

institution of art and the cult of self-discipline of the bourgeois subject;⁴⁸ Conrad Froelich, the promoter of the poetics of explosion and of the virtues of coarseness (Grobheit) (especially after 1897);⁴⁹ the Dadaists Johannes Baader and Raoul Hausmann, with whom Friedlaender/ Mynona tried to publish a journal in 1915 titled Erde

John Henry Mackay

At the origin of the Stirner Renaissance was John Henry Mackay (1864-1933). In his memoirs, Szittyá calls Mackay “the founder of individualist anarchism.”⁵⁰ Although he never wanted it, Mackay became a bridge between Stirner and the literary modernists. He was one of the transitional literary naturalists who never truly grasped the project of the anarchist bohemia though he was a regular at Café des Westens. He opposed the Stirner-Nietzsche fusion adopted by modernist circles, and his understanding of individualist anarchism, a term that he coined, was different from that of Ruest and his cohort.

In spite of his Anglo-Saxon name, Mackay was German and wrote only in German. He republished Stirner’s forgotten *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* in 1911 and edited a volume of Stirner’s “minor” texts (1898). He wrote a monograph on Stirner in 1898, and a series of influential Stirner-informed *Bildungsromane*. The most influential was *Die Anarchisten*

48-450, signed A. Undo). The impertinentists separated from expressionism because they no longer regarded themselves as a literary movement: “Wir tun so, als ob wir Maler, Dichter oder sonst was wären, aber wir sind nur und nichts als mit Wollust frech” (449).

⁴⁸ “Die Selbstdisziplinierungsideologie des Bürgertums erforderte die rigide Anpassung an das Bestehende. Sie bildete Autoritätshörigkeiten Untertanenmentalität heraus, forderte aber auch sexualfeindlichen Triebverzicht” (Quoted in Lehner 78).

⁴⁹ See Walter Fähnders, *Anarchismus und Literatur*, 61.

⁵⁰ *Das Kuriositäten Kabinett*, 155.

The Individualist Anarchist Discourse of Early Interwar Germany

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2018

replicas cited above, were laboratories “of all libertarian ideas, all forms of bold critique and free thought.”⁴³ Theo Kneubühler also shows that the café became an *imago mundi* in which the radical individualist could experiment with his or her egotist beliefs and cultivate his singularity both externally and internally. It was an island of liberated public life, in which social relations could be made or un-made at every moment. It was the quintessential place of transition in which men and women joined thoughts and projects that could not even be envisioned and even less put into practice in a different place.⁴⁴

Some of the notorious Stirner (and Nietzsche) inspired bohemians were Stanislaw Przybyszewski, the leading figure at the Schwarze Ferkel pub (The Black Hog), author of the famous novel *Satans Kinder* (Children of Satan)⁴⁵ and proclaimer of “unconditioned and unrestrained abandonment, revaluation, and destruction of the enclosures of the bourgeois brain, as well as all barriers of morality, society, and authority for the purpose of liberating one’s ‘individuality.’”⁴⁶ There was Hugo Kersten, the promoter of impertinentism,⁴⁷ who attacked the

⁴³ Julius Bab, *Die Berliner Bohème*, 25.

⁴⁴ “Der Boheme war Einzelgänger, sein Ort war das Café in der Großstadt, also ein öffentlicher Bereich, wo er jederzeit hinkonnte, weg konnte, wo er Beziehungen frei wählen konnte, je nach Stunde, Absicht oder Zustand. [...] Das Café ist der Inbegriff eines transitorischen Ortes, einer Durchgangsstation, Verbindlichkeit oder Unverbindlichkeit frei wählbar ist, wo das was im Kopf ist und nur dort für Stunden ‘Wirklichkeit’ werden konnte, da es im Anderen Wiederhall fand, weil dieser andere ähnliche Ideen, Gedanken, Bilder mit sich herumtrug, Ideen, die sonst nirgends Wirklichkeit werden konnten.“ Theo Kneubühler, “Die Künstler und Schriftsteller und das Tessin (von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart),” 151.

⁴⁵ Regarded as the promoter of Satanism in literature.

⁴⁶ “[...] unbedingte und besinnungslose Selbst-Entgrenzung, Umwertung, Zertrümmerung der Schranken des bürgerlichen Gehirns, aller Schranken von Moral, Gesellschaft, Autorität überhaupt zwecks Freisetzung von ‘Individualität’” (quoted in Fähnders 158).

⁴⁷ Also influenced by Friedlaender/ Mynona; *Die Aktion* published his “Impertinentist Manifesto” in 1915 (*Die Aktion* , 35/36, September 4, 1915,

I argue that bohemia played an important role in the crystalizing of the positions of *Der Einzige*. The obvious reason is that many of its contributors were part of it. But there is an intellectual link as well. For *Der Einzige*, the bohemia constituted a pre-war model for understanding and reinventing the idea of community and for putting into practice anarchist ideas, experimenting in the realms of both art and life. Bohemia embodied a living community that resembled Stirner's community of egotists.⁴¹ It was here that men and women tried out "total anarchism" and the undoing of structures of authority. Linse highlights that anarchism was practiced not only with the purpose of challenging human interaction. Revolt was practiced at all levels of life: morality, manners, conduct, thinking, feeling, food, clothing, and love. No wonder then, Linse concludes, that most of these bohemians found a philosophical speaker of their ideas in Stirner.⁴²

The Stirner Renaissance grew in the fertile environment of the literary café. *Der Schwarze Ferkel* and *Café des Westens* in Berlin or the later *Café Innsbruck* (where the *er Einzige* team convened), *Café Stephanie* in Munich, and *Cabaret Voltaire* in Zurich were such physical and intellectual alternative public spaces. *Der Hippel* of the 1840s, like its later turn of the century

converts of March 1890 (Quoted in Kreuzer 293). Salon anarchism also became trendy during these years.

⁴¹ Julius, Bab, *Die Berliner Bohème*, 39.

⁴² See Ulrich Linse, *Organisierter Anarchismus im deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871*, 98-99. In an article dedicated to the presence of artists and writers in the Tessin and the Monte Verita libertarian colonies, Theo Kneubühler highlights that Stirner's influence on the literary bohemia and the avant-garde was not only in terms of positions, but also inspired a certain style of engagement. The work of predecessors was engaged polemically always avoiding identification, and concentrating on one's self. This attitude created a culture of philological disrespect, the praise of textual theft and of genius in everybody. Under the influence of Stirner and Nietzsche, Kreuzer writes, "Alle Literaturcafés in Berlin, München und Wien und noch in ein paar anderen Großstädten wimmelten damals von 'Übermenschen'" (quoted in Kneubühler 150).

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Many German naturalist writers also opposed the mainstream reformist party politics of the SPD. Naturalists were not bohemians, even if toward the end of the century their writings became more linked to literary decadence and their subject matter shifted from the working class to the *Lumpenproletariat* and other outsiders of society, embodying the abnormal and the delinquent. Their radicalism, however, still functioned in many ways within the intellectual paradigm of the Enlightenment. The rational *homo constructor* was still at the center of their understanding of political agency. They just doubted that traditional structures of organization were the right tools to materialize their dreams, especially as embodied in the capitalism with an imperial face of pre-war Germany.

The naturalists were the first generation of intellectuals to experience the Stirner-Nietzsche impact. Their individualism questioned the liberating potential of organized battalions of workers. Many trusted neither the party-controlled working class nor its elites. Naturalists advocated a free floating intellectual as a corrective voice to the abuses of organization. Only a few of them, however, made a step further to question the idea of organization itself (and even fewer the problematic nature of being free-floating). Most of them criticized organized structures with the hope that a certain amount of reflection could fix the problem. Some grew more radical, assuming more thoroughly the consequences of the Stirner-Nietzsche critique of the rational man. Those who embarked on questioning reason itself and the universalism of intellectual discourse found a refuge in the bohemian circles.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ A proof of the fact that bohemia is such a place of refuge is the “Abkehrromane” of many former realists and naturalists. Kreuzer highlights that very often this turn was regarded as unjustified. Intellectuals allegedly turned away from socialism (often under the influence of Nietzsche and aristocratic individualism) more because it was fashionable (292). Heinrich Mann unfairly criticized this attitude in *Im Schlaraffenland*, calling them

Linse, some of the principles of the anarchist movement and the bohemia.³⁹

Kreuzer highlights that individualist anarchism as well as anarcho-communism were the main political views that the bohemians shared. Very often the same person will share both these visions at different stages of his or her intellectual development (Erich Mühsam, Gustav Landauer, or many of the Dadas). Many of the bohemians were one way or another attached to the socialist movement, and some were instrumental in the efforts to redefine it from inside.

It should come as no surprise that almost concomitant with the Stirner Renaissance a major split within the German socialist movement occurred. The split officially happened in 1891, and led to the formation of a series of splinter groups (including many anarchist ones) which were known under the broad title of independent socialists. Some of the keywords of this split resonated with individualist anarchism and the bohemia's cultural practices: decentralization and individualism, and the protest against the turning bourgeois of the socialist movement. The divide followed the SPD's return to legality. Ten years of pro-scription under Bismarck's *Sozialistengesetz* (October 1878) had made many socialist activists believe that changing the world was possible only via subversive and revolutionary acts. The reformist, parliamentary and compromise-open politics of the SPD, aiming at building a mass party, were regarded as a pernicious reinforcement of the status quo. Radical intellectuals of the Left realized that the loose forms of organization practiced during the period of prohibition proved more democratic and ethically more acceptable than the idea of a rank and file movement, organized hierarchically, like a military structure, on the principle of authority which socialism adopted in 1919.

³⁹ Ulrich Linse, *Organisierter Anarchismus im deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871*, 97.

Preface

This book is an updated version of my 2006 PhD thesis *After the Revolution: The Individualist Anarchist Journal Der Einzige and the Making of the Radical Left in the Early Post-World War I Germany*. The thesis has been available online since its defense, and I hope that it has accompanied scholars and intellectuals in their study of anarchism. I decided to update and publish it in book format for two reasons. First, as I show in the Introduction, I believe that recent economic and political developments in the EU and North America have increased the relevance of individualist anarchist ideas. The developments that I have in mind are the 2008 economic crisis and the subsequent Great Recession; increasing democracy deficit in these regions; the rise of populism and of a capitalism that prefers authoritarian state governance, as well as the resilience of religious bigotry and xenophobia—the latter often induced from above with the help of the state. I would also add to this list the public sphere's increased concern with neoliberalism and its pernicious effects on human bonding, creativity and sense of self-fulfillment.

Each of these phenomena has revealed, in its way, the declining sovereignty of the state in regions whose Left still believed, a decade or two ago, that the state was the best tool to defend citizens against social and economic injustice, wars and ecological disaster. More recently, the writings of Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière or Slavoj Žižek—to name just some of the center-stage figures of the Left of this period—have all indicated, in various publications, the simulacrum of democracy that the contemporary liberal-capitalist state offers to its citizens; while Žižek has even overtly expressed doubt that, in

the present ideological predicament, the citizens of the Western world possess the clear judgment and the generous drives that would make possible a functional democracy and an acceptable quest for common good.

The second reason why I believe this book is worth publishing is because, perhaps even more than in the days when I wrote my dissertation, the Left is still afraid of anarchism. I offer here two reasons, which will be both addressed by the thinkers whose work I analyze in this book. The first cause of this fear is the fact that, as Noam Chomsky has emphasized in *On Anarchism*, the Left and its intellectuals, are too theory bound. By that I mean, with Chomsky, that they assume a certain role of leading intellectuals and make use of conceptual toolboxes that the anti-authoritarian discourse of anarchism can effectively undermine.

The second reason (in part an outcome of the first) is that the Left still suspects anarchism of any kind—and individualist anarchism in particular—to be a discourse that can be very easily appropriated by the libertarian right—for example as anarcho-capitalism. The Left keeps distance or criticizes anarchism because it sees it as a trap in the service of a capitalism that has developed ideological mechanisms to appropriate its critique and make it work for its advantage. As such, the Left keeps distance from anarchism because it wants to make sure that its concepts are not put into the service of neoliberal thought. This debate is not new, and the writings I scrutinize here address it at length.

I also want to use this Preface to express my gratitude to people who believed in my project and supported me. I would like to thank my adviser, Jack Zipes, for his encouragement and optimism. Many thanks are also due to the members of my dissertation committee, Rick McCormick, Eric Weitz, and the regretted Jochen Schulte-Sasse. I am also thankful to my friends at the Bibliothek der Freien in Berlin, to Kurt Fleming at the Stirner Archive in Leipzig, and to Hartmut Geerken, who cre-

ambitions whose politics are aimed at undermining the bourgeois liberal state. Kreuzer emphasizes that bohemia is not an artistic category, but a sociological one. He believes that the life of the bohemian is more important than his or her oeuvre. Their art—poems, paintings, music, etc.—is an instrument, a practice subsumed to the political project of permanent rebellion. That which constitutes the bohemian, Erich Mühsam explains, is, negatively, the result of a revolted and revolting spirit. Positively, it is the impulse to live dangerously, away from the protection of norms or social customs.

Neither poverty nor inconstancy is the decisive criterion for being bohemian, but the urge for freedom that finds the courage to break social bonds and create the forms of life that set the least resistance to one's inner development.³⁸

According to Mühsam, radicals wanted to build an anti-world that hosted oppositional practices of living that challenged the legacy of the obedient subject of the imperial state. This is why they identified with the underworld and praised its crooks, prostitutes, criminals, and beggars. They looked for the most authentic and embodied forms of rebellion that would allow them to own their lives in a Stirnerian sense and be singular. The hatred of centralized institutions, the rejection of the political, the undermining of normative social practices, the emphasis on social self-help and direct social action, the cult of autonomy, and the will to design forms of living free from institutional authority were, according to

³⁸ "Weder Armut noch Unstetigkeit ist entscheidendes Kriterium für die Boheme, sondern Freiheitsdrang, der den Mut findet, gesellschaftliche Bindungen zu durchbrechen und sich die Lebensformen zu schaffen, die der eigenen inneren Entwicklung die geringsten Widerstände entgegensetzen." Erich Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*, 491.

zsche for the cause of nationalism and Germany's conservative revolution."³⁵

Several scholars have also focused on the impact of the Renaissance on the literary and artistic innovators of the period. From the naturalists of the early 1890s to the Dadas of the 1920s, almost every prominent figure had read Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* or one of the many compilations of his work circulating in that period. David Weir emphasizes that even the young James Joyce was under the individualist anarchist spell, due to Benjamin Tucker, the main promoter of Stirner in the English-speaking world.³⁶

The Bohemia

Among the German Stirner enthusiasts we find the leading figures of the bohemia. And that should not come as a surprise, argues Julius Bab, the chrono-grapher of the Berlin bohemia, since Stirner himself, the theoretician, as he puts it, of "true anarchism," was one of them. Stirner was a habitué of the radical coffee house culture. He had his "Stammtisch" (regulars' table) at Hippel pub (on Friedrichstrasse), where the Young Hegelians met. It was this milieu that inspired and helped him develop his ideas, Bab argues, because, in Bab's opinion, the bohemia is nothing but a peaceful attempt at practical anarchism, and the creation of a disobedient and self-governing group of people outside of the organized society.³⁷

The concept of bohemia, Kreuzer argues, points to a subculture of intellectuals that is individualist in organization and violent in symbolic praxis. It includes individuals with artistic

³⁵ Seth Taylor, *Left Wing Nietzscheans*, 143.

