner does make his arguments, of course, but more significantly in the way he writes this book, there is a method that, if you grasp it, is (to my mind) magical, by which you can take the power out of the phantasm and make it your own. Stirner's nominalism plays a major part in this. So I see Stirner and Nietzsche-as sorcerers without question, mystics perhaps, in the sense of explorers of the "mysteries". But not as adherents to any religion.

Because the aim of Stirner's magick is to overcome ideas as phantasms so that one can then, if they so choose, use the ideas to enhance their lives and their self-enjoyment. I suppose it would be possible for someone to embrace Stirner's method and choose to continue having a God or gods in their life, but as their servants, their tools in their own self-creation and self-enjoyment. [...] All the best, Wolfi

This essay was lifted from the Autonomedia book False Messiah by Peter Lamborn Wilson

however vaguely defined, sine qua non. For us the universe is not "nothing but a meaningless accident" and we care nothing for the atheo-scientist's compensation, the "sense of wonder". Fuck wonder; we demand miracles Magic(k).

We seem in fact to be proposing a Magical Stirnerism. This would bear close resemblance to a Christian Nietzscheanism. A paradox, even a contradiction. Are we not Emersonians?

Since our Philosophical Anarchism is beyond left and right, I feel no compunction in saying that the clearest exposition of Stirner I've ever read is Eumeswil, a strange SciFi novel by the strange psychedelic Heideggerian, Ernst Jünger. I learned my anarchism from both Fourier and Nietzsche, both Landauer and John Henry Mackay, Renzo Novatore and René Guénon.¹⁴¹ Too bad! From Jünger I learned the difference between an anarchist (still attached to the spook of an ISM) and an ANARCH, a true free spirit a pragmatic non-authoritarian who will not wait to be free until "all" are free, but takes as his own whatever freedom is possible here and now. Blake's Satan also serves as a symbol of this self. In esoteric Yezidism, Jesus and Satan are secretly one.

So I do not hesitate to say that a spiritual Stirner-Nietzsche syncretism is not only possible but already real. Nietzsche was the messiah and Max really was a saint!

Oct. 2019-Mar. 2020

Addendum

I sent out a number of copies of this essay in an earlier recension to various Strinerite friends. Only two really responded. Mark Sullivan gave me some useful corrections; and Wolfi Landstreicher, translator of Stirner's *The Unique and Its Property*, sent a beautiful commentary, part of which I would like to quote here:

I read through "St Max" and thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Your writing is lovely. And you do a brilliant "job" of showing the parallels between Stirner's and Nietzsche's perspectives and those of various forms of mystical thought. Nietzsche's poetic play with paganism has always

Preface: Who Was Max Stirner?

When I've mentioned to friends that I'm writing about Max Stirner, the usual response is..."who?" It occurred to me therefore that a little preface of information about him was indispensable. Old-time anarchists can probably skip it.

Stirner's real name was Johann Kaspar Schmidt; he was born Oct 25, 1806, in Bayreuth, Bavaria (later the stomping-ground of Richard Wagner), and died in Berlin, 26 June 1856-a mere fifty years old.

He was educated at the universities of Berlin and Erlangen but took no degree; he hung around with the "Young Hegelians", and apparently knew Engels and maybe Feuerbach and others, and drank with them at Kippel's wine bar. He worked as a high school teacher, never made any money, died broke and forgotten. His one big accomplishment was his book, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenum* (1844), usually translated as *The Ego and Its [or His] Own*; but a more accurate version would be something like "The Unique One and His Own, or His Property". Aside from a few essays this was Stirner's only work. When it was "re-discovered" late in the 19th century by anarchist poet John Henry Mackay it finally "took off" and exercised some influence on anarchist thinkers and activists, was translated into French and English, etc., and impressed a few creative types like Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Max Ernst, as well as bombers, and illegalists like the Bonnot Gang. He also influenced Nietzsche, who told his friend Ida Overbeck that he never mentioned Stirner in print lest he be accused of "plagiarism" [See *Conversations with Nietzsche*, ed. Seth Gilman, 113-114]. (Most commentators have missed this particular smoking gun, but I believe it reveals a great deal about Nietzsche, so I give the exact reference.)

It is impossible to sum up Stirner's unique philosophy in a couple of paragraphs; it requires a few pages. This task was admirably carried out by Rudolph Steiner (surprise!) who was a Stirnerite in his youth, as we shall discuss in more detail later.

In *Individualism in Philosophy* (1899) the future Anthroposophist carries

out a systematic assault on virtually all Western philosophy for its failure to realize the subjectivity of the divine self. He then arrives at Stirner. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) William James characterized religion as "The feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude." [Thanks to Erik Davis for this reference.] Taking this definition as our lodestar, so to speak, what magnetic experiences might link for us the unlikely pair-Max Stirner and religion? Surely he was the epitome of Nineteenth Century atheism? Perhaps not.

What about Rudolph Steiner? the great educator, artist, agronomist, visionary and mystic, etc.? Who would expect that he, of all possible figures, might make the connection we're seeking? Steiner never hid the fact that in his youth he had felt a great attraction to Max Stirner but after all, perhaps he later renounced "Saint Max" and forgot him? Not at all.

Chris Bamford (of SteinerBooks) sent me an unpublished excerpt from a memoir titled "Steiner in Weimar", dealing with his youth (before Theosophy/Anthroposophy) and friendship with John Henry Mackay, author of *The Anarchists*, of the first biography of Max Stirner, and of poetry that Steiner admired. They met and became quite friendly, sharing an interest in Stirner and Nietzsche.

"Partly [in] response" to Mackay's propaganda for the cause of Individualist Anarchism, Steiner wrote a long essay, originally called "Egoism and Philosophy" (1899). An English translation by William Lindeman was published rather obscurely by an Anthroposophist front, Mercury Press (Spring Valley, N.Y., 1989) and Bamford also sent me this.

In an exchange of letters between Steiner and Mackay, Steiner announces his own position thus:

If...I were to say, in the sense in which such things can be decided, whether the term "individualist anarchist" is applicable to me, I would have to answer with an unconditioned "Yes".

Steiner and Mackay agree that one aspect of Stirner's thought disturbs

Immanence IS transcendence. It's duality that's the illusion. The self partakes of reality as much as it needs to.

The symbolique ("convolution") of this non-dualist realization for Christianity would consist in the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. Taken literally as dogma this idea leads to the forbidding of cremation at death, because the flesh must literally persist as really real in order to be raised up at the end of time. For the esotericist the idea may involve an Imaginal or Resurrection body, more akin to light than to matter but ultimately this doctrine valorizes the material itself at its most "dense" and apparent. Matter IS spirit, and vice versa, just as the Emerald Tablet contends.

