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The Intersection between Feminism and Stirner Egoism

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It is oxymoronic to simultaneously declare oneself an Egoist and a Feminist if one means Feminism in a legal sense, and even moreso if one is inspired by Max Stirner in the endeavor. The individualism presented by Max Stirner rejects any and all collective 'ism'. I do not wish to appear to suggest otherwise, or be misconstrued as a 'Stirnerite Feminist' which is awkward in constitution. Nevertheless, whether one refers to oneself as a Feminist foremost or an Egoist foremost, there is still much to be said about where the two intersect.

Stirner Egoism emphasizes fading out ones need to 'outsource' authority. Whether it be religious, political, or social; the Stirner Egoist looks only to self as an existential authority and sovereign. It is not a higher God nor socio-political trends which determines oneself. Although Stirner does speak of involuntary egoists who are not egoists proper, rather that their Ego seeks out the confirmation of an external authority, they certainly do find this to be an external confirmation. In other words, it is the self which decides there is something that must be sought externally, and it is

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the self which fulfills this requirement as it has orchestrated the whole thing.

It has been said that one is both jailed and jailer.

From this application of individualist sovereignty, I draw multiple criticisms of the present day feminist movement and ideology. This is not an attempt to tear down nor re-define, alternatively it is best to attempt refinement of the presently crude. Regarding feminism, what I dub 'outsourcing' is a major downfall in the position. To outsource is to contract out a particular job or role to an external entity. The earliest waves of feminism were the first to recall this traditional outsourcing. It was no longer the man nor Church whom the woman look to for permission. Instead, women began to look to themselves in deciding their own choices and fates.

There are those today whom criticize present day feminism, and the general population, for being far too self-centered in decisions. I do not find this altogether true, and perhaps true only at the most superficial layer. It is more accurate to say people tend to outsource decision-making to a near infinite plethora of external forces. Be it craving validation from peers, the latest magazines dictating ones personal self-image, society deciding what ones future should entail; what we normally call selfishness tends to be the resulting behavior due to this rampant outsourcing.

If self looks to self as sovereign authority, then it is she who makes decisions, not the never ending line of external entities looking to take on the mantle of decision-maker. One may think of liberalism, secular free thought, the narration of contributing to man's collective knowledge, and other similar Enlightenment ideals which continue to this day though costumed in heavily commercialized and herd-like branding. Indeed, Max Stirner made such a point. Even the strain of 'free thought humanism' or what some call 'progressivism' today is still an intangible 'spook' that is all too ready to take on the role of arbiter.

In brief, a 'spook' is an intangible abstract of which only has power because it is given power by others collectively and is prac-

“In the time of spirits thoughts grew till they overtopped my head, whose offspring they yet were; they hovered about me and convulsed me like fever-phantasies – an awful power. The thoughts had become corporeal on their own account, were ghosts, e. g. God, Emperor, Pope, Fatherland, etc. If I destroy their corporeity, then I take them back into mine, and say: “I alone am corporeal.” And now I take the world as what it is to me, as mine, as my property; I refer all to myself.”

– Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*

Indeed, the ultimate conclusion is as an isolate atom, an isolate subject. Stirner Egoism cuts to the bone, to the bare minimum, a near Zen-like manner which never foregoes the Unique I. No matter the gender or the collectivist angle from which one approaches, Stirner Egoism is an ultimate incision separating from the whole. Identity politics speaks of emancipation, be it of race or sex, though Stirner’s teachings declares self-liberation to the utmost possible. It is not asking permission, asking for emancipation, nor is it protesting the Other and shouting ‘freedom for all’.

No, it is the proclamation of the self, as the self, unto the self. It is the joy of the self itself, the power and strength thereof. It is an affirmative act rather than the negative. It is an essential detail that feminism has lost, along with multiple other present day schools of thought, and as a result has become increasingly anemic and weak.

tically nonexistent if alone in itself. What is called ‘progressivism’ or ‘social justice’ or even ‘feminism’ is indeed a spook. This does not render them negative or bad or undesirable, only that a self which designates self as sovereign will not outsource authority out to these current trends. If the concept of God or religion is not ones master, then how can one allow passing social movements and over zealous herd thinking to become ones master? A feminist who trades in one external authority for another external authority has done little to come into their own.