³⁶ David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, 213.

³⁷ "Denn was ist 'Boheme' im Grunde anders als ein friedlicher Versuch zu praktischem Anarchismus, d.h. zur Bildung eines unbeherrschten Lebenskreises außerhalb der staatlich organisierten Gesellschaft." Julius Bab, *Die Berliner Bohème*, 23.

ated the Mynona archive. A number of fellowships supported my work on this project: a University of Minnesota Graduate Research Partnership, a University of Minnesota Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, a Hirschbach Fellowship, and the year I spent in Berlin as an exchange student at Freie Universität.

Introduction: The Century of Anarchy?

In an essay tracing the influence of Herbert Marcuse's writings on the 1960s German student movement, Rudi Dutschke, one of the leading figures of this movement, reflects on the impact of the immediate post-World War I predicament on Marcuse's political views. Dutschke's point is that the views of the author of the *One-Dimensional Man* undergo an important and radical change during this period. A bloody war had killed and wounded millions and revealed the most beastly aspects of humankind. Death, famine, violence, and misery transformed people and political systems. An empire, the German Kaiserreich, had fallen, and a republic was coming into being. Revolutionary movements that were once prohibited, exiled and persecuted, and their ideas that were once censored and considered a danger for the common well-being could again occupy the center space of public life. All these social, ideological and political intensities, Dutschke argued, had an effect on thinkers of the Left. And there were many other such intensities—some bordering on chaos, others leading to bitter disappointments. They changed the pre-war activist Marcuse (born in 1898) into the interwar and postwar philosopher whom we came to think of as a leading figure of the Frankfurt School.

The year 1919 influenced Marcuse's understanding of activism. His understanding took a turn from the political to the cultural. Active in the Workers' and Soldiers' Council of the Reinickendorf district of Berlin, the young Marcuse witnessed, in Dutschke's retelling of the story, a puzzling phenomenon

insightful forms of bourgeois class treason, one has to understand the bourgeoisie not so much in terms of income, property and work relations, but in broader cultural terms, values and social practices.³³ This assumption is in line with the cultural turn discussed in the Introduction and this turn's weakening of the link between class identity and legitimacy to call for and even enforce social justice. Helmut Kreuzer suggests that the bohemian be regarded as the bourgeois liberated from his or her "Bürgerlichkeit." Van den Berg also indicates that working-class anarchism, in contrast to the bohemian one, was more politically organized, more focused on the state system and its institutions of physical and corporeal exploitation. Bohemian anarchism was more interested in disciplining through censorship, morality, social codes, and especially sexual repression.³⁴ As I will argue in the next chapter, this "cultural approach" did not make the protest of the rebellious middle class less political. What it did was to inaugurate a tactics of resistance that would be continued by various socially concerned thinkers of the twentieth century, who aimed at rebelling not only against a state imagined as a material embodiment of power, but more importantly against the practices of containment encoded in the social-moral-cultural aspects of life.

The Stirner Renaissance also endowed the philosophical language of the Left with more depth. It made it more sensitive to the construction of human subjectivity, to the evils of organized movements, to its neglect of the individuality of the worker and, as Seth Taylor argues, it interested the Left in Nietzsche. It "provided an alternative basis for interpreting Nietzsche other than Julius Langbehn's influential *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Rembrandt as Educator), which appropriated Niet-

³³ Hubert van der Berg, *Avantgarde und Anarchismus*, 95.

³⁴ Hubert van der Berg, *Avantgarde und Anarchismus*, 96.

nificant echo of this Renaissance, and Anselm Ruest its final prophet.

The Renaissance

The importance of the Stirner Renaissance rests, however, not only in the fact that a forgotten philosopher, Max Stirner, and his opus, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, became a philosophical bestseller and influenced thinkers of both the Left and the Right, from Gustav Landauer and the Dada groups to Carl Schmitt and Mussolini. The Stirner Renaissance marked a renewal of German (and, to a certain extent, European) anarchism. It triggered the birth of the individualist-anarchist movement and delivered concepts that helped the middle-class, the artistic avant-garde and the metropolitan bohemia to design their participation in radical politics.

On a broader scale, it contributed to the intellectualization of German anarchism, which until then had employed the practice-oriented idiom of anarcho-syndicalism and skilled-worker centered movements. Individualist anarchism was thus instrumental in de-proletarianizing the Left, and offered the bourgeois the chance to fight the discourses of its own class from inside. It provided the middle class with increased legitimacy to question the values it adopted during the imperial era, and to test its pragmatism, its repressive moralism, its programmatic political narrow-mindedness, and its refusal to be aware of its role of oppressed and oppressor within the mechanisms of the organization of life and labor under capitalism. With individualist anarchism, the social figure replacing the proletariat as the nemesis of the bourgeoisie became the rebel and the bohemian—a figure that mixed both sub-proletarian features with middle-class ones.

In his book on the impact of anarchism on the avant-garde, Hubert Van den Berg suggests that, if one wants to better grasp

of resilience of reactionary mindsets. Newly created political structures, Marcuse observed, could not resist ideological contamination. The social structure did not transform the ideological superstructure; revolutionary social and political reorganization did not create revolutionary thought. On the contrary, the unchanged superstructure gradually managed to make revolutionary structures serve its interests.

According to Dutschke, Marcuse witnessed how the revolutionary councils set up in the immediate postwar era very soon started to lose their political edge. Workers and soldiers made concessions to individual interests. Small acts of corruption emerged; but most importantly, these concessions opened the door to practices from the past. Councils returned to electing as leaders exactly the men whom they were supposed to expel, and who had been their bosses and oppressors in the pre-revolutionary era. By doing so, councils lost their ability to restructure the political-military hierarchies of the German state, and even more the inherited forms of wielding economic power, distributing wealth and capital, and organizing labor.¹ Soon, the structures of authority of the Kaiserreich were reinstated by the same men and women who shortly before had contested them. Once the revolutionary ecstasy was over, the agents of change become the very carriers of reactionary thought. Against their interest, but paying tribute to a certain unconscious sense of order, the very workers and soldiers who carried out the revolution became instrumental in the return of the *ancien régime*.

¹ “Während der ersten Monate nach dem Kriegabschluss von 1918 [Marcuse] erlebte, wie Offiziere, statt davongejagen zu werden, zu Delegierten genannt wurden, wie die deutschen Räte der unmittelbaren Selbstverwaltung für den Augenblick auftauchten und gesellschaftlich fast spurlos verschwanden. Weder wurden die Paläste enteignet noch die militärische Führung und das preußische Kastensystem gesprengt, ganz zu schweigen vom Rüstungskapital, Bankensystem usw.” Rudi Dutschke, *Die Revolte*, 138.

The cultural shift in Marcuse's thinking was the effect of this experience. One can speculate that this experience affected the entire intellectual movement that we call the Frankfurt School. Moreover, one should remember that it is Rudi Dutschke recounting the story, who had his share of disappointment with the 1968 movement. In this line, one can go one step further and speak about a format of storytelling, characterized by a post-revolutionary state of mind. It is a standpoint of defeat, of being in the aftermath of something (wars and failed revolutions)—that is, of being “post.” This standpoint also brings the concepts of poststructuralism closer to those of individualist anarchism—the latter developing in the skeptical atmosphere that follows the acknowledgement of the defeat of communism by Stalinism in Western Europe, especially France, and the defeat of the ‘68 movements by the capitalist corporate state.

I will refer here only to the “post” experience of the Left and to the red line in its history that this storytelling format generates from 1918 through 1956, 1968, 1989, and the post-2008 Great Recession era.² This post-revolutionary gaze is concerned with yet another aspect of the revolution—a certain practical spirit and cynicism that characterizes revolutionary contexts, and which splits revolutionary agency between a leading avant-garde and a manipulable and executing mass. Marcuse's revelation that the revolution did not happen in the minds of the Germans and that the battalions of workers were not trusted to be able to define and follow their interest without transcendent guidance was no secret for leaders of the Left such as Rosa Luxemburg and V.I. Lenin. After going through their own disappointments, they tailored their

² *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

tional political framework, but starting with the canceling of the “rules” of the political game itself—that makes *Der Einzige*'s intervention so interesting today in the aftermath of the Cold War and the Occupy movements, when the Left has exhausted the two strategies with which it had widely engaged: reform and revolution, and has still not clearly figured out what comes after capitalism.

Der Einzige was an “unhappy consciousness,” contemplating in disappointment the political debates of the post-revolutionary period. Its displeasure was, nevertheless, not so much caused by the proposed or adopted political solutions, but by the idea of “solution” itself, by the closure and the warping of the political imaginary itself. The opening that followed the revolt of 1918 and the fall of the monarchy was too hastily harnessed into yet another vision of order. The future of a community, open for a few weeks, was rearrested and community redefined. The same individuals who had fought for freedom from an oppressive state were too quick in figuring out other monopolies of power to contain revolt, as if freedom had been an unbearable existential challenge.

The abundance of radical literature in this period, trying to resignify the arrested moment of revolt, continued a pre-war commitment to change. In an article on the origins of World War I, John Zerzan argues that containing this pre-war revolutionary activity constituted one of the main drives that brought Europe to war in 1914.³² To understand how *Der Einzige*'s ideas were prepared in the pre-war era, one needs to return to the German/ Prussian imperial times and to the development of radical voices among leftist intellectuals. For *Der Einzige*, that defining pre-war moment was the Stirner Renaissance occurring around 1890. This event proved influential not only for the German literary bohemian and avant-garde circles, but also for the whole socialist movement. *Der Einzige* was the last sig-

³² John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*, 147.

to normality had begun. It was a chilling return as this normality was in many ways reminiscent of the pre-war context as Marcuse's experiences discussed in the Introduction suggest.

Detlev Peukert also reads January 19 as marking the end of the short-lived revolutionary era.³¹ Peukert highlights that the important resolutions regarding form of government, establishment of the main nuclei of power and their elites had already been reached in the period that preceded the appearance of *Der Einzige*. This period was November 9, 1918 – January 19, 1919. These new and old elites had decided to follow a constitutionalist path toward the emancipation of workers and called for the suppression of the Councils (*Räte*) movement. Having Russia as a counter-model of chaos, the president of the newly born German republic, Friedrich Ebert, set order as his highest priority. He focused on the achievement of limited political and economic goals, condoned administrative continuity, and joined forces with the leaders of the imperial army. The period that followed the elections, in which *Der Einzige* saw the light of print, was, Peukert argues, one of disappointments, when the pernicious decisions of the previous period became apparent. The forces of change were split and their power limited. Ebert started his war against leftist radicalism again; the conservative right realized that it had more power than it had expected, and social frustration increased.

Der Einzige positioned itself both against the Ebert reformist government and the revolutionary communism of the *Räte*-movement. In the context of this divided Left, the journal looked for the third leftist way, as did many other radical journals and movements of the time. In an era in which the political could no longer provide space for reconciliation, *Der Einzige* argued for the abolition of the political as a framework for organized power struggle. And it is this quest for an alternative—one understood, however, not within the tradi-

³¹ Detlev Peukert, *Weimar Germany*, 28-33.

political theory and praxis in this dualist fashion, that was qualified as cynical within the post-revolutionary narrative.³

Emphasis on the cynicism of revolutionary leaders would generate the trope of the stolen or betrayed revolution, which will also become a mantra of the soliloquies of the post-1989 Left or of Great Recession radicalism as practiced for example in Greece and Spain.⁴ For Marcuse, the experience of 1918-1919 marked a departure from a nineteenth-century understanding of revolution, whose most prominent manifestation was the Soviet Revolution started a year earlier in Moscow. He realized that power functioned in a more complex way than its manifestation in and reproduction through political institutions. Based on this new way of understanding power, 1918 and 1919 became landmark years for him and for many others who lived through these times. These years allowed the development of a new (twentieth-century) understanding of political militancy, and whose most prominent outbreak in the Northern hemisphere would occur in 1968. The questions that troubled the young Marcuse—the revolution in “the minds and souls of people” and the legitimacy of party elites—would haunt revolutionary movements throughout the twentieth century. They laid the ground-work for the birth of the New Left, which was itself incapable of answering these questions and just generated new dilemmas. After the anti-climactic endings of the anti-globalization and occupy movements, and the sliding into Islamism of the Arab liberation movements, the questions of 1919 still haunt the Left. The proof of their importance is perhaps best illustrated by the writings of thinkers such as Mark Fisher, Wolfgang Streeck and Slavoj Žižek, who, among many others, publicly acknowledged that there is no revolutionary movement of the

³ Rudi Dutschke, *Die Revolte*, 141.

⁴ Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of 1989*, 277; Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 37.

Left that can place itself outside the current order, and that the current order of late-capitalism is expected to implode, without any clear representation of what would come next.⁵

*

This book revisits the early days of the cultural turn and of the New Left with the purpose of shedding fresh light on them, and of entering a dialogue with these early days of the New Left that would make them address the present terminal condition of capitalism. In the spirit of Dutschke's exploration of this period, my project returns to this site in order to trace some of the questions that tormented the twentieth century. This dialogue is carried out with a movement that, in 1919, insistently asked these questions. This movement was the individualist anarchism of the journal *Der Einzige*. My study aims to recover the answers given by an unusual group of leftist mavericks who edited and published in this journal, and to show their possible ties to the twentieth and twenty-first century radical democratic movements.

This revisitation is motivated by another goal: I intend to focus not only on the concerns that link *Der Einzige* with the contemporary Left, but also on important differences. In spite of the fact that many ideas and practices of the immediate post-World War I period were inspirational to twentieth-century political activism, there was also a remainder, a rich and relevant political thought that was marginalized. 1918-1919 represented an unparalleled intellectual outbreak. It marked an opening in history—a moment in which radical change seemed possible. But not all the insights that this privileged period brought to light entered the canon of progressive thought. *Der Einzige's* individualist anarchism was one of these insightful contributions to radical thought that the Left unjustly chose to

⁵ Wolfgang Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End?*; Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the Endtimes*; Mark Fisher *Capitalist Realism: Is There no Alternative?*

ary wave was over. The republic was proclaimed, the new structures of power and the new faces that would dominate the first part of the Weimar political terrain had already gained prominence and had begun eliminating their most challenging competitors. Four days before, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg—two important figures of German leftist radicalism— had been assassinated at the orders of the SPD.³⁰

Looking back at the historical context, one notices the delay with which *Der Einzige* tried to propose its own radical social project. And one can speculate that theory is *always* too fast or too slow. It is too fast in the sense that, as many “anti-totalitarian” thinkers argue, the facts of life are more complicated and slower than revolutionary paper visions. But at the same time, some theory, perhaps the truly relevant, can be too slow. This theory is a genre of retrospection, one that looks perhaps too close at facts. As such it arrives too late to influence the facts of life, and functions only as a machine of appropriation, rationalizing what has already happened.

Der Einzige generated this second type of theory and by the time its first issue circulated, the future of Weimar Germany had already been settled. The unstable and paradoxical coalitions between reactionaries and reformists had already been built. History had moved faster than the editors' words on paper. What they and so many other journals were left with was a look at a *fait accompli*, and only the opportunity to protest against an unjust turn of events that contradicted their political dreams. The spirit of revolt that had largely been swept off the streets of Berlin in 1919 by proto-fascist paramilitary groups survived in intellectual positions. The first issue of *Der Einzige* appeared on the day of the first postwar elections for the National Assembly. This date marked the end of the period in which all political options were on the table. These elections conferred legitimacy to the new power structures. The return

³⁰ See note 38.