In art therefore the image of the non-dualist reality would be the Resurrection body of Christ as the emblem and inner truth of the ego, the self itself. For me the perfect example would be the depiction of Christ resurrected in the Isenheim altar by Grünewald, which I have also identified as St Anthony's LSD vision of Jesus as the eternal light. (See illustration in *Gospel of Thomas tract #18*.) One cannot contemplate this image and still speak of the world as "nothing but maya". We participate in this body through the transubstantiation of the eucharist, the form of matter par excellence, the flesh and blood or bread and wine that we ingest and become. Thus we may be permitted to say that the Immanent Body symbolizes the self (ahamkara, ego, etc.); that is to say, it both represents the self and is the self. In a sense this formula eliminates "metaphysics" in the strict sense, which would pertain only to religious systems we've been calling "dualist", systems that posit an abyss or aporia "between" spirit and matter. (Platonism tends toward this position, although rectified Platonism such as that of the Renaissance neo-pagans and Christo-pagans like Bruno and Ficino in fact corrects classical Platonism on precisely this point.)

Our system "telescopes" immanence and transcendence in such Stirnerian spook but a kind of breath of matter, what Bergson called a way that we can admit a spirit (geist, spiritus) that is not a mere an élan vital. I'm afraid we cannot do without this possible entelechy or Holy Ghost; we cannot admit positivist or vulgar technomaniacal modern capitalist (or dialectical!) materialism. We must have a life principle

Conclusion

My teacher of Zen, Toshihiko Izutsu, used to say that ultimately there exist only three basic philosophies of Being:

- 1) Naive realism. The universe that we perceive is real. Animism would constitute the "religious" manifestation of this position.
- 2) Dualism, or anti-realism. "Everything" is an illusion. On one level of course this is simply true. The apple I think I see in fact consists of "nothing but" a few whirling electrons with vast empty spaces in between. But more than that, the dualist must agree that the electrons themselves are illusory-"maya" empty non-Being. Only consciousness is real (i.e. Gnostic Dualism).
- 3) Non-dualism (such as Advaita Vedanta)-i.e., the world is both real and unreal at once. Maya is both illusory and the very substance of the real. The apple is "empty" and yet simultaneously actual and present. We do not share an illusion we share an apple.

The pop version of "eastern wisdom" that can dismiss the world and the Self, its focus as mere illusion, has always annoyed the hell out of me. As far as the three positions are concerned, in fact I prefer position one: the world is exactly as real as it needs to be. "Maya" is the beneficent game the universe plays to give us apples. But if I have to choose between (2) and (3), I opt for not real/ real. Atoms, yes, but gloriously suffused with color and flavor, potential intoxication (cider) each apple a planet of light and delight. So also the self. In one sense an "illusion" but simultaneously the enjoyer (and sufferer) of the supremely real.

Sufism does not simply want to "transcend the ego". It hypothesizes a triple reality: the ego as principle of separation from the real, the ego repentant and in search of the real, the ego as the real (haqiqat). The psychological progression from first to third position, so to speak, can be theorized as the actuality of "religion", literally, getting-relinked-to-the real. The self is the divine principle. Tat Tvam Asi. The kingdom of God is within you, God becomes man that man may become god; after which the question of theism/atheism can be seen as the empty set.

them, namely its possible use as justification for "propaganda of the deed" as terrorist violence which in 1899 was a genuine issue, what with the "illegalists" and bombers and assassins active at that time. Non-violent tactics, of course, can also be derived from Stirner's work, and the friends agreed to embrace them.

Individualism in Philosophy offers a crash course in the history of Western philosophy centered in one central issue: whether the individual is to be seen as the originator of all "divinity" or if the notion of a god is displaced into the universe in some way, as divinity or some other kind of objective absolute. Steiner makes his own position quite clear by ending his survey with Max Stirner and the overthrow of all idols. He also refers to Mackay's *The Anarchists* and Benjamin Tucker's *Instead of a Book-two "bibles" of philosophical individualism*. (Tucker of course first [1907] English translation of *The Ego and His Own*; for a long time it remained the only English version, until 2017 when Wolfi Landstreicher published *The Unique and Its Property* [Baltimore, Underworld Amusements]).

Steiner, then, opts for the human and inner aetiology of the divine, and a superficial reading of the essay might lead to the conclusion that Steiner wrote it as a "card-carrying" atheist. However, we recall that a mystical or "pantheistic" view of the inner deity was expounded by none other than Jesus himself "the Kingdom of God [Heaven] is within you"- etc., etc. Steiner offers a clue to this reading by quoting (twice) the incomparable German mystic Angelus Silesius e.g.:

The rose has no "wherefore?"

It blooms because it blooms.

It pays itself no mind, Asks not if it is seen.

And the Romantic Schiller:

Are you seeking the highest, the greatest? The plant [flower] can teach it to you.

What it is will-lessly, you
Must be will-fully that's it!

In other words, Steiner is hinting quite broadly! that "god" is not an empty set ("There is no god") but rather that subjective consciousness realized mystically, is the divine:

Thou Art That.

For him this is a logical and necessary next step after his warm embrace of Mackay and Stirner.

In his later autobiography, *The Course of My Life* (Chapter 31, included as Appendix II) Steiner makes perfectly clear that he never repudiated Stirner, but rather built on him:

...[B]efore devoting myself publicly to the anthroposophical presentation of the spiritual world, I portrayed the pre-anthropological life of the soul from the most varied points of view. There is no contradiction between them and my stand on Anthroposophy. For the picture of the world that arises is not refuted by Anthroposophy; it is broadened and carried farther by it.

The "value" of Stirner (and Nietzsche) for Steiner, we might say, lies in overcoming the strictures or mental chains of orthodox religion and traditional philosophy to make mysticism one's own property. The thinker who carries out this project (which I call ontological anarchy) will of course appear as a universal heretic to all who cannot share in the Free Spirit. Nevertheless I think we can posit that such a being as the Stirnerite mystic really can exist, and does exist.

This is what Steiner says about (and quotes from) Stirner in his 1899 essay:

Max Stirner, in his book *The Individual and What is His* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*), published in 1844, demanded of the "I" in a radical way that it finally recognize that all the beings it has set above itself in the course of time were cut by it from its own body and set up in the outer world as idols. Every god, every general world reason, is an image of the "I" and has no characteristics different from the human "I."

but both Carroll and Steiner experience Stirner as a mystic.