A feminist declares self-liberation and personal autonomy, to stand alone as oneself, as free and as separate as any man. Of course this must be taken within context. No person is an island. We live in constant contingency and interrelating factors. In other words, interdependency. Be that as it may, one can still attain a particular degree of separation and ontological or existential isolation. Dora Marsden was an early feminist who was inspired by Max Stirner, but we know little about her analysis of his work, only that she found it profound. In her latter activism she shifts from using the label feminist, as she disliked its reactive disposition. In a Stirnerite fashion she understood liberation of the self in the ‘here and now’, that the self was already sovereign, and did not require an external entity to emancipate it. Therefore, it is the self first that has realized its own sovereignty, and any ‘activism’ concerning feminism which may occur afterwards is a secondary detail.

“The time has arrived when mentally-honest women feel that they have no use for the springing-board of large promises of powers redeemable in a distant future. Just as they feel they can be as ‘free’ now, as they have the power to be, they know that their works can give evidence now of whatever quality they are capable of giving to them. To attempt to be freer than their own power warrants means that curious thing-protected freedom and their ability, allowed credit be-

cause it is women is a 'protected' ability. 'Freedom' and 'ability' recognised by permission, are privileges which they find can serve no useful purpose."

-Dora Marsden

Inspired by Stirner, Marsden distinguishes self-liberation from emancipation, or rather those whom acknowledge their own power versus those who demand others grant them rights.

Here differentiates the reactive and active. The reactive is one who rages against the Other, demanding emancipation, condemning the Other as the oppressor, the violator, leaving oneself as the morally good and downtrodden. 'Those whom reign, whom have a position of power, they are the bad, and thus that makes me the good.' There is little power of ones own in the reactive position, indeed any power that is acquired is through the negative, via deflecting from the active. Stirner Egoism is concerned with the active, which Stirner refers to as Ownness or Self-Enjoyment. It is not the crusade for freedom or social justice. Instead, it is the focus upon ones ownness, ones own unique intrinsic power and autonomy.

Indeed, one has the right to be what their strength allows them to be. The active position sees oneself as good in itself, ones ownness, without need of an external Other of which to be defined.

Outsourcing to trending groupthink such as 'progressivism' and various other socio-political trends is antithetic to autonomy. If one declares themselves a feminist, one who has disregarded the yokes of external authority concerning women (religion, tradition, patriarchy, consumerism, etc.) commits an error if they soon after don the yoke of yet another socio-political authority, be it groupthink or hive-minded political movements, no matter their use of rhetoric claiming free thought or diversity. A feminist in the truest dons no yoke, and this makes it synonymous or intersecting with Stirner Egoism.

There are tangible situations in which a person is indeed a victim of an injustice, be it mild or severe. Be the injustice real or imag-

ined is another argument entirely. What must be eradicated is the constant victim mindstate which is inherently and relentlessly reactive to the Other. Whether it be words, actions, or images; the reactive victim state is perpetual, is always the persecuted, is always the 'good' based purely on the fact that they are the downtrodden. The definition of self is defined based upon the latest whims of the Other; be it called patriarchy, capitalism, systematic sexism, or whatever it be labeled. This includes the slang reference to the 'politically incorrect'. An individual who is at the whim of the rhetorically aggressive has freely given away their power and autonomy.

One can be at the receiving end of an injustice or an indecency, and it will certainly damage the individual, but perpetual or imagined victimhood is a reactive mindstate that permanently places one at the mercy of external whims. This is commonly found in feminism as well as general liberalism; an incessant pursuit of martyrdom, of glorifying the downtrodden rather than praising the strong. Much like the Mother Mary, the secular woman is a receptacle and receiver, the one who must endure and bear weight. To the feminist this is unacceptable. The feminist is defined by the positive, by affirmation, and only voluntarily does she allow herself to play the opposite role. The feminist is not a prey to be hunted, she is the one who hunts.

The feminist in her truest actualization ultimately becomes an isolated being, a lone egoist in and of herself. It is not necessary for me to go to length to clarify that this does not mean a disgruntled life of selfishness, reclusiveness, pettiness, and callously caring only about oneself. Quite the contrary, the 'isolated being' I speak of maintains their own separation, even when fully engaged with social crowds and friendships. Amongst the crowd, she resides unto herself and thinks for herself without outsourcing to an external. A collective 'ism' is shed, and technically that includes feminism, for she ceases to cling to the identity. She may advocate 'feminism' or other 'isms' for the sake of assisting the actualization of others, but ultimately she is the self and only the self.