The Times

Should this desertion from individualist anarchism by two core contributors of *Der Einzige* be read as unconnected to the financial troubles of the journal? Or should one read it as a sign of the times? And if one can blame the “times,” how far can one go beyond what I have already assumed: a tendency toward centralization within the Left?

The relative initial popularity of the journal indicates the receptivity to radical democratic projects during this period. The short life of the project, however, testifies to the opposite. I mentioned the names of other journals that proposed alternative agendas of the German Left. Almost all of them ran into financial problems and lost their audience even before the economic crisis of the early 1920s. 1919 was the year of their glory. It was a year in which the German political imaginary, or at least part of it, was bold enough to explore radical political transformations with the feeling that these ideas were closer to becoming reality than ever before. Almost all of these journals disappeared once the period of unrest was over and the Left consolidated its positions. Its two main alternatives became the reformist-statist SPD and a Leninist/ Stalinist KPD. The possibility of a “third way” of doing politics from the Left was lost or literally murdered, as it happened with the leader of the USPD Hugo Haase in 1920.

In its beginnings, the German revolution of 1918-1919 was a spontaneous act of revolt. It constituted an event that did not carry with it a clear meaning other than a will to change. Investing it with meaning was a post-factum practice. Its causes and goals were signified and “understood”; representatives emerged and the revolution was completed. Though a highbrow philosophical-literary journal, *Der Einzige* tried to respond to the turmoil of early 1919 and thus represent the unfolding events in its own idiom. Its first issue was dated January 19, 1919. The first phase of the revolution-

exclude. Its effect on the twentieth century is thus that of a lack, of a necessary but missing complementary discourse.

The framework and the concepts of twentieth-century political thought (alien-ation vs. liberation, civilization vs. barbarism, democracy vs. tyranny, freedom of speech vs. censorship, human rights vs. totalitarianism, etc.) and the realities that informed them (the world wars, colonization and decolonization, economic crises, globalization, and neoliberalism) could not allow a complete grasp of individualist anarchism’s intellectual potential. Dutschke recalls that, in spite of their call to direct action, their pacifism, their respect for diversity, and their anti-authoritarian stance, most of the 1968 movements failed to be radical enough when it came to rebuilding the internal structures of the movement and to rethink the discourse on the subject and individual agency. I referred to Dutschke extensively in these opening paragraphs because *Der Einzige*’s anarchism had articulated responses to his dilemmas and anticipated both the cultural turn and the rethinking of individual and collective agency.

Der Einzige’s anarchism, I will show, also provided an insightful but mostly ignored critique of humanist discourse and of the concept of human (*Mensch*). It challenged historical necessity and proposed an original framework for understanding social change in which individual revolt played a central role. Some of these ideas reappeared—rarely acknowledging their individualist anarchist heritage—in writings produced in the aftermath of the ‘68 movement, within post-structuralist theory. They can be traced to concepts developed by its French proponents, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, and Jacques Derrida, though these thinkers hardly wrote on

individualist anarchism, and most of them would probably identify themselves as Marxists or socialists.⁶

Yet the return of individualist anarchist ideas in poststructuralist concepts and in the concepts that emerged from the debates of the 1980s and 1990s was instrumental in leading the Left into the twenty-first century, and helped provide a different rhetoric to address the neoliberal condition. According to some of the early twenty-first century Left's most notable promoters, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, one of the key features of this "new" New Left is its understanding of sovereignty.⁷ Following Hardt and Negri, I argue that the twentieth-century Left, in the name of which Dutschke spoke, could not overcome the opposition "sovereignty vs. anarchy" (anarchy understood here pejoratively) because it employed an ineffective approach to sovereignty. It was ineffective because it could not develop outside a statist framework, and consequently it was unable to process decentered forms of sovereignty in the globalized world order and develop concepts that could design effective cultural and political action to democratize the global predicament, which *Der Einzige*'s anarchism had already outlined.

*

Although my project focuses on the interwar years of the German individualist anarchist movement, I also take into account its earlier days, starting with its pioneer text, Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1845) and the birth of individualist anarchism as an intellectual and political move-

⁶ In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida addresses Stirner's work at length. Deleuze has discussed Stirner briefly but admiringly in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962). Although Derrida does not state it directly, one can notice a cautious consideration of Stirner as an alternative to Marx. The "New International" advocated by Derrida in this book, which is written as a reflection on the fall of East European communism, is an effort to rethink the Left for the twenty-first century.

⁷ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude*, 329.

that Friedlaender/ Mynona and Ruest became closer again in their Parisian exile. Their relationship was, however, more like a cohabitation in contradiction, a fragile truce of mutual tolerance imposed upon them by the hard times they experienced as refugees from Nazi persecution.

A key contributor to *Der Einzige* was Gerhard Lehmann. He represented the voice of the younger generation. His name stood among those of young intellectuals who had been schooled in disobedience by *Der Einzige*. He was only 23 at the time and a dedicated disciple of Ruest. As student and enthusiastic individualist anarchist, he was willing to go beyond the practice of writing articles for the journal. He organized a student individualist anarchist group and a discussion group associated with *Der Einzige*, named Gesellschaft für Individualistische Kultur (Society for Individualistic Culture), also known as the Stirnerbund.

Lehmann wrote polemic articles and organized and reported on the activities of the Gesellschaft. Like Friedlaender/ Mynona, however, possibly under his influence, Lehmann later underwent a Kantian conversion himself. In the post-World War II period he became one of Germany's best-known Kant editors and scholars. The break with Ruest and the conversion seemed to start as early as 1920. After Lehmann's defection, Ruest inaugurated another discussion group in the 1920s—called Verein der Einzige (Union Der Einzige), later Individualistenbund—with which he organized the aforementioned "Individualistencongreß." Lehmann's conversion triggered, as in Friedlaender/ Mynona's case, an act of distancing from his "Stirner years." Bernd Laska documents that, in later autobiographical accounts, Lehmann regarded his passion for Stirner as a youthful malaise.²⁹

²⁹ Bernd A. Laska, "Von Stirner zu Kant: Gerhard Lehmann" *Der Einzige* . 4 (12), November 2000, 5-16.

work haunted by Stirner's antihumanism, had appeared only a year before.

Friedlaender/ Mynona scholar Lisbeth Exner emphasizes that Friedlaender/ Mynona's rejection of Stirner takes place only in letters and never in a publication. Stirner is quoted only once in *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, but scholars like Dieter Lehner have demonstrated the strong influence Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* had on *Schöpferische Indifferenz*. This position is also substantiated by the many articles in which Friedlaender/ Mynona professed a vigorous anti-humanist stance (opposed to his later "heliocentric humanism") and denounced, in the spirit of Stirner, Nietzsche and Ruest, the political construct of *Mensch* (being human) a central theme of *Der Einzige*.

The creative philosophical dialogue between Friedlaender/ Mynona and Ruest, whose best testimony is the publication of *Der Einzige*, ends in the early 1920s. In the so-called second and third series of *Der Einzige*, Mynona is hardly present.²⁷

Lisbeth Exner quotes a letter by Friedlaender/ Mynona that highlights the ensuing gap between the editors. In this letter, Friedlaender/ Mynona declares bombastically that all his life he had done everything he could not relate to Ruestian individualism in other fashion than the grotesque.²⁸ Exner emphasizes

²⁷ Without Friedlaender/ Mynona on the editorial board, Ruest tried to revive *Der Einzige* first in 1920 as a series of brochures titled "Einzelschriften für die Mitglieder des Stirnerbunds." Three such booklets appeared: Rolf Engert (Hrsg.), Max Stirner's 1834 essay, *Über Schulgesetze*; Reinhard Hanko, *Dissoziativismus*; Paul Cohn, *Gemütseregungen als Krankheitsursachen* (probably a reprint of the two articles already published in *Der Einzige*). None of these issues is available. In 1921, six issues of *Der Einzige* appeared in small format, mainly written by Ruest. And then again, a try in 1923-4 that led to issues 1 to 3, and another one, in 1925, resulting in two issues. In 1938, while already in exile in Paris, Ruest attempted another revival but under a new name: *Die Empörung. Eine Zeitschrift für Mündige*. According to Geerken, the editor of the 1980 reprint of *Der Einzige*, the first issue was prepared but never made it to the printer.

²⁸ Lisbeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik*, 176.

ment forty-six years later with the publication of John Henry Mackay's influential *The Anarchists* (*Die Anarchisten*) (1891). In the post-World War I period, individualist anarchism was short lived. In a century that was statist in political thinking, and in which political and economic agents followed the imperative of concentrating the power of organizations and increasing the effectiveness of their interventions; individualist anarchism's insights found few adherents. By the early 1920s, this movement disappeared, and its revivals would be ephemeral. During the early interwar years, individualist anarchism reached its point of maximum intellectual sophistication. One locus of such high intellectual complexity was the weekly *Der Einzige*, which appeared in 1919 and was edited by two original German thinkers, Anselm Ruest (Ernst Salomon) and Salomo Friedlaender/ Mynona.⁸ Because of the unpopularity of individualist anarchist ideas in the twentieth century there are few books that have examined it, and even fewer have grasped its intellectual richness. Little has been written on *Der Einzige*. So far, the journal has been discussed by two authors, only briefly and only historically, and not for the sake of uncovering its relevance within the individualist anarchist movement. In *Left-Wing Nietzscheans*, Seth Taylor reads *Der Einzige*, as the title of his book suggests, as part of an effort to reveal the way Nietzsche's concepts fertilized those of the Left. Mainly a Stirner scholar, Taylor develops ideas similar to those articulated by *Der Einzige* around the concept of postanarchism.⁹ Though Dieter Lehner's *Individualanarchismus und Dadaismus* (Individualist anarchism and Dadaism) is thoroughly documented, it is not concerned

⁸ Pre-World War I individualist anarchism had two languages, German and English. It was in Germany and in the US that individualist anarchism flourished: in the works of authors such as Max Stirner, John Henry Mackay and Anselm Ruest in Germany, and Josiah Warren, Benjamin Tucker, Dora Marsden, and, to a certain extent, Emma Goldman in the US.

⁹ Saul Newman. *The Politics of Postanarchism*.

with drawing a profile of the publication. To a certain extent, the book does aim to emphasize the post-World War I transformations of individualist anarchism, but Lehner's major concern is to highlight the way in which Anselm Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona provided the Dada movement with philosophical and literary models.

Nor is there any study that deals with the work of Anselm Ruest. Dirk Heißerer's *Verschwinden und Erinnern: auf den Spuren von Anselm Ruest und Salomo Friedlaender/ Mynona* (Disappearance and Remembering: Following the Footsteps of Anselm Ruest and Salomo Friedlaender/ Mynona) provides a knowledgeable overview of the life and work of the two thinkers, but it focuses primarily on their literary output and on their years of exile, and less on their individualist anarchist ideas. Literary and philosophical scholarship have produced a few books on Friedlaender/ Mynona, but none of these explores the individualist anarchist dimension of his work, and his activity as editor of *Der Einzige* is neglected. An editorial effort worth mentioning is the reprint of the journal by Hartmut Geerken.¹⁰ Geerken has also rescued Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona's unpublished philosophical manuscripts and has reprinted part of them. Friedlaender/ Mynona's autobiography *Ich* (I), his philosophical opus *Das magische Ich* (The Magical I), and Anselm Ruest's *Zum wirklichen Ich: Prolegomena zum Personalismus* (Towards the True I: Prolegomena to Personalism) have been saved from obliteration and have seen the light of print due to the efforts of this dedicated intellectual.

My study draws on the work of a series of authors who have produced "genealogical" studies that aim at bringing to the fore the anarchist roots of poststructuralist theory. Todd May and Saul Newman are the household names here. My study, however, does not concentrate on filiations. It is not an effort to

¹⁰ Hartmut Geerken (Ed.), *Der Einzige*, Munich, Kraus Reprint, 1985.

Friedlaender/ Mynona built a contrast between himself and Ruest in terms of a quarrel between philosophical nominalism and realism. Both drew on Stirner, but Ruest understood individual sovereignty in a way that was for Friedlaender/ Mynona irrational and empirical.²³ In contrast, Friedlaender/ Mynona was more interested in a form for a universal understanding of the human, which at the moment of writing his memoirs seemed superior to his *Der Einzige* period, a period when he was not fully "converted" to the rationalist dogmatism of his later years.²⁴

In 1919, Friedlaender/ Mynona was in a phase of transition. He still framed his writings in the bohemian-expressionist Stirner-Nietzsche postwar euphoria,²⁵ but at the same time, he started writing articles that signaled Marcus's influence.²⁶ He had not yet become the apostle of the universal heliocentric self-centered order and Ruest's Stirner-inspired individualist anarchism still interested him. After all, Friedlaender/ Mynona's most influential opus, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, a

²³ "Der Freund und Vetter suchte und fand diese Mitte, nach Stirners Rezept, in seinem Ich, aus dem er jedoch etwas Irrationales zu machen schien, das mich unaufhörlich reizte; schon deshalb, weil es ihm mehr zur Distanzierung als zur Annäherung diente [...]. Es spielte sich zwischen uns etwas ab wie der Streit des Realisten gegen den Nominalisten. Ich kultivierte die allgemeine Menschheitsform des Ich, er dessen empirisch-konkreten Stoff, ohne dass er die Zusammengehörigkeit zu merken schien." Friedlaender/ Mynona, *Ich*, 63-64.

²⁴ Seth Taylor argues that the conversion happened in 1918 with the end of the war and with the publication of *Schöpferische Indifferenz*. That would, however, contradict Friedlaender/Mynona's participation in *Der Einzige*, where, under the aegis of Stirner and Nietzsche, he wrote not only for the supplement, but also philosophical pieces. I argue that, in 1919, Friedlaender/Mynona was experimenting with the ideas of Stirner and Nietzsche for the last time, and that one can talk of a true apostasy only after this collaborative has come to an end.

²⁵ He writes not only for *Der Einzige* but also for other radical journals of the time.

²⁶ See Dr S. Friedlaender, "Kant und die Freiheit. Nach Ernst Marcus." *Der Sturm*, 11, February 1919.

that had a great impact on the life and thoughts of the young philosopher Friedlaender. It was in Berlin and in the spirit of anarchism that he also invented his literary alter ego and pen-name Mynona.²²

One can extrapolate the love-hate relationship between the two brothers-in-law to *Der Einzige*, more specifically to the dynamics between the two sections of the journal. Ruest was in charge of the main part, the “theoretical” one, while the literary-humoristic supplement was under Friedlaender/Mynona’s supervision. And indeed, tensions between them were obvious. The question is how to interpret them, especially when one has access only to Friedlaender/Mynona’s memoirs.

Some caution in reading Friedlaender/Mynona’s recollections is advisable. His autobiography is rendered as the story of his Kantian awakening—more exactly, of an awakening to the “magical” Kant discovered by Friedlaender/Mynona through Ernst Marcus. This awakening divides Friedlaender/Mynona’s work. The partnership with Ruest belongs to the prehistory of his Kantian intellectual enlightenment. The memoirs refer to this period as one in which his thought had chosen an erroneous path; his soul had given way to temptation, and the explanation for that lay in the fact that he was not able to discipline himself in the spirit of Kantian teachings. The autobiography depicts a gradual conversion from “materialism,” “exteriority,” and polarism to idealism and “interiority” and the order of “helio-centrism.” It tells the story of the anchoring of a singularity in a rational and metaphysical I and of a gradual detachment from everything that is worldly.