Dora Marsden

Another Stirnerite Christian should be at least mentioned here. Dora Marsden (1882-1960) rose to some fame as a Suffragette and became editor of *The Freewoman*; then of *The New Freewoman*; and finally of *The Egoist*, in which she pioneered a kind of "feminist Stirnerism". In its short life-span *The Egoist* caused quite a stir in avant garde circles (Ezra Pound served as poetry editor, and published work by H. D., James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, etc.). Marsden seems to have collapsed under the strain. She retired to the country and became a hermit, where she wrote on philosophy and religion. Her work on Christianity was so obscurely published and remains so hard to find that I have been unable to read any of it. She seems to have embraced some personal (and heretical) form of belief. Later, it appears, she lost her mental balance and had to be institutionalized, although she does not seem to have "gone mad". Anyway, she died in the hospital. A biography of her exists (re-published by Underworld Amusements) but more work certainly remains to be done on her.

"...the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov... argues against Christ, who represents a position identical to that of Stirner, that men do not want...freedom." (32)

"...Christ-Stirner's prototypical insurgent..." (53)

"Necessarily, Marx and Engels cannot respond to the mystical, irrationalist core of Stirner's existentialist ontology..." (73)

"Notions such as 'ego' and 'unique' could be described as religious..." (ibid.)

"Ultimately it is [the] noumenal realm, that of the Stirnerian presence, which Dostoevsky seeks to preserve. Science would be justified if it helped man to contact his own mystical depths. But its effect was precisely the opposite, to substitute itself for the hidden god..." (116)

That, in a nutshell, is Carroll's argument for Stirner not as a "vulgar atheist" but as a veiled mystic. Rudolf Steiner makes the same argument as I do throughout this essay.

Many years after the Crystal Palace in 2007-Carroll published a book in which he "comes out" and makes explicit his own unchurched and very heterodox Christianity. The Existential Jesus is a fascinating commentary on the Gospel of Mark; here how ever I will give just one quote that demonstrates how Carroll's Stirnerism became via existentialism the basis for his unique Christianity:

We have now reached the inner sanctum of the Master's radical new conception of the human condition. Everything orbits around living being that of the individual. It is the nucleus that determines all. It is both creator and creation. It is the source the shaper of the constellation of energies that will drive a life and every human life.... Just as Jewish history is made obsolete, so is the external God. Beyond being, there is no independent divinity... (194-195)

Rudolf Steiner gives very nearly an identical account of Stirner's relation to "divine subjectivity". No doubt it's a scandal, or at least a big surprise

And even the concept of the general "I" was extracted from the completely individual "I" of every single person.

Stirner calls upon man to throw off everything general about himself and to acknowledge to himself that he is an individual. "You are indeed more than a Jew, more than a Christian, etc., but you are also more than a man. Those are all ideas; you however, are in the flesh. Do you really believe, therefore, that you can ever become 'man as such?'" "I am man! I do not first have to produce man in myself, because he already belongs to me as all characteristics do." "Only I am not an abstraction alone; I am the all my char in all;...I am no mere thought, but I am at the same time full of thoughts, a thought-world. Hegel condemns what is one's own, what is mine... 'Absolute thinking' is that thinking which forgets that it is my thinking, that I think, and that thinking exists only through me. As 'I,' however I again swallow what is mine, am master over it; it is only my opinion that I can change at every moment, i.e., that I can destroy, that I can take back into myself and can devour." "The thought is only my own when I can indeed subjugate it, but it can never subjugate me, never fanaticize me and make me the tool of its realization." All the beings placed over the "I" finally shatter upon the knowledge that they have only been brought into the world by the "I." "The beginning of my thinking, namely, is not a thought, but rather I, and therefore I am also its goal, just as its whole course is then only the course of my self-enjoyment." In Stirner's sense, one should not want to define the individual.

"I" by a thought, by an idea. For, ideas are something general; and through any such definition, the individual at least logically would thus be subordinated at once to something general. One can define everything else in the world by ideas, but we must experience our own "I" as something individual in us. Everything that is expressed about the individual in thoughts cannot take up his content into itself; it can only point to it. One says: Look into your self, there is something for which any concept, any idea, is too poor to encompass in all its incarnate wealth, something that brings forth the ideas out of itself, but that itself has an inexhaustible spring within itself whose content is infinitely more extensive than everything this something brings forth. Stirner's response is: "The individual is a word and with a word one would after

all have to be able to think something; a word would after all have to have a thought-content. But the individual is a word without thought; it has no thought-content. But what is its content then if not thought? Its content is one that cannot be there a second time and that consequently can also not be expressed, for if it could be expressed, really and entirely expressed, then it would be there a second time, would be there in the 'expression'...only when nothing of you is spoken out and you are only named, are you recognized as you. As long as something of you is spoken out, you will be recognized only as this something (man, spirit, Christian, etc.)." The individual "I" is therefore that which is everything it is only through itself, which draws the content of its existence out of itself and continuously expands this content from out of itself.

This individual "I" can acknowledge no ethical obligation that it does not lay upon itself. "Whether what I think and do is Christian, what do I care? Whether it is human, liberal, humane, or inhuman, unliberal, inhumane, I don't ask about that. If it only aims at what I want, if I satisfy only myself in it, then call it whatever you like: it's all the same to me..." "Perhaps, in the very next moment I will turn against my previous thought; I also might very well change my behavior suddenly; but not because it does not correspond to what is Christian, not because it goes against eternal human rights, not because it hits the idea of mankind, humanity, humaneness in the face, but rather because I am no longer involved, because I no longer enjoy it fully, because I doubt my earlier thought, or I am no longer happy with my recent behavior." The way Stirner speaks about love from this point of view is characteristic. "I also love people, not merely some of them but everyone. But I love them with the consciousness of egoism; I love them because love makes me happy; I love because loving is natural for me; because I like it. I know no 'commandment of love...' To this sovereign individual, all state, social, and church organizations are fetters. For, all organizations presuppose that the individual must be like this or like that so that it can fit the community. But the individual will not let it be determined for him by the community how he should be. He wants to make himself into this or that. J. H. Mackay, in his book *Max Stirner, His Life and Work*, has expressed what matters to Stirner: "The annihilation, in the first place, of those foreign powers which seek in the

sense, Isaiah "combats idolatry" because "it places the object above the subject, declaring the former a sanctum worthy of adoration by the latter." "YHWH, I-HE, floods the spiritual earth with spiritual light. The new creation is an ideal subjective creation without any...objectivism about it...I AM I-HE and nothing more and nothing else." Thus in three decades Gordin has managed to build a bridge between Stirner and Isaac Luria-a sort of Meister Eckhart "bridge". I wonder if Gersholm Scholem knew about this!

John Carroll

The Anglo-Australian sociologist-economist John Carroll long ago wrote a book highly valued by nascent Stirnerites of my generation: *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace: The Anarcho-Psychological Critique: Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky* (1974). Altogether excellent, the book's chief value lies in its comparative analysis of Stirner and Nietzsche. Although Carroll missed the Ida Overbeck anecdote that would have proved his point, his purely structural critique of the two philosophers (in the first few chapters of *Crystal Palace*) amply demonstrated Nietzsche's debt to Stirner.