²² “Eines Tages lud mich mein Vetter [Ruest] ein, in dem damals berühmtesten Bohemien Café ‘Großwahn’ bespitznahmt [Café des Westens], einen jungen russischen Lyriker aufzusuchen. Diese Zusammenkunft inaugurierte eine Periode von acht Jahren, während deren ich das bunte Leben des sog. Künstlervölkchens mitmachte.” Friedlaender/Mynona, *Ich*, 64.

highlight the way in which one group of thinkers has anticipated another more than half a century later, in spite of the fact that these thinkers were riddled by similar dilemmas regarding humanism, the transparency of language, truth, binary thinking, the functioning of power, universalism, revolution, representation, class, intersubjectivity, the metaphysics of presence (see individualist anarchism’s Goethean motto: “Ich hab’ mein Sach’ auf Nichts gestellt” [I’ve set my thing on no-thing]), singularity, and affirmation.¹¹ There are, however, also major differences between these positions, as for example Félix Guattari’s rejection of individual revolt, a central practice within individualist anarchism’s understanding of political action.¹² My argument is that the emergence of poststructuralism signals a time that is more receptive to individualist anarchist ideas, and that poststructuralist concepts help one render insightful the act of remembering performed in this book.

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Philosophical anarchism, like postcolonial or feminist theory, is an exercise in thinking beyond hegemonic naturalized intellectual structures, structures that inform language, everyday practices, institutions, and political imagination. Philosophical anarchism’s challenge to think beyond given structures refers to envisioning the political outside statist and organized frameworks. In 1919, within this framework, *Der Einzige* asked a series of fundamental questions regarding the ends of man and politics. In the aftermath of the bloodbath of World War I, and after the crumbling of the oppressive corporate German imperial state, *Der Einzige* asked: why rulers, why state again? Why authority, allegiance to collective causes, obedience, order, grand values, collective beliefs, socially defined vocations, and social organization that is not spontaneous? The

¹¹ This is the motto of Stirner’s *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. Contemporary trends in anarchism, such as postanarchism and postsocialist anarchism, espouse poststructuralist and individualist anarchist concepts.

¹² See Félix Guattari, *Chaosophy*, 60.

list is of course longer; in fact infinite, since anarchists stand for the radical questioning of anything imposed or ideologically given.

Appearing at a time that was, as Derrida puts it, “out of joint,” *Der Einzige*’s political intervention aimed at preventing the arrest of history within yet another grand political project. Out of joint refers here to the potential of the in-between—situated on the boundary of the not yet and the no longer.¹³ It aimed at keeping history open by spreading a culture of disobedience and permanent revolt. For *Der Einzige*, undoing the idea of the human was the main strategy of preserving the openness of history. The experience of the nineteenth-century state that culminated in World War I revealed, as Jacques Derrida puts it at the end of the twentieth century, that “man, a certain determined concept of man, is finished, [and that] the true humanity of man, of the *other man* of man *as other* begins or has finally the chance of heralding itself—of promising itself in an apparently inhuman or else a-human fashion.”¹⁴

In 1919, *Der Einzige* sent the twentieth-century Left an invitation to live dangerously: to keep the future of communities open, abandon humanism, rethink the aims and tactics of political action, and overcome the statist horizon of understanding and managing the commons. It called upon the Left to think power differently, not to organize in order to create sovereign bodies and group antagonisms that lead to wars, but to leave everybody’s future in his or her own hands. It called on individuals not to immerse into a mass, not to accept being treated as such, but to struggle to discover their own self-interest, emancipate via the assertion of this interest, and free their minds of the burdening duty of being human. In one word, they called for revolt—a generalized revolt fought on all fronts, from class to gender, as well as from work to family relations.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 12.

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 73.

Einzig was built on a compromise. It was the brainchild of two philosophical projects that had touched upon each other, but refused to converge. In a 1944 letter to his son and in the wake of his brother-in-law’s death, Friedlaender/ Mynona writes that Ruest has been his best friend since childhood, and that the only thing that stood between them was their philosophical views.¹⁹

Friedlaender/ Mynona and Ruest were “Vetters” (uncle cousins) and brothers-in-law.²⁰ They grew up in middle-class Jewish families, studied philosophy, frequented the same circles, and helped each other materially and professionally. They knew each other from childhood. Friedlaender/ Mynona was born in 1871. Seven years older than Ruest, he served as a model for his younger cousin and friend. However, once established in Berlin, it was the latter who, at least in the beginning, played the role of initiator. According to Friedlaender/ Mynona, once Ruest earned his doctorate (in Würzburg 1911) and started developing his own philosophical ideas, the dynamics of their friendship changed. The relationship between them became more and more one of “love and hate.”²¹ That did not lead in any way to separation. In 1911 both were active contributors to *Die Aktion*.

Ruest was instrumental in Friedlaender/ Mynona’s move to Berlin. He hosted his cousin, in-law and friend during his first days in the metropolis; introduced him to the literary/ bohemian circles of the cafes on the Kurfürstendamm, a milieu

¹⁹ “Es klingt seltsam, aber Onkel Ernst fehlt mir. Er war mein allerintimster Freund, kannte jede Falte. Trotz Altersunterschieds von rund sieben Jahren waren unsre Kindertage verflochten und eigentlich war es nur die Philosophie, die in die Freundschaft eine Zwiespalt brachte.” Quoted in Lisbeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik*, 176. One should also note that the brothers-in-law did not call each other by their pen names. For family members, Friedlaender/Mynona’s appellative was “Sali” or “Salomo.”

²⁰ Friedlaender/Mynona’s favorite sister, Anna, married Ruest’s brother, Salomon Samuel.

²¹ Friedlaender/ Mynona, *Ich*, 63.

canon.¹⁷ Marcuse attended the meetings of the group, which after the war included Gerhard Lehmann and other new faces. After the demise of *Der Einzige*, Marcuse also participated in a four-day long Individualisten Kongress.¹⁸ Marcuse recalls that meetings were no longer located in the famous Café des Westens (which in the meantime had acquired bourgeois flavor) but in the Café Innsbruck, which had more reasonable prices.

No other information on the group is available. All scholars who have written on *Der Einzige* (Hartmut Geerken, Lisbeth Exner, Dieter Lehner, and Seth Taylor) agree that the information on how *Der Einzige* came into being and how its two editors collaborated is scarce, and that speculation is unavoidable. Marcuse does not provide names, but one can assume that some of the people he met there were contributors to *Der Einzige* such as Walter Bähr, A.W.M. Funder, Paul Gurk, Otto Bahn-Höhne, Daimonides, Ludwig Hilbersheimer, Eduard Saenger, Rolf Engert, Hans Pieper, and Ernst Roy. These names appear on a list publicized by Ruest in the self-descriptive blurb of the last issue of *Der Einzige* (287). Facing bankruptcy, Ruest emphasized that the effort was not in vain. During its short-lived existence, the journal had managed to breed a new generation of individualist anarchists.

The Cousins

Friedlaender/ Mynona scholars like Lisbeth Exner argue that, aside from finances and the deafness of the period to radical democratic ideas, there was another important reason as to why this project was so short-lived: the complicated and sometimes tense relationship between its two editors and major contributors, Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona. In this regard, *Der*

¹⁷ Ludwig, Marcuse, *Mein zwanzigstes Jahrhundert*, 65.

¹⁸ Ludwig Marcuse, *Mein zwanzigstes Jahrhundert*, 64.

Der Einzige's intervention was, however, theoretical and radical, that is, willingly un-realistic and not a doctrine or the groundwork of a policy. This is why a "realist" approach to the writings of individualist anarchists proves fruitless. *Der Einzige* refused to think within the margins of the spectacle of the possible, within the leeway that was bestowed by (hegemonic) ideology on political imagination. Its radicalism was neither practice-oriented nor descriptive. It was abusive; its role was to disrupt and not to explain, suggest or enforce.

The main target of individual revolt was the human (*der Mensch*). Discourse on who the human or the individual is constituted, in their view, the original falsification of politics, the myth of myths upon which a pernicious understanding of community was built. The human was the essence that founded a politics that suffered from *horror vacui*, a politics of presence, organization and mobilization. Individualist anarchists called their revolt against "man" egotism. It meant both rejection of the political construction "man" (the new God of the secular society), and the affirmation of something that existed, as absence, founded on nothing, the *Ich*, the I as singularity.

Der Einzige was written not only with an eye on the "hijacked" 1918-1919 German popular revolt, but also on the 1917 Soviet revolution that turned into a repressive regime and the German grand mobilization of August 1914 that generated the World War I bloodbath. Like the post-cultural turn of Marcuse (but years before him), *Der Einzige* believed that change could not be awaited from organized masses, led by an avant-garde. Nor there was any script of a revolution, derived from a political platform. In *Der Einzige*'s vision, collective revolts needed to emerge, spread and generate impact differently. The best metaphor to describe them and the way in which individualist anarchists understood the shift from the singular to the multiple was that of a viral epidemic. Change would spread gradually, *Der Einzige* argued, from one individual to another:

The new era is not born in one day, but the doctrines of egoism, will hopefully convince more and more individuals that their interest lies beyond the “social interest” until they are strong enough to prevail.¹⁵

This gradual infestation with the ideas of individualist anarchism is, however, not reform; and also not a prologue to Dutschke’s Gramscian post-1968 project of the long march through the institutions. First, because an epidemic spreads in an uncontrolled fashion; second, individual revolt does not have a “platform,” but is pure rebellion; third, because infection always presupposes a possible mutation, which means that there is no ideological continuity in the act of political change. And fourth, because it does not rely on a representative or sovereign body, but on dispersed strategies of territorialization. One does not know how, why or even where exactly a disease starts; its moments of intensity and relapse are hard to foresee. Science knows that epidemics readily contaminate susceptible bodies: the weak, the sickened, and the marginal, but preventive interventions by the apparatuses in charge of containing them—immunization and isolation—are very often inefficient if they do not constrain the entire population.

The metaphor of a viral epidemic explains individual rebellion not only through its disorganized sprawl, but also through the active participation of each contaminated body in the perpetuation of the disease. Viruses lack identity, and they are not true living beings, that is, they cannot multiply by themselves. The infected body is not the passive object of a disease. It is a producer and an agent of the mutation of the virus. An

¹⁵ “Die neue Ära wird nicht an einem Tage geboren, sondern die Lehren des Egoismus überzeugen, wenn es ihnen gelingt, immer mehr Einzelne, dass ihre Interesse jenseits des “Gesellschafts-interesses” liegt, bis sie stark genug sind, sich durchzusetzen.” Benedict Lachmann, *Protagoras, Nietzsche, Stirner*, 65.

ing to Szyttia, combined Stirnerianism with Scheerbartian “bohemian ideology.”¹⁴

Little is also known about the individualist anarchist circle around Ruest and Mynona from which the publication emerged. The circle’s existence predates that of the journal, and even the start of the war. The scarce information available comes from sources that need to be taken with a grain of salt. There are two such sources. One I already quoted above: the contested memoirs of Szittyä. He recalls that the circle, probably located in the Café des Westens, included Alfred Richard Meyer, a literary figure with “a very good nose for what would be once important”; the anarchist painter Homayer; the poet and literary critic Ludwig Rubiner, who helped Friedlaender/ Mynona publish his first short story; the sculptor Otto Freundlich; and the future Dada artist Emmy Henning.¹⁵ Szittyä’s account is a pre-war account, because it designates Paul Scheerbart, “der lachende Heilige” (the laughing saint) who died in 1915, as guru of the circle.¹⁶

The other account on the activity of *Der Einzige* covers the post-World War I era. It belongs to Ludwig Marcuse. In his memoirs, Marcuse writes about his contact with “the egotists” and how, under their influence, he discovered Stirner and realized that the history of philosophy was much more diverse than its representation in the university curriculum, which consisted of the provincial Greek-German-Christian-idealist

¹⁴ Lehner quotes Szyttia in his book on the individualist anarchist origins of the Dada movement. He finds Szyttia’s assumption dubious. Lehner argues that Friedlaender/ Mynona was the theoretical head of the “cosmological trio” Baader-Scheerbart-Friedlaender in the bohemian pre-war years (71-72).

¹⁵ Emil Szittyä, *Das Kuriositäten Kabinett*, 158-159.

¹⁶ Scheerbart died in poverty, which was ending of most of the members of the group. Alfred Richard Meyer, who published some of the writings of the members of the group, did not get rich in the publishing industry, Friedlaender/ Mynona recalls. See Salomo Friedlaender/ Mynona, *Ich (1871-1936)*, 67.

Der Einzige und sein Eigentum as his philosophical alpha and omega.⁸ Moreover, his reading of Nietzsche overlapped with that of *Der Einzige*. According to Steiner, Nietzsche would have been a Stirner devotee, had he not died young.⁹

It is not clear whether *Der Einzige* found a Maecenas. Messages from the editors suggest that the journal enjoyed a certain popularity for a while. Lisbeth Exner speculates that *Der Einzige* found readers among the avant-garde circles,¹⁰ and Friedlaender/ Mynona looks back at *Der Einzige* as a journal with some visibility.¹¹ This visibility did not prevent however the journal from quickly running into financial trouble. This was confirmed in Emil Szittya's memoirs. Szittya wrote that though Friedlaender/ Mynona was one of the most important literary practitioners of the grotesque (as important as Paul Scheerbarth), he was at the same time a starving talent. About Ruest, Szittya wrote that he had poured a lot of his own wealth into the journal.¹²

This "wealth" did not grant the survival of the weekly. *Der Einzige*'s first issue was dated January 19, 1919,¹³ and its last, issue 28, bore the date November 1 of the same year. In the beginning it appeared once a week. The last issues no longer kept up the initial pace. Lack of money shortened the life of the journal. Thus, when Szittya called Ruest the only idealist of the individualist anarchist movement he might have also been referring to Ruest's clumsy handling of financial matters. One cannot expect financial skills from a group that, accord-

⁸ "For Rudolf Steiner, Max Stirner is an end and a beginning. Steiner judges all philosophies by their nearness to the absolute egoism [sic] of Stirner," writes Thomas Riley in *Germany's Poet-Anarchist* (73). See also Bernd A. Laska, "Die Individualanarchisten und Stirner."

⁹ John Henry Mackay, *Max Stirner*, 603.

¹⁰ See Lisbeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik*, 182.

¹¹ Quoted in Lisbeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik*, 176.

¹² Emil Szittya, *Das Kuriositäten Kabinett*, 158-159.

¹³ The first issue appeared on the birthday of the third "patron saint" of the publication, Paul Scheerbarth.

infected collectivity is not a mass. Each body breeds and transforms the virus to resist countermeasures and spreads it by its own means.

Individual rebellion both sickens and makes the body susceptible to subsequent contagious diseases. It transforms the vigorous and well-organized community administered by state apparatuses into a susceptible entity. It renders the health of the multitude unstable by undermining the structures of immunity that have been cast upon it. For *Der Einzige*, this epidemic was an illness with an infinity of symptoms and one effect: the unexpected implosion of the structures of authority.¹⁶ The germ of disobedience would render superfluous laws, social rituals and the mythology of organization. The singularity would overcome its induced existential incompleteness and step up to a face-to-face encounter with the other, a situation no longer mediated by codes of conduct.