Here however I'd like to investigate a sub-text of *Crystal Palace* that escaped its readers in the '70s but later became obvious in light of subsequent work by Carroll, namely his premonition that Stirner could be read on a kind of "esoteric level" as a Christian thinker or mystic. The same can be said of Nietzsche: although he railed and ranted against Christianity he later became (post-mortem and paradoxically) a major inspiration for the "God is Dead" school of Christian theology. In both cases the link, as we shall see, lies in existentialism.

From *Crystal Palace*:

"Key passages in the work of both Stirner and Dostoyevsky echo Christ's parables." (15)

"Like many of Christianity's critics, and in particular Nietzsche, Stirner does not attack the figure of Christ, but his Church, and its religiosity." (25)

force of mutuality created by individuals. The concept of deity conceptualized as a vision of the I (Ikh) was expressed by constant social and cultural evolution. The process toward individualism and eventually to collective inter-individualism'... entailed a synthesis between individuality and mutuality...

"Gordin's concept of God shifts from antireligious and anti clerical barbs hurled against a supreme being to instrumental interpretations of God as the foundation for a higher rationality and ethics to a phenomenological interpretation comparable to Rudolf Otto's notion of a supernatural 'Sensus Numinis'." In fact Gordin goes so far as to draw "on esoteric images such as the ingestion of light" a purely Kabbalist concept ("Yiddish Radicalism" 25-27).

In Clarion and Problems we can follow the development of Gordin's fascinating variation or enlargement of Stirner's "Union of egoists" into a voluntary-social "inter-individualism". "Egoism is not selfishness, but self-love subjoined with self-mastery" (Clarion, I/1). If one owns one's own selfhood then solidarity with others and with Nature becomes possible without the prison of ideology (see "Egohood" in *ibid.* I/9-10) "an association without the abrogation of the inalienable and inviolate right of the individuals to secession and independence" (*ibid.* I/2).

As Gordin and his comrades move closer to a heterodox spiritual position they coin the delightful term egosophy (*ibid.* I/11-12): "Go, awake the elements in their remote sleep on the lap of Eternity, gather them into units of energy, into circles of activities and cycles of everlasting creation. And that great variety combine, personify, coordinate into one sentence of egotics valid for the planet and atoms" (*ibid.*). Self or ego is a kind of Adam, Self-life, the thing-in-itself, that ate of the tree of "naked self-thingness...the tree of inner-knowledge" (*ibid.*). Finally, "ego is holy" and perfect as "man will be perfect" (*ibid.*, II/2[14]). Judaism itself is now seen as "Monoegoism", the I Am of Yahweh himself, the "I-hood" of man (Problems I/1).

In the last issue of Problems seen by me (II/1, 1949) Gordin goes so far as to praise Isaiah's prophecy as "the glorification of the supreme EGO, the idea of the divine I-hood, the very essence of the Covenant". In this

most varied ways to suppress and destroy the 'I'; and in the second place, the presentation of the relationships of our intercourse with each other, how they result from the conflict and harmony of our interests." The individual cannot fulfill himself in an organized community, but only in free intercourse or association. He acknowledges no societal structure set over the individual as a power. In him everything occurs through the individual. There is nothing fixed within him. What occurs is always to be traced back to the will of the individual. No one and nothing represents a universal will. Stirner does not want society to care for the individual, to protect his rights, to foster his well-being, and so on. When the organization is taken away from people, then their intercourse regulates itself on its own. "I would rather have to rely on people's self-interest than on their 'service of love,' their compassion, their pity, etc. Self-interest demands reciprocity (as you are to me, thus I am to you), does nothing 'for nothing,' and lets itself be won and bought." Let human intercourse have its full freedom and it will unrestrictedly create that reciprocity which you could set up through a community after all, only in a restricted way. "Neither a natural nor a spiritual tie holds a society [or "union"] (Verein) together, and it is no natural or spiritual association (Bund). It is not blood nor belief (i.e., spirit) that brings it about. In a natural association such as a family, a tribe, a nation; yes, even mankind individuals have value only as specimens of a species or genus; in a spiritual association such as a community or church the individual is significant only as a part of the common spirit; in both cases what you are as an individual must be suppressed. Only in a society ["union"] can you assert yourself as an individual, because the society does not possess you, but rather you possess or use it."

The path by which Stirner arrived at his view of the individual can be designated as a universal critique of all general powers that suppress the "I." The churches, the political systems (political liberalism, social liberalism, humanistic liberalism), the philosophies they have all set such general powers over the individual. Political liberalism establishes the "good citizen"; social liberalism establishes the worker who is like all the others in what they own in common; humanistic liberalism establishes the "human being as human being." As he destroys all these powers, Stirner sets up in their ruins the sovereignty of the

individual. "What all is not supposed to be my cause! Above all the good causes, then God's cause, the cause of mankind, of truth, of freedom, of humaneness, of justice; furthermore the cause of my folk, of my prince, of my fatherland; finally, of course, the cause of the spirit and a thousand other causes. Only my cause is never supposed to be my cause. Let us look then at how [they] handle their cause for whose cause we are supposed to work, to devote ourselves, and to wax enthusiastic. You know how to proclaim many basic things about God, and for thousands of years have investigated 'the depths of the Divinity' and looked into His heart, so that you are very well able to tell us how God Himself conducts 'the cause of God' that we are called to serve. And you also do not keep the Lord's conduct secret. What is His cause then? Has He, as is expected of us, made a foreign cause, the cause of truth and love, into His own? Such lack of understanding enrages you and teach us that God's cause is, to be sure, you the cause of truth and love, but that this cause cannot be called foreign to Him because the assumption that God could be like us poor worms in promoting a foreign cause as His own. 'God is supposed to take on the cause of truth when He is not Himself the truth?' He takes care only of His cause, because He is the all in all, everything is also His cause; we, however, we are not the all in all, and our cause is small and contemptible indeed; therefore we must 'serve a higher cause.'-Now, it is clear that God concerns Himself only with what is His, occupies Himself only with Himself, thinks only about Himself, and has His eye on Himself; woe to anything that is not well pleasing to Him. He serves nothing higher and satisfies only Himself. His cause is a purely egotistical cause. How do matters stand with mankind, whose cause we are supposed to make into our own? Is its cause perhaps that of another, and does mankind serve a higher cause? No, mankind looks only at itself, mankind wants to help only mankind, mankind is itself its cause. In order to develop itself, mankind lets peoples and individuals torment themselves in its service, and when they have accomplished what mankind needs, then, out of gratitude, they are thrown by it onto the manure pile of history. Is the cause of mankind not a purely egotistical cause?" Out of this kind of a critique of everything that man is supposed to make into his cause, there results for Stirner that "God and mankind have founded their cause on nothing but themselves. I will then likewise found my cause upon myself, I who like God am nothing from anything else, I, who am

Abba Gordin

There have been plenty of Jewish anarchists, some utterly atheistic but others adhering to some part of the religious tradition but most of them appear to have followed some socialist or communalist or communist form of anti-authoritarianism. One very original thinker, however, Abba Gordin (1887-1964), along with a few followers, took a Stirnerite egoist position and yet also embraced aspects of Jewish spirituality and mysticism.

Gordin was born in Russia and took part in the 1905 revolution. He then emigrated to New York, where he involved himself in the great old anarcho-Yiddish weekly newspaper, Fraye Arbeter Stime ("Free Voice of Labor") and The Workmen's Circle-which still existed in my activist days, when it hosted the monthly Anarchist forum of the Libertarian Book Club, to which I belonged. Gordin also founded and edited two critical journals in New York-The Clarion (1933-34) and Problems (1948-51). Later, after the founding of the Israeli state, he emigrated again, to Tel Aviv, where he carried on with his anarchist work which, as we know, utterly failed to take root in that new soil.

Thanks to M. Sullivan, assiduous collector of rare and forgotten Individualist literature, I was able to read some of Clarion and Problems; I also consulted an interesting essay, "Yiddish Radicalism, Jewish Religion: Controversies in the Fraye Arbeter Shtime, 1937-1945" by L. Türk and J. Cohen, 2018 (in Christoyannopoulos and Adams, ed.'s, Essays in Anarchism and Religion II, Stockholm University Press).

In 1918 Gordin (and his brother Velfke) already propounded an anti-Capitalist anti-Marxist "Pan-Anarchism", denouncing both "the rule of heaven and the rule of nature angels, spirits, devils, molecules, atoms, ethers, the laws of God-Heaven and the laws of Nature, force, the influence of one body on another...—all this is invented, formed, created by society." Marxism was simply another religious illusion, with Marx and Engels "the Magi of Scientific socialist black magic."

However, even then Gordin expressed some sympathy for a kind of heretical version of the core values of Jewish ethics. "God is seen as a

Zen

The Zen term MU, sometimes translated as nothing, exemplifies a certain (let's call it) taste of nihilism-maybe "holy nihilism"-that can seem to permeate Buddhism. This tendency in turn has been interpreted in Japan as somehow related to Stirner's egoism. An individualist-anarchist publishing house called Enemy Combatant once put out a few pamphlets on this subject. Keiji Nishitani, ("Nihilism as Egoism"), exemplifies the strange conjunction of Stirner and Zen.

"Highly regarded in the history of Japanese philosophy, Keiji Nishitani (1900-1990) was one of the foremost Eastern minds grappling with the challenge of Western nihilism and its relation to the Buddhist concept of sunyata (emptiness/voidness). At the center of his philosophy lies what he called 'the abyss of nihility' the absence of any meaningful relationship between the human being and the indifferent, impersonal world into which it is randomly cast. Rather than ignore this abyss, Nishitani sought to go deeper into it. As he once put it, 'the fundamental problem of my life has always been, put simply, the overcoming of nihilism through nihilism.'"

Nishitani was allied with the so-called Kyoto school of philosophy (and with Soto Zen), and conceived of a syncretic system that included Mahayana Buddhism, Meister Eckhart, Taoism, Nietzsche and Heidegger as well as Stirner.

Enemy Combatant also introduced another Japanese thinker to American anarchists Tsuji Jun: Japanese Dadaist, Anarchist, Philosopher, Monk by E. J. Taylor. He combined some of the preoccupations of the Kyoto school with a dionysian bohemian poetic career that exemplified egoism at its wildest sort of a Zen Renzo Novatore! [Thanks to the Union of Egoists and Mark Sullivan for reminding me of these two figures.]

my all, I who am the single one."

And Steiner ends his precis by saying, "This is Stirner's path" an indication of the guru-like effect of Stirner, even for avowed atheists.

It should be noted that there exists the possibility of a violent and authoritarian selfish reading of Stirner, which was carried out by certain burglars and fascists like Alexandre Jacob, Ernst Jünger and even Mussolini-but Stirner and J. H. Mackay agreed that a pacific or non-violent version is possible. Stirner says that he "loves" his friends and takes pleasure in helping them; that "altruism" can be a part of his philosophy because he makes even altruism his "own", his "property". This concept leads to his slogan "Union of Egoists", which takes the place for him of a social theory, a principle for organization.

I urge you to read Stirner himself. Contrary to most critics (who usually don't bother) he is not boring on the contrary, I find him both luminous and very funny. Try it!

Saint Max

Marx called Stirner "Saint Max" in order to make fun of him. Just to be perverse, let us entertain (if only for a moment) the ironic notion that Stirner may in fact deserve a sort of canonization.

Obviously Stirner and Nietzsche can both be read as doctrinaire 19th century atheists. To deny all "spooks" is surely to deny "God"; while Zarathustra's claim that God has been murdered, and Nietzsche's claim to be the Anti-Christ, enact a stranger form of unbelief based on the deconstruction of belief, rather than simple denial.

But we should recall that not all "religions" (in the broadest sense of the term) are rooted in ontology determined by an absolute divinity. Famously Buddhism has been called the "atheist religion"; gods exist but need enlightenment just like humans; and gods die.

If divinity be purely immanent as in pantheism and not at all transcendent, if God and Nature are to be identified as in Spinoza, then

we need to expand our consciousness beyond the dualism/monotheism dichotomy

Lucretius never claims to be an atheist. Gods exist but cannot affect our becoming. *De rerum naturae* is presented under the sign of Venus. It's not clear (to me) what the theological ramifications of this strange idea might consist of but crude atheism doesn't seem the most juste.

The idea that the Self itself may be considered divine appears integral to the Vedic tradition, perhaps especially in the pre-Upanishadic period, but clearly in the Upanishads too. Isn't the doctrine that Atman and Brahman are one Upanishadic? And we note that Nietzsche approved of the Rig Veda, no doubt for its "will to power" aspect centered on Indra as divine Man, hero, consumer of the sacrifice but certainly not a transcendent God. The idea (i.e., the god) of the contract (Varuna) occupies the place of any moral altruism. The goal of life remains intoxication or ecstasy, over and above the ritual duty (rta) one owes to creation simply by existing. All being is eventually sacrificed and eaten; there are no sacred cows on any ontological or hierarchical plane. Given the hypothesis that gods exist in fact that "everything" has its divinity-I believe the Rig Veda to be the most "existentialist" of the great scriptures (in the sense of the term as I mean it, which will become obvious, I hope.)