*

Individualist anarchists often used the term *Egoismus* to mark the idea of individual revolt. *Egoismus*, as Max Stirner understood it, referred to a revolt against abstractions and universals. *Egoismus* stood for placing one's "Sach" on nothing. It pointed to a personal imperative—"follow only your interest"—which rested on the absence of a definition of being human. More than a practice *Egoismus* was, like the Cartesian cogito, a hypothesis upon which the singularity could produce its autonomy. Stirner referred to the subject of this revolt as the *Ich*—which he capitalized.¹⁷ He also called it *Einzige* and opposed it to the *Einzelne*, who was the individual as understood by nineteenth-century liberalism. The *Einzelne* was the one in the crowd, the one individual version of a shared essence (man/ human). It was countable, comparable

¹⁶ A similar eschatology is offered by Streeck for the end of capitalism.

¹⁷ He and later *Der Einzige* capitalized personal pronouns in order to highlight singularity.

and self-identical in time, while the *Einzig*e was in a singular relationship to the other and to itself, and preserved no fixed continuity of self in time.

The standard English translation of Stirner's opus *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* is *The Ego and Its Own* and goes back to 1907 to Steven T. Byington's rendering edited by Benjamin Tucker. I believe this edition is dated, and the concepts I employ in this book suggest that *The Singularity and Its Sovereignty* would be a better translation.¹⁸ It would make individualist anarchist thought more relevant for the twenty-first century. Thus the translation of the title of the journal I focus on: *Der Einzige : The Singularity* .

I also do not translate the German "Egoismus" with the English "egoism" as has been done in most texts by or on

¹⁸ In fact, Byington admits that his choice of words is imperfect. In the "Translator's Introduction," he argues that other versions would have been even more imperfect. This again can be seen as a symptom of the failure of the twentieth century to understand Stirner. For Byington, the impossibility of finding a better translation lies in language itself. Byington's tribulations don't seem, however, to grasp the problem, which is not stylistic, but epistemological. Finding the English equivalent becomes tantamount to a breakthrough in political philosophy: "The Ego and His Own" is not an exact English equivalent of "*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*." But then, there is no exact English equivalent. Perhaps the nearest is "The Unique One and His Property." But the unique one is not strictly the *Einzig*e, for uniqueness connotes not only singleness but an admirable singleness, while Stirner's *Einzigkeit* is admirable in his eyes only as such, it being no part of the purpose of his book to distinguish a particular *Einzigkeit* as more excellent than another. Moreover, "The Unique One and His Property" has no graces to compel our forgiveness of its slight inaccuracy. It is clumsy and unattractive. And the same objections may be urged with still greater force against all the other renderings that have been suggested,—"The Single One and His Property," "The Only One and His Property," "The Lone One and His Property," "The Unit and His Property," and, last and least and worst, "The Individual and His Prerogative" (ix-x).

ter clashes, growing more and more indifferent to the radical Left's visions of democracy.

One could assume that Ruest contacted Kessler not only because the latter was an influential aristocrat capable of providing him with financial support, but also because, as Nietzsche scholars, Kessler, Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona had been allies. They had all fought to save the legacy of Nietzsche from the right-wing politics of his sister Elisabeth.⁷ But even if they had been allies in the effort of saving Nietzsche from becoming the inspiring mind of German nationalism and war propaganda, Kessler's and *Der Einzige's* readings of Nietzsche agreed on few issues. *Der Einzige* proposed a marriage of legacies that was not popular among either Nietzsche or Stirner followers. *Der Einzige* did not back the aristocratic individualism that the Count Kessler derived from the teachings of Zarathustra; rather, it tried to integrate Nietzsche in the tradition of the radical German Left. Here *Der Einzige* faced opposition not only from traditional Marxists, but also from nineteenth-century Stirner conservatives like Mackay and Lachmann, who refused to associate their inspirer with the "irrationalist" Nietzsche.

Der Einzige read Nietzsche as an individualist anarchist thinker and as a follower of Stirner. Bearing this in mind, contacting another main collaborator of the Nietzsche archive, Rudolf Steiner, for financial support would have seemed a more propitious option. The future anthroposopher had been close to the Berlin bohemians and championed a Stirner-Nietzsche synthesis. He was a friend of Friedlaender/ Mynona, and, at least in his pre-religious years, regarded Stirner's

⁷ See, for example, Friedlaender/ Mynona's review of Elizabeth's book on the friendship between Nietzsche and Wagner, S. Friedlaender, "Wagner und Nietzsche zur Zeit ihrer Freundschaft, Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche," *Berliner Börsen Courier*, Jg. 49, Beilage Nr. 38 v. 24.1. 1917, p. 5; or Mynona's satirical portrayal of her in his 1916 published story, *Goethe spricht in den Phonographen* .

Bloody Earnest, edited by Carl Einstein and George Grosz). Finally, there were two other specific individualist anarchist journals: Benedict Lachmann's *Der individualistische Anarchist*, "Organ der Vereinigung individualistischer Anarchisten," (The Individualist Anarchist, Organ of the Gathering of Individualist Anarchists), and the Hamburg-based monthly journal *Ich* (1920), edited by Wallenstein (Jacob [Jack] Friedland), which would merge with the *Der Einzige* of the 1920s.⁶

Kessler's reference to mushrooms had a disqualifying connotation. Anarchism was something a dandy aristocrat could accept on the canvas of an expressionist painting or on the written page of a modernist poem, but it was too impure for real-life politics, which required that a certain degree of organization be upheld. His sense of order is also reflected in the observation "like mushrooms." It means more than enough. It also refers to an emergence out of a certain opportunity (like mushrooms after the rain) and not to a tradition of what is truly important in political life. Thus for an aristocrat, such opportunistic occurrences without roots are doomed to be short lived and should be given limited attention.

And so it happened. *Der Einzige* died young and, it is not only the absence, today, of any study—academic or otherwise—dedicated to *Der Einzige* that confirms Kessler's apprehensions, but the short life of the journal also anticipated that German politics would take another path during its Weimar era. This path would be directed not toward building a diverse spectrum of peacefully cohabiting leftist movements. None of the journals mentioned above survived into the 1920s. As history approached the winter of 1933, the picture of the creative and truly revolutionary Left of 1919 gradually faded into a bleak image of growing and bureaucratized monoliths engaged in bit-

⁶ See Aiga Seywald, *Die Presse der sozialen Bewegungen*, 96, 98, 169-170, 290.

Stirner.¹⁹ My preference is for "egotism."²⁰ Both translation choices, "singularity" and "egotism," aim at distancing individualist anarchism from liberal individualism, right-wing libertarianism, and the idealism of the ego. "Egoism" has often been used with reference to the idealist philosophy of thinkers such as George Berkeley and Christian Wolff. It also connotes solipsism and thus obscures the social dimension of individualist anarchist rebellion. "Egotism" refers instead to concrete existential choices and distances individualist anarchism from idealism. Moreover, because in common English it bears negative connotations, it better expresses the rebellious nature of Stirner's "individualism," which, in contrast to liberal and neo-liberal individualism, is not a tool for a subtler integration of the singularity within the organized community (as imagined by thinkers such as John Stuart Mill), but an agent of its destabilization.

In the case of right-wing libertarianism, such tools of integration would be accumulation of capital (economic property) or the free market—which neither Stirner nor *Der Einzige* endorsed.²¹ As I will show later, the generalized rebellion proposed by *Der Einzige* imagined the thinker as a person without belief in a social religion. For anarchists, capitalism and its main forms of organization required such religious behavior. Both Stirner and his anarchist followers were quick to reveal the oppression that capitalist piety and the free market generated. First, they emphasized that the free market was not self-regulating, and that, as a product of the state, it reinforced the role of its creator as economic arbiter and intervener in times of crisis. Second, they argued that the free market generated

¹⁹ For R.W.K. Paterson's canonic study (*The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner* . London: Oxford University Press, 1971), Stirner is the philosopher of egoism.

²⁰ German does not have these two variants, *egoism* and *egotism* . *Egoismus* indicates both.

²¹ Saul Newman, *Max Stirner*, 181.

economic oppression, which led to political oppression, contradicting the very basic principles of anarchism. Third, and most importantly, they showed that the window of freedom that the free market offered was in fact very narrow, restricted to capitalist relations of production and competition—the latter creating unfavorable conditions for developing one’s ownness and singularity in the spirit of individualist anarchism.²²

The choice for the term singularity on behalf of “individual,” “ego,” “the one,” or “the unique,” follows the same line of thought. It brings to the fore the temporary, concrete, and indefinable aspect of Stirner’s *Ich*. The choice for “singularity” also expresses my intention to differentiate individualist anarchist discourse from right-wing libertarianism, whose radical individualist heroes (descending from Randian literature) are clearly outlined racially (white hetero-sexual), morally (resolution, discipline, hard work) and politically (in a capitalist context).²³ I also use singularity in order to link individualist anarchism with concepts of poststructuralist thinkers, for whom, as Gilles Deleuze’s *Pure Immanence* and Jean-Luc Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community* highlight, “singularity” is used as a beacon of an anti-essentialist and antihumanist approach to the political.²⁴

I should also mention that I use the term individualist anarchism to make reference to a movement that was essentially non-essentialist. I see it as an assemblage of discourses reflecting on the singularity of the subject and its historical landmarks and a development scenario in a fight for indetermi-

²² Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 28, 43.

²³ For example as appearing in Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*.

²⁴ In *Pure Immanence*, Deleuze proposes an alternative to traditional humanist discourse by interpellating the *Ich* not as individual, but as singularity. He proposes a “metaphysics” of virtuality in which the mark of the singularity is the fact that it is living the indeterminate life, *a life*. The singular life is *a life*, as opposed to the individual life which is *the life*, the determined life (30)

The immediate post-revolutionary period marked a return of the radical Left to the Berlin scene.³ The individualist anarchist *Der Einzige* belonged to this group of the returning repressed, alongside *Die Erde* (The Earth, Ed. Walter Rilla, or the more literary *Die Erhebung* (The Uprising, Ed. Alfred Wolfenstein); *Das Forum* (The Forum, Ed. Wilhelm Herzog), expressionistic and sympathetic to the USPD;⁴ the Spartacist *Der Revolutionär* (The Revolutionary, Ed. Moritz Lederer),⁵ not expressionist but devoted to the arts and strongly anti-bourgeois; and the literary revolutionary journal *Umsturz und Aufbau* (*Overthrow and Reconstruction*, Ed. by Kurt Pinthus). There were satirical journals such as *Faun*—sympathetic to the USPD and the Spartacist League; *Jedermann sein eigener Fußball* (Everyone’s Own Football, Ed. Wieland Herzfelde and John Heartfield), later *Die Pleite* (The Bankruptcy)—a Dada journal to which Friedlaender/ Mynona also contributed; and the Dada-communist (and anarchist, but mostly KPD sympathetic) *Der blutige Ernst*, (The

³ On October 1918, the character type of *Die Aktion* changed. It became smaller, as if the journal wanted to convey more on the same number of pages. It now had to say all the things it needed to repress during the war years. The journal gave up publishing literature. Its idiom grew overtly revolutionary, and already the November 16, 1918, issue identified *Die Aktion* as the organ of the Antinationale Sozialisten Partei, whose goal was to build a socialist movement whose hands were not stained with blood (see Ludwig, Bäumer, et al, “Aufruf der Antinationalen Sozialisten Partei.”), and which was to struggle to make sure that change in German history would be radical and irreversible: “Gelingt es unserem Henker Kapitalismus nochmals das erwachte Volk einzuschläfern, gelingt der infame Schwindel mit der Nationalversammlung, die den Geldschrank der Ausbeuter sichern soll, dann ist der 9. November umsonst gewesen” (Franz Pfemfert, “Soldaten! Kameraden der A.S.P. Freunde der Aktion,” 587)

⁴ USPD, Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland (Independent German Social-Democratic Party), was the short-lived and more radical faction of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD). It dissolved in 1922, most of its membership either returning to the SPD or entering the ranks of its leftist rival, the KPD, the German Communist Party.

⁵ Voicing the ideas of the Spartacist League which then became the German Communist Party (KPD).

was a philosopher with books on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and an original opus called *Schöpferische Indifferenz*

Kessler's note is one of the few written acknowledgments of the existence of *Der Einzige* available today. Literary and intellectual histories of the time do not remember the publication. It seems that for Kessler—and probably for many intellectuals of the Weimar period who did not or chose not to remember it—*Der Einzige* was just one of those many journals appearing after the war—“shooting out of the ground” in what seemed to be a new era in German history.²

Kessler did not tell his readers whether he supported Ruest's project. Maybe he only intended to highlight a turn in the German literary landscape: the outbreak of publications following an era of centralization and censorship, of which Ruest's project was an example. He noticed that the transition from the monarchical to the bourgeois order produced chaos; human expression was not regulated; surprising and unsettling points of view were voiced. Even established journals like *Die Aktion* suddenly and radically changed their content. Reduced by war censorship to a literary journal, the 1919 *Die Aktion* re-became the overt anarcho-communist journal it had been before 1914.

² Many of the “mushrooms” of the alternative Left were “Sprachröhre” of newly born organizations. *Der Arbeiterrat* and *Die Weltrevolution* advocated the revolutionary politics of the Räte-communists. The bi-monthly *Der Freie Arbeiter*, edited by Rudolf Oestrich, voiced the insights of the German Communist Anarchist Federation; the weekly *Die freie Jugend* (edited by Ernst Friedrich) was of the same anarchist orientation, but targeted the younger generation; and the better known *Die Freiheit*, appearing twice a day during that period, was the organ of the USPD. The weekly *Der Marxist* advocated the interests of an ecumenical socialist group, while Fritz Kater's and Max Winkler's *Der Syndikalist*, a theoretical journal that reached 120 000 copies in 1920, spoke in the name of the most successful anarchist movement in Germany, Die Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands. See Aiga Seywald, *Die Presse der sozialen Bewegungen*, 34, 341.

tion. As such, individualist anarchism qualifies a movement within which *Der Einzige* was a voice—though its editors rejected the label. John Henry Mackay coined the term “individualist anarchism” in an effort to distance his Stirner-inspired anarchism from communist and revolutionary anarchism. It is possible that the contributors to *Der Einzige* refused this label because they did not want to be associated with Mackay's circle. In 1919, Friedlaender/ Mynona called himself a polarist, and Ruest thought of himself as a radical individualist. The discussion group around *Der Einzige* was called the Society for Individualistic Culture, and later, in 1920, Ruest founded an *Individualistenbund*. Individualism, however, was also problematic and could inspire unwanted misinterpretations: liberalism and Nietzsche-inspired aristocratism. Many leftist followers of Stirner and Nietzsche avoided using it, and this might be the reason why later Ruest referred to his Stirner-inspired philosophy as “personalism.”

I argue that it is critical for my project to work with the term “individualist anarchism” because it reveals the continuity of an intellectual effort, which, even if it underwent several metamorphoses, has preserved the original Stirnerian impetus. It also stresses the multiple connections of *Der Einzige* with the radical Left. If, according to Daniel Guerin, “anarchism” stands for a movement whose main characteristics are revolt (instead of organized revolutions), anti-statism, rejection of representative democracy (and of its marriage with capitalism) and authoritarian socialism (with its party elites and its scientific methods), promotion of alternative forms of organization, and rethinking of bourgeois morality;²⁵ individualist anarchism is a radicalization of these features. Anarchism developed from a critique of both the socialist Left and the capitalist and fascist Right, and looked for a “third way” of doing politics that would not be based on the principle of authority (*arche*,

²⁵ Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism*, 13-43.

ergo an-arche-ism), which it saw as the main cause of human alienation. Individualist anarchism brought this critique of the organized community to its perhaps ultimate consequence: antihumanism.