What about Confucianism? The Analects recognizes gods and spirits but says it's better not to get involved with them. Ritual itself gives meaning to life (ritual as "will to power"? or perhaps more "will-to-order" than will to power.) Mencius, not Confucius is the sage of altruism; for Confucius it suffices to attain social harmony for its own sake, not from any moral imperative. But in its way Confucianism seems the most conservative of all religions; appears to lack the ecstatic principle common to both the Rig Veda, and the Stirner-Nietzsche version of anarchism. The existentialist choice here tends toward order and serenity- although I believe the Analects contains a secret aspect involved with friendship and joy if only the mild joy of fishing! 12
Now we come to Taoism, and to the famous Wang Chu Tractate. The Tractate suggests that even if one could save the world by harming one hair of one's own head, one should refuse. Pleasure is everything there

are killing Sufis, Yezidis, Christians, Shiites, etc. as we speak nor the wishy-washy "normative Muslims" whom the Western liberals have adopted as poster-children to show how non "Islamophobic" they are.

Anyone who has spent time in the East with dervishes (and sad hus) knows that not all of them are seeking enlightenment through asceticism many (most?) are vagabonds and hedonists who'd rather bask in the shade and smoke hashish than work or pray. Of course Occidental Orientalists believe that "real Sufism" is pious and orthodox and far from the scandal and license of the Qalandars. Western scholars want eastern mystics to act like Christian puritans to prove their bona-fides but the reality is that "voluntary poverty" is a form of pleasure, that "aimless wandering", listening to music, dancing, drinking and smoking costs little or nothing and are great luxuries. Real mystics (not text-book cut-outs) have been using entheogens for at least 4000 years, on textual evidence, and no doubt really for a million or so. True mystics embrace the world, love, and delight but not the "worldly world" of war, trade, discipline, self-denial, world-hatred and other "religious" virtues.

Try to imagine Jesus and his union of egoist apostles as wandering dervishes as performing the free-spirit programme that Stirner only outlined as philosophy in *The Unique One and His Own*. "Will to power" as carelessness. An extreme case would be the Aghoris, "Hindu" sad hus who overcome all religious dread all "spooks" by breaking every taboo and law-including the praxis of ritual cannibalism. 140 "Stain your prayer carpet with wine", as Hafez expresses it. "When I kiss my boy friend I kiss God" as one anonymous dervish told the Arch-Bigot Ibn Taymiyya (who promptly had him executed). "Ana" I-Haqq, I am the Real, as Hallaj said (before they crucified him in Baghdad). "Satan is the perfect Lover", as Hamadani said before they burned him at the stake. Shams-i Tabriz they murdered and threw down a well (putting out the Sun-shams). And we know what happened to Jesus. Perfect freedom is a risky bet.

detachment and voluntary poverty ("locusts and honey") and the selfness of prayer, free of the boredom and responsibility of the "civilizee" (as Fourier said)—of the bourgeois. Jesus too is seen as a vagabond, a hobo, a holy bum.

Among modern theological scholars the writer who comes closest to this notion is Morton Smith in *Jesus the Magician* supplemented by his image of Jesus the homosexual in *The Secret Gospel*, a book that has almost been made to disappear by outraged puritans and pedants. Scandalous Jesus, a kind of gay Simon Magus, snake oil salesman whose snake oil actually works. God in a human body is already a huge scandal for monotheism—flesh is already "redeemed", we are freed of sin as matter itself is freed of its heaviness, as it becomes sheer spirit (and vice versa). The Kingdom of God (or Heaven) is within you; God becomes man in order that men may become God-138 "Theosis", apotheosis, incarnation. The paradigmatic miracle of Jesus is perhaps changing water into wine, making pleasure sacred in itself, a very tantric idea, and of course the essence of Alchemy. The later anti-sexuality of the Church—which has done more to lead us to apocalypse (death of earth) than any other religious disease, I would argue, derives from Paul—a puritan half-overthrown by the temptation of antinomian freedom, who rejects it for crypto-dualist gnosticism. I prefer Reich's orgone-Jesus if I'm allowed to choose. The earth would be green as the cloak of Hermes, or Khezer, if only God had not forsaken him. And us.

To gain perspective on this admittedly minoritarian view of Christianity, we can look at Sufism, especially in its most heterodox or downright heretical manifestations like the wild Qalandars (See *God's Unruly Friends*, by Karamanli); or the extremist Mevleviyya who seem to follow Shams-i Tabriz even more than Rumi (wine, hashish, opium, boys), or the Bektashis who perhaps descend from them (see *The Bektashi Order*, Birge); or the Malamatiyya or "Blameworthy Ones" who break the Law in order to hide their spiritual station. Their contemporary descendants in Turkey are said to consider Nietzsche one of their Shaykhs!139 These dervishes are the true disciples of Jesus the maker of water into wine, and of course also the Zoroastrians as wine-makers, and constitute the real esoteric tradition in (or against) Islam, not the puritanical Salafis and Wahhabis who now reign over the religion and

exist no higher values. If a sterner-than-Stirner exposition of pure Egoism were ever written, I don't know it. But is the Tractate really "Taoist"? Is it embedded in the genuinely Taoist text, the *Lich Tzu*, merely by some chance binding together of various unrelated manuscripts? Clearly, on the evidence of style and content, it was written by its own unique author, Wang Chu, whoever he may have been, and not by the other author(s) of the *Lieh Tzu*. Why do we find him in this company?

The three foundational texts of so-called "philosophical Taoism" include the *Lich Tzu*, although it is usually considered less important than the *Tao Te Ching* or the *Chuang Tzu*. I happen to love *Lieh Tzu* however, for his imaginal exuberance and surrealist imagination. The emphasis centers on the figure of the "Immortal", who in a sense utterly exemplifies the free-spirit or "egoist" in a Chinese context. What exactly defines immortality? This turns out to be a very complex issue. Like the Rosicrucian immortal,126 the Taoist cannot be defined simply as someone who lives "forever". Maybe he lives for a long time. Maybe he lives on in an imaginal body. The reader may consult Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*, (Vol. V) where the subject is discussed in detail. Does he (or she) attain this state through yoga, or alchemy (medication), or meditation, or by intercourse (perhaps sexual) with some powerful spirit? Does the Adept really ride around the clouds on a crane or dragon, or just imagine it (perhaps while under the influence of some psychedelic "pill")? These conundrums retain their fascination, but are not germane to our inquiry. The point I want to make is that the "Immortal" can be seen as the true free-spirit or ego-free-of-all-spooks perhaps

because he controls the spooks! The "True Self" or "real human" of the *Lich Tzu* is the real sage Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Lieh Tzu. Any altruistic action he performs would arise not from moral concerns or even from Confucian-like ritual obligations, but simply by whim or to use a more theory-laden term, "desire". Like Chuang Tzu's gnarled and knobby pine (so loved by later ink-brush artists) the sage has no use you can't make furniture or cross-bows out of him. The Chi, the "power of no-power" (wu-wei) courses in a chaotic (yet beautiful) way through his very bones. With a gentle gesture the tai-chi adept defeats all

opponents using their own strength against them. Thus I would argue the Wang Chu Tractate does indeed belong in a Taoist context, and is not included in the Lich Tzu by accident.