Similar designators for individualist anarchism could be “Stirnerian anarchism” or “antihumanist anarchism.” In all cases, their radicalism originates in the fact that they trace authority at the biopolitical level of subject production and reject any forms of organization (anarchist federalism), class struggle (communist anarchism), the idea of revolution and a revolutionary elite (as envisioned by Kropotkinist anarchists), and the rule of the free market (anarcho-capitalists). Individualist anarchism promotes individual revolt and envisages the spread of this revolt more like an epidemic than like an organized assault of the Winter Palace. If relevant change should happen, it would not be in the form of political organization via a revolution, or via intensified exchanges on liberated global markets. For individualist anarchists, change is first and foremost cultural and is contingent upon individual liberation, that is, liberation not only *at the level of* each individual but *with the means* of each individual. This is why individualist anarchists used the word state to refer not only to the traditional institutions that grant monopoly of power, but also to structures of cognitive mapping and knowledge. “State” becomes a metaphor for everything that works for the organization of a community: virtues, beliefs, values, signs, and markets.

*

All these ideas result from the Stirner impetus and his “relentless critique of piety and bold hopes for ownness [individual sovereignty].”²⁶ The journal *Der Einzige* was one expression of this impetus. Other revivals occurred during the “roaring sixties” of Dutschke and continued in various forms and

²⁶ Saul Newman, *Max Stirner*, 183.

Chaper 1: Individualist Anarchism in the Post-World War I Period

Mushrooms Shooting Out of the Ground

An entry in the diaries of Count Harry Kessler, dated Wednesday, February 19, 1919 reads:

I received a letter from Anselm Ruest asking indirectly for financial assistance for his magazine. Publications, some interesting in part, are shooting out of the ground like mushrooms.¹

Kessler was a Weimar era celebrity. A dandy diplomat, patron of the arts, and publisher, he kept a 10,000-page diary of the tumultuous times of German change from decline of the Kaiserreich, through World War I, the world economic crisis, to the rise to power of Nazism. The quoted entry refers to a name, a journal, a problem, and an era. The name was in fact a pen name. Anselm Ruest stood for Ernst Salomon, and was a well-known figure of the radical and expressionist press. He was co-founder of the journals *Die Aktion* and *Bücherei Maian-dros*

Der Einzige, which Ruest started together with an even better-known figure of the turn of the century radical scene, Salomo Friedlaender/ Mynona. Salomo Friedlaender/ Mynona

¹ Harry Kessler, *Diaries*, 70.

der/ Mynona's contributions, his philosophical ideas, and emphasizes the individualist anarchist roots of the literary genre of the grotesque. Finally, an Epilogue looks at recent variations on the individualist anarchist theme.

in various locations around the world queering and barbarizing new forms of power and order specific to the era of globalization.²⁷ The fact that the only visual document we have of Stirner is a caricature drawn *from memory* by Engels is a good metaphor to explain the silences and the distortions of Stirner's legacy. A relevant inventory of these distortions, as well as an intelligent rejection of them, can be found in Saul Newman's *Max Stirner*. I will refer here only to a few that are relevant to the year 1919—mainly Stirner's defamation in socialist literature.

Most twentieth-century accounts of him were, like Engels' depiction, signed by hostile authors (very often hardline Marxists), and with the explicit goal of consigning his work to the trash can of history. The book that set the tone for the critique of individualist anarchism was Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology*, mainly an aggressive, unfair, and, I would argue along with many Stirner scholars, desperate anti-Stirner pamphlet.²⁸ It regarded Stirner's thinking as petit bourgeois (and ivory-tower) and as a breeding ground for reactionary discourse. Inspired by Marx and Engels, twentieth-century Stirner critics focused on the "adventurous" nature of his idea

²⁷ The concept of generalized revolt and of its agency, the barbarian (as opposed to the Randian hero), can be found in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*.

²⁸ Desperate because Stirner's radical take on organization and his anti-humanism posed uncomfortable questions to the naïve humanism of the early Marx and his organizational practices. According to Bernd Laska ("Dis-sident geblieben"), the discourse of historical materialism developed in *The German Ideology* is crafted to become a philosophy immune to Stirner's criticism. For Paul Thomas, Stirner awakened the Hegel in Marx (34).

of revolt,²⁹ and on the complicity of Stirner-inspired thinking with fascism³⁰ and global capitalism.³¹

Like that of a Dostoevskian hero, Stirner's biography is veiled in mystery. Max Stirner was a pseudonym for Johann Caspar Schmidt (1806-1856). He studied philosophy, worked as a teacher and journalist, and became a central figure of the Berlin bohemia at the Hoppel, where he mingled with the "Berliner Freien" (Young Hegelians). He wrote only one philosophical opus, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, published in Leipzig by Otto Wiegand in 1845, and well received in the immediate period after its publication, especially among the youth. However, it was also very quickly forgotten on the eve of 1848, when the radical circles thought of revolution and armed rebellions. Because of its radical anti-Church and anti-state stance, the book was immediately censored, like almost every project signed by Stirner's radical Hoppel companions. Nevertheless, it was allowed back into bookstores after a few days. The reason was that the ideas of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* seemed to the censors too absurd to pose any danger to the social order. The authorities proved to be right in their intuition. In the post 1848 era, Stirner was totally forgotten.³²

Nietzsche was the other inspiring figure for *Der Einzige*. There is a long and unsolved debate whether Nietzsche had read Stirner or not, a debate which was also hosted by *Der Einzige*, but which I will not detail here. There are, however, two main points emerging from this debate that need to be

²⁹ See, for example, Heinz Holz in *Die abenteuerliche Rebellion*.

³⁰ See Hans Helms *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft: Max Stirners "Einziger" und der Fortschritt des demokratischen Selbstbewußtseins vom Vormärz bis zur Bundesrepublik*.

³¹ See, for example, Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism: The Unbridgeable Chasm*. His argument—a common one within the organized Left—is that individualist anarchism cannot oppose capitalism because it does not accept macro-theories of emancipation and has no clear vision of the final reconciliation of antagonizing political forces.

³² John Henry Mackay, *Max Stirner*, 127-131.

emphasized: first that, regardless of whether Nietzsche had or had not read Stirner, he developed some of Stirner's ideas and *Der Einzige* integrated this "development," which in turn individualized its voice within the individualist anarchist movement. Second, what was called the "Stirner Renaissance" of the 1890s is impossible to imagine without the surging interest in Nietzsche, which also started making headway in the socialist movement of the 1890s.³³ Stirner inspired *Der Einzige*'s critique of the organized world. Nietzsche offered *Der Einzige* an "attitude," a "style," an existential experience of writing that expressed passion for the sublime of the super-human.³⁴ For *Der Einzige*, this form of writing exemplified revolt itself and completed Stirner's critical insights against piety with an emphasis on rebellious and non-dialectical affirmation.

* This book discusses *Der Einzige*'s ideas in four chapters. Chapter 1 provides historical information about the journal and biographical and intellectual profiles of its contributors; it looks at the immediate postwar context in which the journal appeared and locates *Der Einzige*'s significance within the Stirner Renaissance and its roots in the 1890 split of the Left and the turn-of-the-century bohemia. Chapter 2 focuses on *Der Einzige*'s critique of the organized community, revolutionary practices and the idea of mobilization, and brings to the fore the journal's vision of communal living centered on anti-humanism, singularity and individual revolt. Chapter 3 studies *Der Einzige*'s understanding of language, concepts and the production of meaning; the journal's role as a medium of mass-communication and that of its editors as intellectuals; its invitation to disobedient reading, creation and active forgetting. Chapter 4 highlights the dialogue between the main section of the journal and its literary supplement, focuses on Friedlaen-

³³ See Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, 168. Some of the early leftist Nietzscheans are Gustav Landauer and Bruno Wille. They also rediscover Stirner.

³⁴ Friedrich, Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*, 51.

Blücher even tried to provide a tactics against this conceptual inoculation of the public sphere and proposed a “Gegengift” derived from Stirner and Benjamin Tucker’s theories of resistance: active ignorance. Once people did not obey the law any more, the law made no sense and lost its power. He imagined a conceptual general strike. The concept should be ignored, and chaos, the undetermined, indifference should be placed at the center of singularities’ interaction.²⁶

Blücher’s colleague and editor of *Der individualistische Anarchist*, Benedict Lachmann, was also keen on remarking that the rendering intersubjective of individual consciousness by statist humanism was the ideal tool for subjection. Intersubjectivity was tantamount to oppression and granted the domination of the world and of singularities with the concept. Men and women had to realize— Lachmann argued in his book on Stirner—that they lived in a world of mis-understanding. The way in which each singularity used a concept was different.

Individuals had to be reminded the trivial fact that no two acts of signification produced the same result and that to believe in ideas means in fact to believe in an idea of an idea, which is in fact a “double spook, a labyrinth of nonsense and madness.”²⁷ Lachmann’s book ended by drawing an important conclusion for individualist anarchist resistance:

This impossibility of reaching an agreement on the conception of the judgments of value of others, which, it seems to me, is the strongest and most common foundation of egotism, has not yet been

²⁶ “Die einzigste Möglichkeit, einen Begriff zu töten, ist, sich keine Mühe mehr geben, ihn zu begreifen.” Heinz Blücher, “Verstaatlichung des Menschen oder Vermenschlichung des Staates,” 223.

²⁷ “Denn an ‘Ideen’ glauben, heißt in Wahrheit: an die ‘Idee’ glauben, die Ich Mir von Deiner ‘Idee’ mache! Ein Spuk, ein Doppelspuk, ein Labyrinth von Unsinn und Wahnwitz.” Benedict Lachmann, *Protagoras, Nietzsche, Stirner*, 71.

(1891), which can be regarded as marking the birth of German individualist anarchism. Another was *Der Freiheitssucher* (The Freedom Seeker, 1920), which he considered the capstone of his revolutionary thought, but which was less successful than his previous novel.

In contrast to *Der Einzige*, Mackay’s positions were much more tributary to nineteenth-century rationalism. He belonged to literary naturalist groups like *Durch*, which included Bruno Wille, Johannes Schlaf, and Gerhart Hauptmann, and to the intellectual community around the Hart brothers. His turn to individualist anarchism happened while in England, probably under the influence of Benjamin Tucker.⁵¹ Mackay also never thought of himself as an organizer. Unlike other anarchists of his generation, such as Gustav Landauer, he isolated himself from people and crowds. He limited his praxis to writing books. The only organizing effort he managed to complete was a reunion of individualist anarchists in Berlin in 1910 (co-organized with the editor Bernhard Zack). This group decided not to do any propaganda among the working class, but only among the educated.⁵² Thus on August 12, 1910, the “Vereinigung individualistischer Anarchisten” (The union of individualist anarchists) was founded, and in May 1911 its first newsletter appeared in 1,000 copies (it would decrease dramatically; the next issues were down to 200 copies, and it ceased to exist in October). The *Vereinigung* dissolved in 1913 and was shortly revived by Benedict Lachmann after the war.

⁵¹ Mackay argued that he had “discovered” Stirner all by himself. American scholar Thomas Riley questions Mackay’s claim. According to Riley, the Americans were the ones who rediscovered Stirner, and “it was Benjamin Tucker who converted John Henry Mackay from the revolutionary, communistic anarchism of Europe to the non-violent, non communistic anarchism that had grown out of American individualism” (58).

⁵² See Ulrich Linse, *Organisierter Anarchismus im deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871*, 82.

The publication of Mackay's *Die Anarchisten* in 1891 triggered a break within the anarchist movement, between individualist and communist anarchists. A debate on organization and revolutionary politics ensued that continued over the years and proved to be a central issue for *Der Einzige* too. Mackay used the term "individualist anarchism" to distinguish his Stirner-inspired position from an anarchism understood through the concepts of Bakunin and Marx. Anarchism could only be individualist, Mackay argued, because freedom was individual, not the same for two people. He admitted that the phrase "individualist anarchism" was tautological. True, unrestrained individualism was anarchism, and an anarchism that was radically anti-authoritarian was individualist. The use of the pleonastic phrase "individualist anarchism" was necessary only because a faction of the communist movement had mistakenly appropriated the term anarchism for itself.

An intellectual phenomenon like *Der Einzige* revealed, however, how "individualist anarchism" slipped out of Mackay's hands; how he could not control the rereading of Stirner by the bohemia, and the fusion with Nietzsche's ideas. Mackay fought hard to keep individualist anarchism within the confines of his interpretations of Stirner. In numerous texts, he aimed at demonstrating the incompatibility between Stirner and Nietzsche and Stirner and bohemianism. In his Stirner monograph, he described this tension in terms of an incompatibility of intellectual temperament. The ironic-analytic mind of Stirner could have only few things in common with Nietzschean flamboyance or with the passionate style of the Young Hegelians frequenting the Hoppel (among them Karl Marx).

life. In his essay "Something on Morality" (Etwas über Moral), Landauer emphasized this mortifying nature of concepts, referring to them as domineering, oppressive, and loaded with hatred of freedom.²³

For Hans Blücher, a collaborator of *Der individualistische Anarchist*, language came under critical scrutiny because of its instrumental role in organizing communities. Since language was such an important organizing tool, political disobedience had to work at its level too. Like Ruest, Blücher looked back at August 1914 to understand the way in which language became instrumental in building the state as war-machine, and tracked the workings of concepts. The intellectual was for him the culprit as well. The intellectual hunted free-circulating signifiers, turned them into concepts and integrated them into a system.²⁴ The cultural word game was the game of selection, accommodation, and integration of the signifiers with the interests of the state machine. The intellectual perpetuated the infestation of society with concepts, and the system worked because integration also meant hiding the subjecting character of the concept. In their labor of universalizing, intellectuals also rendered invisible the disciplining function of language. This erasure enabled coercion and prescriptive modes pass as descriptive. The intellectual's work is to smoothen the transition from "you should accept" to "there is." The intellectual and philosopher's "Meistertrick" was that of making the questions "Why?" or "On whose behalf?" hard or even impossible to pose.²⁵

²³ "Die menschlichen Begriffe sind schwächlich, in der Zeit vergänglich, hinfällig: darum sind sie herrsüchtig, unterdrückungswütig, freiheitsfeindlich." Gustav Landauer, *Auch die Vergangenheit ist Zukunft*, 43.

²⁴ Heinz Blücher, "Verstaatlichung des Menschen oder Vermenschlichung des Staates," 223.

²⁵ Heinz Blücher, "Verstaatlichung des Menschen oder Vermenschlichung des Staates," 223.

organizing intellectual saw community, consensus, and smoothness, the individualist anarchist saw difference, fractures, and dis-sociation. Moreover, the idea of the sovereign singularity emerged out of this moment of discontinuity. Autonomous thought constituted itself within this breach in communication. Since nothingness was the foundation of every singularity, their interaction, Ruest argued, could not assume an accurate reproduction of meaning (51). Thus, there was no such thing as a universal intersubjectivity between two radical singularities. When it was posited, it was with the purpose of creating identity and turning symbolization into a subjecting practice.