Now this philosophical attitude or insouciance does not characterize "popular" Taoism. Drawing on archaic shamanic and "spirit-possession" tradition, ritual Taoism¹²⁷ can be seen as a pure form of altruism. My Taoist teacher, Mr. Sulayman Chang (a 7th generation Moslem jade merchant from Peking, resident in Formosa) told me that there was no Sufism in Chinese Islam because anyone who wanted to practice mysticism would simply read and meditate on the Tao Te Ching. ¹²⁸ But he introduced me as well to popular Taoism in the form of spirit-possession, quite common then (and now) in Taoism. The "horse" (possessed person) remains unconscious of the experience of becoming a spirit, and the benefit thus goes entirely to those suppliants who question him and gain occult knowledge thereby i.e., the community. In its most complex form the Tao-shih or "priest" carries out an elaborate ritual by which an entire pantheon of gods is called and invoked and invited to possess the ritualist's imagination. He serves them an elaborate feast. He begs them to favor his human community. Then he sends them back to "heaven". ¹²⁹

But the hero of philosophical Taoism is not a "priest" but an Adept, even a hermit, a lone practitioner striving for personal "immortality" (whatever that may be). Often he lives by himself in a hut on some sacred mountain (rich in veins of Chi), occasionally getting together with other adepts for drinking-and-poetry parties by moon light (Union of Egoists!) He may earn a living as a doctor, although Chinese traditional medicine is not especially Taoist rather it belongs to "Chinese popular religion", a misnomer for Chinese tradition. Taoism is something else. It is beyond good and evil. ¹³⁰ The amorality of Taoist adepts is narratized over and over again, for instance in tales of the notorious "Eight Immortals". The emperors who embraced Taoism (especially in the Tang era) did so not to benefit the people but to attain immortality (and sometimes died poisoned by magic pills). But even before the incursion of Ch'an (Zen) "spontaneity" into the Taoist religious mix we can already see that (like St Max) Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu deconstruct the ego itself (lest it become the "final spook") in the sheer aimless wandering of the

not a metaphysical essence (i.e., not a spook!), and neither is the Tantrik self. But in both cases we could say the self is not nothing, but is the field of transformation or becoming ego as "creative nothing". Would this be true also of Dzogchen? I'm not learned enough to say but I suspect so. It's no wonder and no accident that Alexandra David-Neel, the great adventurer and Tibetologist and Dzogchen practitioner, began her career as a Stirnerite anarchist!

Nietzsche lambasted "the Anarchists" and yet many anarchists revere him. He attacked Christianity and yet (so multivalent is his thought) certain Christian theologians like Thomas J.J. Altizer of the "God is Dead" school revere him as a divine mentor (often along with Blake) "Dionysus AND the Crucified One" as he signed his last ("mad") letter from Turin. Let us see if St Max can yield a similarly surprising hermeneutic exegesis. Anarchist, yes but Christian??

Jesus, as has often been remarked, exemplifies polyvalence or polysemy to such an extent that contradictory or paradoxical "avatars" of his essence can be derived from the same scriptures. (See "In What Sense I am a Christian" in this book.) Even Nietzsche (at times) seems to condemn Christianity rather than Jesus for the "slave mentality" he attacks; Jesus himself could perhaps even be seen as übermensch. And if Jesus "fell" and was crucified by pity, so too at last was Nietzsche pity for a beaten cab-horse in Turin.

Jesus is God and yet he is betrayed, he weeps, he fears that God has forsaken him. God abandoning God—surely an apt metaphor for the eternal sadness of the world; of course God manifests as false or failed messiah what could be more appropriate? *deus patheticus* as Corbin calls him, which we could (mis)translate as "pathetic god". In the lore of the Iraqi Mandaean (the last barely surviving Gnostic Dualist sect) we are given hints of a now-extinct "Christianity of John the Baptist" in which John and Jesus were seen as co-messiahs. The Mandaean texts sometimes seem to imply that Jesus somehow betrayed John, who was the true messiah who lost his head. The true messiah never wins perhaps by definition. John is the archetype of the desert hermit, and the hermit can be seen as a type of the egoist, living not for the Social but for himself or her self, indulging in the luxury of

shaken from his millennial trance by desire for Shakti in order to achieve the "fast" way to realization, to become an active participant in satchitananda (being, consciousness, bliss). Desire, which in Vajrayana seems meant to be overcome, in Shakti Tantra appears as the very principle of the Way. Realization comes via pleasure, not asceticism; hence the "Five M's" of feasting and making love. In the Rig Veda the hero does not deny himself the fruits of being-in-the-world, but conquers them and enjoys them, whereas in the Upanishads, in Buddhism and Jainism, these pleasures are to be renounced. This is why I say that Tantra is an "update" of Vedism for the Kali Yuga, and renunciatory spirituality is not. This role of pleasure also plays out in "extreme" Vajrayana, but in Bengali tantra most clearly.

However, there does exist a path within "Maha-Chini" left-hand Tantra in Tibet wherein the goddess plays the major role, appears on her own and not as a "consort", and bestows realization: the cult of Tara¹³⁶-the same goddess who so often presides in Bengal (at the other end of the Brahmaputra). Surely, despite iconographic differences, these two are one: the Star, the Savioress. I wish I could explain this, but I have searched the material available to me in English (quite a lot, actually) and have never found an explanation. The "Brahmaputra theory" is my own solution to the puzzle-a hypothesis, but I think a good one. In Bengal and Tibet alike Tara is considered at least by some Orientalists a "folk" deity, not worth much scholarly attention. ¹³⁷ As she is my ishtadevata however, I have given much thought to the mystery.

It seems to me that Stirnerite egoism could easily be given a tantric spin. In some practices the practitioner identifies with the "piddam" or realized figure. This is the essential practice in Vajrayana. And it is also so explicitly in Hindu Tantra. Even Hindu Tantra, however, need not be considered deistic in any monotheist sense; it could be as "atheistic" as Buddhism. In Buddhism, the yiddam or Dhyana Buddha (Meditation Deity) is simply an image for the realized Self with which one identifies in order to "realize" the buddha nature that is in principle already who or what one really is. It would seem this idea could be connected to Stirner! The (Hindu) tantrika is par excellence an isolated self, detached from the merely social, at most involved with a small clique of fellow practitioners, and a maithuna-partner or two or three. Stirner's ego is

realized sage. "Emptiness" was, I think, emphasized in Ch'an more than in old-fashioned philosophical Taoism; although the potent personalities of Buddhist patriarchs like Bodhidharma (of the pop ping eyes) appear as egoistical (not egotistical) bohemian free spirits. Still, for Buddhists, such principles as compassion and altruism (the bodhisattva vow) persist even in the wildest personalities, whereas the purely Taoist sage adopts such positions only when the Tao, so to speak, flows that way. Compassion in itself seems to mean very little in real Taoism. Of course, as Nietzsche insisted, "beyond good and evil" doesn't mean to do evil and no Taoist would want to do evil in the conventional sense. "Immoral behavior" however by no means lies outside his bailiwick. Just ask a Confucian!