Many anarchist voices spoke up against various aspects of the subjecting nature of language, concepts, and signification. The thesis that, within the modern liberal state, subjection was done not only via law and law-enforcement, but also via control over symbols went back to the earliest anarchists. In *God and the State*, Bakunin argued that struggles for emancipation needed to gain in complexity since the control of the modern state was primarily over signification.²¹ However, only individualist anarchists of later generations turned Bakunin's intuitions into subtler inquiries into the mechanics of language and highlighted the immanent structures of oppression at work within the symbolic order.

For Stirner, everything boiled down to the rise of the Geist and its appropriation by the state as the modern tool of subjection, fascinatingly depicted by Hegel. Hegel had brought concepts (Begriffe) as religious and spooky tools to dogmatic perfection.²² Influenced by Stirner, Gustav Landauer stressed the alienating effect of concepts. Signifiers were abstract, that is, detached from history, and, unlike living bodies, they did not bear the mark of time. They were, in a way, a negation of

²¹ Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, *God and the State*, viii.

²² Max Stirner, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 104.

Aside from his rationalist and anti-bohemian positions,⁵³ Mackay's hagio-graphic approach to Stirner was also problematic for many individualist anarchists, Ruest included.⁵⁴ Ruest criticized Mackay's effort to turn Stirner into a prophetic figure as the communist movement did with Marx. Here is a sample of Mackay's encomiastic approach. In a poem he presents Stirner as a "genius unrecognized by his century," whose "wisdom" has triggered Mackay's awakening, and in turn Mackay has given Stirner back to humankind.⁵⁵

Paradoxically, Mackay wrote about the unsystematic nature of Stirner's thought and about the error of turning his writings

⁵³ Although he wrote unconventional literature under the pseudonym Sagitta dedicated to his passion for young boys and was one of the first activists for gay rights, Mackay was definitely anti-bohemian. In his memoirs, Mühsam portrays Mackay as "der konventionellste Mensch" who visited the Café des Westens. For Mackay, everyday individualist anarchism meant solitary, distant and well-mannered behavior. Manners and decorum, he thought, were the products of the individual's effort to create an autonomous zone around him/ herself. Mühsam hints ironically that the end product of such an approach to life could be nothing but bourgeois dandyism. Er "kleidete sich in sorgfältig durchdachte Unauffälligkeit [and] verhielt sich in jeder Situation pedantisch korrekt" (Mühsam Unpol 541). Mackay read Stirner's work into his life. He saw Stirner as an ascetic philosopher, parsimonious in expression, ironic and extremely lucid.

⁵⁴ Nr. 3 (7) of the new series of *Der Einzige* (August 1999) is dedicated to John Henry Mackay. Most articles question Mackay's originality and the way in which he administered the memory of Stirner. (See the articles by Bernd A. Laska, "John Henry Mackay's Stirner-Archiv in Moskau"; Rolf Engert, "Mackay's Stirner-Biographie und die Notwendigkeit ihrer Ergänzung," and Mirko Jeleusich, "John Henry Mackay. Ein individualistischer Anarchist Stirnerscher Provenienz?") Thomas Riley emphasizes that the philosophers of the turn of the century did not appreciate Mackay's analysis of Stirner's work. They only appreciated his biographical research and his work as editor of the *Kleinere Schriften* (72).

⁵⁵ [...] Genius, den sein Jahrhundert/ Nie die arme schloss/ O Genius, hinabgesunken/ Wärs't du in das Schweigen der Nacht?/ Nein – meine Lippe hat getrunken/ Hat sie – ich bin erwacht./ Unsterblicher! Schauernd begrüße/ Ich dich aus der Nacht um mich her. Quoted in Walter, Fährnders. *Anarchismus und Literatur*, 93.

into a-historical dogmas. He argued that Stirner's philosophy is not a system that can build a school of thought which can then generate canonic readings of Stirner and consolidate this system. "Each has to learn from him what he or she wants, without ever becoming his student in the narrow sense of the word." Because if one wanted to become such a student, Stirner himself would reject him or her and accuse them of idolatry.⁵⁶

Mackay's writings were, however, the first to contradict these assumptions. Everything he wrote after *Die Anarchisten* was part of a project to create a certain canon of interpretation of Stirner's work aimed at intimidating the bohemian pro-Nietzsche faction. The pre-war quarrels with Ruest (which toned down during the second half of 1919—when it became clear that the individualist anarchist movement could not afford internal tensions) also stemmed from Mackay's orthodoxy and from the fact that the two belonged to different generations of intellectuals. In the introduction to the third edition (1910) of his monograph on Stirner, Mackay had only negative things to say about Ruest.⁵⁷ The generational conflict was manifest. Mackay's book on Stirner was descriptive, centered on facts, slightly positivist, and aiming to establish the truth. In contrast, Ruest's *Max Stirner. Leben, Weltanschauung, Vermächtnis* (1907), which Mackay bashed, was idiosyncratic. It interpreted the life and work of Stirner through the idea of rebellion—Ruest's interpretation itself being an act of rebellion.

Ruest's reaction to Mackay was not friendly either. He reproached Mackay that he had transformed Stirner into an idol, and had placed his ideas in "heaven."⁵⁸ In an article published in *Die Aktion* he also ironized Mackay's poetry presenting it as pompous and making use of unconvincing calls for armed

⁵⁶ John Henry Mackay, *Max Stirner*, 131.

⁵⁷ John Henry Mackay, "Max Stirner", 21.

⁵⁸ Sigrid Hauff, "Maßnahmen des Verschwindens. Die Familien Friedlaender und Ruest im französischen Exil," 92.

The August 1914 experience demonstrated that both party-affiliated and "free-floating" intellectuals were powerless when faced with state structures. What more often happened was that they were co-opted by these structures sometimes to the point of ecstatic identification with the role of promoter of state interest. The question was then how could one escape such structural "suggestion"? Besides revolt, Ruest recommended *askesis*. Intellectuals (individuals in general) should resist the temptation of speaking in others' name. They should give up talking to *man*, and start talking to singularities. They should give up the temptation of power, of leadership, and of authority, as well as of putting themselves into the service of building "operative" communities in a narrative of progress.

The Symbolic Order

Antihumanism as critique and as affirmation of the uncontainable singularity was the tool that *Der Einzige* used to fracture the homogeneity of the "communities of brothers and sisters"—*Bruderschaften*. In line with this was the questioning of communication and intersubjectivity. *Bruderschaft* assumed identity of thought and feeling among its members. The transmission of knowledge from the center (the subject) to individual recipients (the object) was expected to function smoothly, allowing concepts to pass from one location to the other and be signified similarly.

Der Einzige's position was that of regarding modern media-increased inter-subjectivity and signification not as an achievement but as a constant failure. Once humanism was abandoned, communication, concepts, consensus, dialogue, and other constitutive values of traditional intellectual approach would come under questioning too. Where the

was a holy purification, a redemption which we felt, and an enormous hope" (quoted in Mommsen 25).

in *my name*, and whether I was just passively, structurally accepting this predicament.

Whose song of praise did sing and still sings this well-known and 'true-human' poet and poet-man, [...] applauded and adored by all peoples? Yours or mine [...]? Or do you not feel, at least now, that this "un-human" did not really mean you or me, but some bloodless rambling timeless ghost, the "high" schemes of the common man who had never been your true human brother? (50)¹⁸

The pre-war era proved that the involvement of the intellectual in creating such *Bruderschaften* was extensive. In August 1914, these "poets" wrote 1.5 million war poems. Mobilized by state propaganda, people took to the streets and sang hymns of praise to the Kaiser and patriotic songs. The Second International failed to oppose the war and the SPD disregarded its pre-war commitment that workers would not kill each other for the interests of their masters. Few leftist journals adopted outspoken anti-war positions,¹⁹ and few German intellectuals opposed it from its very beginning, among them only Ernst Bloch, Kurt Hiller, Richarda Huch, Gustav Landauer, Karl Kraus, and Heinrich Mann.²⁰

¹⁸ "Wen sang und singt dieser allbekannte, dieser bei allen Völkern [...] beklatschte, in den Himmel erhobene, "echt menschliche" Poet und Dichtersmann? Etwas Dich und Mich [...] oder fühlst Du nicht wenigstens jetzt, wie dieser Unmensch gar nicht Dich oder Mich gemeint hat, sondern irgend ein blutleeres klapperdürres Gespenst der Jahrhunderte, jenen "hohen" Schemen des allgemeinen Menschen der noch keines Menschen leibhafter Bruder gewesen?!"

¹⁹ Only Pfemfert's *Aktion* and Rene Schikele's **Weisse Blätter** (Mommensen 33).

²⁰ See Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung*, 230. Th. Mann's war excitement proved how "holy" the war was for many German intellectuals. "Why should the artist, the artist as soldier, not have praised God for the collapse of a peaceful world with which he was fed up, so fed up? War. It

rebellion.⁵⁹ A polemic between the two never ensued, but one might speculate that the fact that *Der Einzige* never called itself individualist anarchist also expressed this tension.

The "Mackay" brand of individualist anarchism also resurged after the war in Benedict Lachmann's journal *Der individualistische Anarchist*. Lachmann, like Mackay and Tucker, followed the rationalist anti-Nietzsche path.⁶⁰ Like Mackay, Lachmann did not attempt to pose as original thinker, but adopted the role of canonic promoter and explicator. In a book that traced the origins of individualist anarchism in the literature and practices of ancient Athens's sophists (*Protagoras, Nietzsche, Stirner. Platz dem Egoismus!*), he followed Mackay in stressing the impossibility of a Stirner-Nietzsche synthesis. His revolutionary theory was based on Tucker's call for the abolition of the four state monopolies, but filtered through a practical mind that, unlike *Der Einzige*, could not radically distance itself from social and political reformism. In a polemical article, titled "Die Übergangs-sozialisten," (The socialists of transition) he pledged allegiance to gradual reformist change, which would be achieved by an increased awareness that the state does not represent the interest of individuals.⁶¹

The first issue of *Der individualistische Anarchist* bears the date April 1, 1919. It appeared regularly in small book-format on the first and 16th of the month until September 15. Its

⁵⁹ "Seine Gedichte von viel trotzigem Heldenmut, von Schlachtruf und Schwerterklingen, von verzweifelter Ausharren und einsamem Überleben, von herrlicher Selbstgenügsamkeit und düsterer Ritter-Schmerz-Stimmung hinterlassen doch nicht selten ein Gefühl von Stürmen im Glase Wasser, von wortreicher Ruhmredigkeit" (quoted in Fähnders 96).

⁶⁰ The name of the journal already highlights Mackay's influence.

⁶¹ "Ich habe Vertrauen zu einer allmählichen Entwicklung, in der sich Schritt für Schritt die Autorität und Herrschaft des Staates verringert, weil die Menschen mehr und mehr erkennen werden, dass ihr Interesse dort am besten aufgehoben ist, wo sie sich in freier Ausübung ihrer Beschäftigung betätigen können." Benedict Lachmann, "Die Übergangsozialisten," 137.

main contributors were Lachmann himself, who also used the pen-name Antibarbarus. Other contributors included Friedrich Dobe, Hugo Nansen, and Johanna Salzman. It published mainly essays, but also fiction, poetry and drama⁶² and engaged in something its mentor (Mackay) announced he was not able to do, propaganda.

From this point of view, *Der Einzige* and *Der individualistische Anarchist* complemented each other. While *Der Einzige* was mainly a theoretical project, *Der individualistische Anarchist* focused on anarchist and individualist anarchist literacy.⁶³ Like *Die Freiheit* or *Der Sozialist*, both influential publications of the Left, *Der individualistische Anarchist* included among its readers literate members of the working class and artisans groups. It published economic analyses, and discussed concrete issues, such as elections, factory management, legislation, and government reform. If *Der Einzige* was a provider of concepts and of examples of intellectual revolt, *Der individualistische Anarchist* envisaged concrete institutional and political changes.

Der individualistische Anarchist aimed more clearly at building a movement. The July 1 issue called on the revival of a “Vereinigung Individualistischer Anarchisten.” Although *Der Einzige* had its own “Bund,” one would never read in its pages a call like Lachmann’s:

Most of our friends believe that it is time to quit the mere theorizing and begin to try to realize the principles of individualist anarchism.⁶⁴

⁶² It was one of the few radical political journals to publish women on a regular basis.

⁶³ It also published, besides Stirner and Tucker pieces, texts by Kropotkin and Proudhon.

⁶⁴ “Die meisten unserer Freunde sind der Ansicht, dass es Zeit ist mit dem bloßen Theoretisieren aufzuhören und mit dem Versuche zu beginnen, die Prinzipien des individualistischen Anarchismus zu realisieren.” Benedict Lachmann, “Aufruf,” 337

entiated and organized world.¹⁶ In terms of language, Orest aimed at undermining structures of differentiation by employing a fluid, “gelatinous” understanding of language and concepts. Opposed to humanism, “Amsel valued the difference between you and I” and “sought to replace the absent community with ‘life’, indistinction, slime, [and] jelly” fearing ideas of law and precision.¹⁷

Since Hiller’s intellectual “represented,” this representation constructed the represented object as mass-multitude. The multiple was interpellated as the same by the mobilizing discourse of the *Geistige*. This engendering of brotherhoods and sisterhoods in the name of collective causes outraged Ruest. In another article, criticizing the intellectual demise that happened on the eve of World War I (“—aber lügt nur nicht zu sehr!”), Ruest argued that it was the state-structure that created the intellectual. The intellectuals’ pro-war delirium was not the expression of an error of the mind or of human wickedness. The reality of organized communities heroicized intellectuals’ profiles and endowed them with the authority to speak for the many. In response to this situation, the basic question that had to be asked was whether this or that intellectual, arguing for a common cause, was truly speaking

¹⁶ “Hielte es nur jeder so—dann wäre (ohne Gesetz, ohne Staat, anarchisch) allen geholfen!” Mynona, *Graue Magie*, 98.

¹⁷ “...suchte die fehlende Gemeinsamkeit [i.e. the Vereinigung performed by power] durch ‘Leben,’ Verschwimmung, Schleim, Gallerte zu ersetzen, “ängstigte sich von Gesetz, Abstraktion, Präzision und vermochte so, ein Wesen zu machen, das eine Verwandtschaft mit den Ideen des Justemilieu zeigte.” Mynona, *Graue Magie*, 98-99. The singularity was spirit and matter. The singularity was both at the same time and none. It was neither a sole cerebral being (as for Descartes or Fichte) nor a *tabula rasa* produced by the environment or by relations of production as for positivists or socialists. The ego, as understood by Ruest (through Stirner), was an impure mixture of corporeality, emotions and intellect: “Hingegen für den ‘Einzigen’ ist das Ich die wirkliche reale Substanz, konkret und persönlich erlebbar. Suchen Sie, Herr Doktor Stern, tieferes als die Realität? Ich nicht” (28).

the pillar of Ruest's political resistance. Egotism disenchanting the world from the spook of the *Geist*. In Stirner's words: "The egotist will dissolve the spirit [and the spirit-matter divide] in his nothingness" (77).¹² "Unification," as the production of masses and mass-objects, and the appeals to *Geist* and to universalizing discourses did not bring liberation, because strong was, for Ruest, not the multitude but the singular (16).¹³ The only *Vereinigung* that Ruest could accept was against this divisive operation of power—a multitude of assertive singularities.¹⁴

In the novel *Graue Magie* (1922), Friedlaender/ Mynona, by this time already converted to idealism, depicted Ruest's insistence on the indefinable nature of the self. Anselm Ruest was identified as Dr. Amsel Orest and *Der Einzige* as "Der Insler" (The Islander) and described as concerned with indeterminacy and the vitality of the singularity.¹⁵ Orest's intellectual project was the promoting of this "neither-nor" subjectivity or the undifferentiated self. This active thrust of indeterminacy (*Indifferenz*) into the political discourse would lead, Orest believed, to an implosion of the determined, differ-

¹² Egotism and revolt become the countertactics to the spooky works of the *Geist*: "Darum verachtest Du den Egoisten, weil er das Geistige gegen das Persönliche zurücksetzt und für sich besorgt ist, wo Du ihn einer Idee zu Liebe handeln sehen möchtest. Ihr unterscheidet Euch darin, dass du den Geist, er aber Sich zum Mittelpunkt macht" (41).