Tantra

Tantra can be seen, from a certain perspective, as a projection (into the "Kali Yuga") of the primordial pre-metaphysical world-view of the Rig Veda and its commentaries, the Brahmanas. ¹³¹ I mean by this, first, that Tantra is not a "late decadent" development somehow outside the great Indo-Iranian Tradition, but a legitimate application of it to a later, more "decadent" world-situation. The Upanishadic and Puranic developments of Vedic thought always seemed to me to have introduced dualist and moralistic dimensions that involved, perhaps, a certain misinterpretation of the Rig Veda as Nietzsche read it, monist, suffused with the Dawn, beyond good and evil.

The chief evidence for this no doubt eccentric view of the Vedic "world" would stem from an interpretation of the ego (ahamkara); for the Upanishadic/Yogic system the ego is something to be erased, or at least devalued, in comparison with the mystic self-transcendence of the sage. Of course, this is not the entire explanation of the self in the Upanishads, which after all-give us the aphorism Tat Tvam Asi, "Thou art That" (i.e., the "limited self" is essentially the Overself [Atman] or divine principle). Nevertheless the Upanishads breathe an atmosphere of denial, of renunciation, of asceticism, of avoidance, of crypto-moralism, which we cannot find in the Rig Veda's emphasis on heroic overcoming, the exalted self of the Soma Sacrifice, the ritual rather than moral values of the sacrificial world view.¹³² One might almost symbolize the

shift in weltanschauung between Rig Veda and Upanishad by noting that the sacrificial cattle of the Veda are eaten (in fact the universe itself is a system of eating and being eaten; it comes into being via sacrifice); whereas the praxis of the Upanishads and Yoga Sutras appears to be vegetarianism, and eventually the (very late) cult of the "holy cow". I'm not making any moral judgement here, but it seems clear to me that Vedic sacrifice (like Greco-Roman sacrifice) exemplifies a "pagan" atmosphere of Nietzschean "yes to the world" (to pleasure and sexuality, as also to darker aspects of being), rather than a tendency toward world denying asceticism such as characterizes later "Hinduism".

133 The chief quarrel between Hinduism and Buddhism, it seems to me, revolves not around the status of the Vedas, but around the question of the self/Self, the ahamkara and the Atman. For the Vedic Tradition(s) there must persist some essential reality to the self; the self IS the divine, if it be transmuted by realization. Indra is the symbol of the divine self, which is meant for ecstasy (soma) and overcoming (of the dragon Vritra, principal of denial-the anti-Self as it were). For Buddhism this Self itself is ultimately "empty"; it is overcome by virtue of the realization of its non-existence or "spookiness". Even the gods die. Upanishadic Hinduism stands halfway between these world-views. It retains the assertion Tat Tvam Asi, but it also in a sense denies the ego. (Early Buddhism of course does not deny the ego, it denies that it is anything but composite. Later Buddhism does not deny the existence of the ego, but denies that it has any essential characteristics. It steers a middle path [madhyamika] between "existence" and "Non existence".) It remains loyal to the Veda, but no longer says Yes to its world of strife, pleasure, magic, intoxication and ritualism.

Tantra basically a late medieval tradition re-interprets certain "minor" Rig Vedic deities like Rudra, who is now Shiva, Lord of Destruction, magic, Yoga, etc., and his consort Shakti (Kali, Par vati, etc.), and revives the "lost" Rig Vedic world of pleasures and intoxication as supreme means for attaining realization and freedom (moksha). Shakti now occupies a "higher" position than Shiva himself; she distracts him from his ascetic praxis and teaches him the liberating powers of sex/magic. The essential ritual of Tantra is known as the "Five M's" (five "sacraments" beginning with the letter M in Sanskrit, meat, wine, fish, grain, and sexual intercourse), culminating in Maithuna, ritual

intercourse. Also important are meat and wine, now considered "forbidden" in orthodox Hindu praxis. 134 If pleasure and intoxication are now to be seen as the primary, easiest and quickest means of realization, it would seem that Tantra could be experienced as a dialectical response (antithesis) to Upanishadic self-denial. The Self (even in a sense the ahamkara) is now divinized, exalted, alchemically transmuted not suppressed and erased. (Its identity Brahman, is, if not actually asserted, implied. The ego of desire, or continuity with Atman, not only Atman's identity with transmuted by Tantric practice, IS the divine Atman.) "Left-hand" Tantra emphasizes the thaumaturgic, magic entheogenic praxis and pleasure (bhoga) over all other means of attainment. Now, in Bengali Tara-Tantra, 135 the left-hand path is called the way of "Maha-Chini", i.e., Greater China, i.e., Tibet. It's clear to me (although the scholars all seem to have missed it) that Tara-Tantra moved up and down the Brahmaputra River (look at an atlas) between Bengal and Tibet. Both cultures worship Tara. I don't know which way the influence moved, though I suspect the tradition may be older in Bengal. The Vajrayana or Tantric path in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism includes other influences (e.g. Kashmiri Shaivism, or indigenous Bon Po) but it seems clear that of all the Tibetan tantric practices, the closest to Bengali Tantra may be Dzogchen (or so my friend and editor Charles Stein, a Dzogchen practitioner, has suggested)—not so much from the magico-sexual perspective as from the metaphysical view of the Self. Mahayana doctrines of "emptiness" are perhaps strangely "turned back" toward a more Vedic (more primordial?) definition of Atman. The Self is not erased or even suppressed, but fully realized. Stein believes that Dzogchen would be the closest of all schools of Buddhism to a Stirnerite philosophy of the Self.

Perhaps the most mentioned difference between Hindu Tantra and Buddhist Tantra comprises the relation of the goddess and the god as supreme sources of enlightenment. In Bengal no mistake could be made about the supremacy of Shakti (Kali, Tara, etc.) who teaches Shiva in the tantrik texts, and who strides above his supine but ithyphallic body (corpse?) in the most common icon of the couple; whereas in "yab-yum" depictions of ritual intercourse between god and goddess (dakini) in Vajrayana, the dakini obviously plays a secondary role to the god or bodhisattva or demon. In Hindu Tantra Shiva must be