¹³ "Nicht Vieles ist stark: stark sein kann nur Eines, das Eine, das Individuelle."

¹⁴ "Ich berufe mich auf eine Unio, die jeder Einzelne in seinem Ich, seinem Geist, seiner Einzigkeit mit sich herumträgt—, auf eine Einheit die Jeglicher auf dem Grunde kennt, wenn er des geheimnisvollen Willens, das seine Glieder bewegt, und der nicht viel komplizierter (denn er ist ohne Teile) auch die Lenkung aller Welt Dinge besorgen könnte, gedenkt..." (16).

¹⁵ Ruest "wollte nämlich nichts als lebendig sein und wirken, und da das Leben synthetisch undefinierbar ist, rund, verflössend, Weder-noch, zum Beispiel weder Leib noch Seele, sondern bereits zusammen: so ließ auch Amsel sich nicht definieren, war nicht fassbar, und hatte an dieser 'Lebendigkeit' seine Delikatesse."

Chapter 2: The Last Revolution

War and Revolution

From the very beginning *Der Einzige's* voice was original within the leftist camp. In the midst of intense revolutionary activity, it argued on the first page of its first issue that revolutions could bring no authentic political change. Regardless whether originating in the Left or the Right, the revolution, as imagined in 1919, would lead to nothing more than the replacement of one repressive regime with another. The true goal of a revolution was that of not having regimes at all. This was the main argument of Anselm Ruest's inaugural piece, "The Last Revolution." Revolutionary struggle had to be rethought. It should no longer be collective but individual; it should no longer aim at creating a new order, but at abandoning the idea of order as a whole.¹

Der Einzige's take on the war was also different from that of other progressive journals of its time. For *Der Einzige*, the four-year bloodbath was neither an accident in history nor the outcome of a certain form of government. The massacres of World War I were the product of the state itself and state-based political European and global order. It was only its abolition that

¹ Die letzte, größte, wahrhaftigste Revolution muss erst noch in Jedem, Jedem Einzigen sich vollziehen, stattdessen drohen wir wieder auf halbem Wege stecken zu bleiben—darum: auf der Hut vor jedem neuen Götzen, vor Knechtschaft und Versklavung. (1) All quotes are from *Der Einzige* unless otherwise indicated.

could prevent such monstrous massacres from ensuing again. As long as there was state, statist organization and its practices of mobilization, like the ones in Germany in August 1914, war was inevitable.²

When criticizing the return to statist structures which was happening in the postwar period and the closure of history in eternalized political projects, *Der Einzige* was referring to moments like August 1914, which gestured toward the unlimited leverage of the state over its subjects and its ability to manipulate them. From *Der Einzige*'s point of view, the revolution of 1918 failed because its outcome was a return to statist organization. Revolutions would always fail because they did not address the pre-rational (unconscious) dependency of men and women on state structures. The state was constitutive to a subject's self-understanding. State structures did not give men and women the opportunity to envision themselves and experiment with politics outside this framework.

The years 1918-1919 witnessed men and women desiring to escape the freedom that they gained with the collapse of the imperial regime. This impulse to "escape freedom," later theorized by another German witness of the 1919 transformations, Erich Fromm, made looking back at a moment like August 1914 so important.³ The patriotic delirium of those days might provide one with answers regarding the way in which state structures operated upon the subject and alienated men and women

² In a letter from the frontlines (published in the third issue of *Der Einzige* and titled "Über den völligen Bankrott jeder staatlichen Wirtschaft und Regierungskunst") an army officer confessed that it was the battlefield experience (and, I assume, the structures of obedience and the absurdity of death) that convinced him that state organization was the source of war, and that after the war one should think of alternative ways of organizing individuals in collectivities so that this terrible event would never return (43).

³ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941.

in such a way as to privilege identity over difference. What intellectuals imagined as spontaneous and free dialogue of ideas was for Ruest "suggeriert" (15). Their creative tasks were intuitive acts of adaptation (Anpassung) (15), and their so-called independent and dialectical thinking was just the mark of their role as socializers, producers of word games and conceptual buzz (Begriffsverwirrung), as well as performers of ideology.

Such a procedure, however, was possible because state organization created the spectacle (via humanism) of a certain model of (human) interaction founded on intersubjectivity. Against Hegel and Hiller, Ruest argued that *Geist* was always singular and utterly contingent upon a particular corporeal being. The materiality of the singularity granted it. Universalists like Hegel and Hiller invented this division between matter and spirit and dialectics (division of labor) in order to overcome the interruption of singularity and contain it.¹⁰ Ruest argued that the appeal to the *Geist* was a reaction to the threat posed to the ordering mind by the unorganized multiplicity. The *Geist* was born out of the fear of the other, and its proclamation as a superior entity emerged from the effort to contend this uncontrollable being (Vereinigung).¹¹ The other was interpellated as *Geist* and body separately in order to legitimize a two-level social and political manipulation. Otherwise, why would the intellectual need such abstractions like the spirit, Ruest asked? Because the energies of the battalions of workers scared him to death, the *Geistige* quickly called for containment and socialization (15).

Arguing for the singularity of the *Geist* and the lack of division between spirit and matter became, in the lineage of Stirner,

¹⁰ "Schon an und für sich aber steht Geistiges und Körperliches immer nur im Verhältnis des Lenkenden und des Gelenkten" (Wo sind die Geistigen? 16).

¹¹ "Hat er nicht immer das bloß Zahlenmässige, das Quantitative, Physis, die Materie (nehmen wir einmal die ganz entgeistete) beherrscht?" (Wo sind die Geistigen? 15)

of a social division of labor. Based on the Marxian humanism of work—one of those essences that Ruest rejected—Hiller advocated that the guiding mission of the intellectual was legitimate because it was part of a collective and socially divided effort towards emancipation. For Hiller, there was such a thing as *Geist* * as opposed to matter, and there had to be someone to administer it, the “geistige Arbiter.”

Confronted with such a portrayal of intellectuals, Ruest questioned its legitimacy and asked how could the *Geistige* administer the *Geist* of others, both as singularity and as multiple. He also wondered what did division of labor say about the way in which the intellectual conceived of himself or herself and the *Geist* it administered, and on what basis would the represented agree to feel represented. These questions triggered him to notice two Stirnerian “spooks” haunting Hiller’s thought. First was the spook of representation, and second, the spook of intellectual autonomy and universal thinking within an organized and mobilized society.

There was no such thing as only one logic, Ruest argued. There were an infinite number of logics corresponding to each singularity (he gave Hamlet as an example of such particular logic that did not overlap with that of others around him). If the laborers of spirit argued that they were in possession of something that was true and present in the poly-idiomatic logic of the multiple, a Nietzschean reading grounded in the will to power made this assumption look controversial. But there was more Ruest had to say. Universalism and the regime of truth were not only the effect of hegemonic signifying practices or cynical manipulation of knowledge by a truth-administering intelligentsia, but also its cause. The real problem rested in the fact that the regime of truth (which was also the regime of organization) was administering the intellectuals’ thinking and was turning them into its agents. In the organized community, the presupposition of the universal (*Geist*) acted as a power vector, disciplined the *Geistige* ’s utterances and framed them

from their ownness. 1914 also could provide some answers as to how to counter these predatory practices of the state.

The power void of 1918-1919 showed the twentieth-century human in a new light. This human was no longer the self-governing individual envisioned by the liberal state. The power void brought to the fore a disoriented being, one frightened by freedom and addicted to transcendent guidance. Stirner’s predictions proved to be true: liberalism had failed to produce a free subject; instead it created a monad that conceived of itself as incomplete, as part of something bigger than him or her: an order, a body politic or a mission. This explains why, in 1919, after the bigger entity, the nation, of which the individual *Ich* s were a part of, collapsed, its “elements” rushed into rebuilding it, its hierarchies and teleologies. The passion of “rebuilding” the future—Germany, the republic, the nation, etc.—was in fact a rejection of the true opportunities of 1919. This rejection was caused by the desire to forget and return, symbolically, to a moment prior to the fall of the regime, to a moment of integration and being in common.

Der Einzige ’s commitment to oppose such practices of integration can be found in the self-description of the journal or in the article by Ruest I referred to, suggestively titled “The Last Revolution.” In its self-descriptive blurb, *Der Einzige* introduces itself as an individualist (anarchist) journal that is not affiliated with any party (which of course did not mean it was not political). It presents itself as fighting mass-suggestion and mass-psychosis. Its mission is “an appeal to the singularity,” to the singular being, whose affirmation (revolt) is the key political practice of breaking the ideological spell that arrests radical democratic social networks. *Der Einzige* defined the present times as in turmoil (“verwirrte Gegenwart”), and considered as “Mit-Arbeiter” every soul interested in candidly asserting their disobedience and reliance on themselves (“ehrlichen Zu-sich-selbst-Bekanntnis akklamieren”), and which, “after five years of

mass delusion, have kept their senses and mind intact, have not discarded reasoning.”⁴

August 1914

One way of understanding the catastrophe of August of 1914 is through the number of casualties it generated. World War I killed ten million people and wounded and crippled many more. Another ten million died of disease and hunger. Another way of reading the war, *Der Einzige* argued, was as a triumph of the state over the individual, of organization and mobilization over autonomy. The state had successfully persuaded its subjects to sacrifice their most precious asset, their own lives.

This “success” could not be evaluated by means of a body count. It rested in the conformism and the lack of dissent with which state and war propaganda were accepted by the population.⁵ The nationalist delirium of August 1914 constituted a chilling moment for the German intellectual community and the German Left. As if spellbound, German intellectuals abandoned independent thinking. They fell prey to the sweeping enthusiasm of identification with the nation. On the political front, 1914 marked the betrayal by German social democracy

⁴ “... nach fünf Jahren der Massenverblendung seine Sinne noch unversehrt, seinen Verstand— als solchen—behalten, seine Vernunft nicht weggeworfen hat” (12).

⁵ The Grand Mobilization of 1914 demonstrated how dangerously effective the state and its ideological apparatuses had become in manipulating its subjects. Testimonies from enthusiasts of the day speak for this widespread *Massensuggestion*. Here is one such profession of “Entselbstung” from philosopher Alois Riehl: “Never was a people so united as in those August days, those unforgettable days. A higher life seemed to reveal itself to us. Each of us felt, each of us lived for the whole, and the whole lived in us all. Our more narrow self with its personal interests merged into the great historical self of the nation.” Quoted in Wolfgang Kruse, “The First World War,” 70.

die Geistigen) or “Intellectual Proletarians or the System of Incapacitation (Intellektuelle und Proletarier oder das System der Entmündigung), he attacked Hiller’s activism from the traditional Marxist perspective of the revolutionary role of the proletariat. Arguing, like *Der Einzige*, for a post-World War I ideological tabula rasa, Einstein concluded that intellectuals as promoted by Hiller are “the mental brothel of the bourgeoisie” (das Gehirn-Bordell des Bürgertums) and needed to be eradicated.⁹

Ruest’s critique started from a different premise. In an article I discussed before “Where Are the Intellectuals?” Ruest bluntly responded, like Einstein, to the question in the title: “I’m telling you, nowhere.” (13). His position was, however, not grounded in class struggle. Ruest was as critical of universalism as he was of the Marxian cajolement that philosophers should cease participating in the word game of interpreting the world and start changing it. For Ruest, the “world” as unity did not exist. Acknowledging a concept like the “world” meant accepting structures of organization. Besides being a homogenizing and mobilizing discourse, class struggle falsely divided society in oppressors and oppressed. Oppression was structural and resided in the existence of the state and collectivities themselves and in the illusion of the “world” they engendered. Everybody was a loser as a member of an organized community—not only the working class, but also rulers and the bourgeoisie. From this point of view, class struggle, Ruest realized (as did later proponents of the New Left like Antonio Negri), stood in the service of the perpetuation of the state order.

“Where Are the Intellectuals?” traced the way in which a thinker like Hiller constructed a humanist discourse. It investigated the intersubjective ground that would allow the *Geistige* to universalize. Ruest read Hiller’s activism as part

⁹ Carl Einstein, “Intellektuelle und Proletarier oder das System der Entmündigung,” 159.

for singularity and self-possession. Predictably, *Der Einzige*'s anti-universalism was continuing Stirner und Nietzsche's positions, something that was highlighted by Ruest in an article titled "Stirner and Nietzsche": truth was a fabrication employed in keeping the singularity at bay, and universals were tools of the state deployed to engender the subject's inferiority and dependency on organization (6).

Ruest could not argue with Benda. The latter's book appeared after the demise of *Der Einzige*. Ruest, however, confronted the universalist tradition that Benda represented. According to Seth Taylor, one of his targets was Kurt Hiller's under-stating of intellectuals as a freethinking avant-garde (that is, not part of the party bureaucracy), capable of leading the working class towards emancipation.⁵ Hiller and Ruest's biographies had many touch points. Like Ruest, Hiller had broken with Franz Pfemfert's *Die Aktion* in the pre-war period and edited his own publication. Like Ruest, he adopted Nietzsche's radicalism, but their readings did not overlap. Hiller's response to the intellectual brainwashing of the last years of the Wilhelmine era (imperial era) led to a more "constructive" approach, which he called activism or volunteerism. He professed the intellectual activist as consensus builder. The agency he advocated—the intellectual worker, *Geistige Arbeiter* (or simply *Geistige*)—was guided by the normative goal of the (Hegelian) *Geist*,⁶ and was, as Taylor stresses, "in a position to determine society's goals precisely because [it] stood above party interest."⁷

Pfemfert had accused Hiller of elitism.⁸ In 1919, the former's protégé and future KPD and Dada wunderkind Carl Einstein ridiculed Hiller's activism from the perspective of the new revolutionary Left. In articles such as "To the Intellectuals" (An

⁵ See Seth Taylor, *Left-Wing Nietzscheans*, 157.

⁶ Anthony Phelan, *The Weimar Dilemma*, 21.

⁷ Seth Taylor, *Left-Wing Nietzscheans*, 68.

⁸ "Soldaten! Kameraden der A.S.P., Freunde der Aktion," 587.

of the pacifist international socialism and its call on Germany's workers to die for the interests of their exploiters.

For individualist anarchists, the war confirmed Stirner's theories regarding the pernicious nature of the state. Their postwar task was thus to continue un-raveling the structural violence inherent in the design of state structures and its technologies of producing obedient subjects whose warped desires made them freely and willingly embrace a miserable death on the frontline and participate enthusiastically in the appalling act of killing other human beings. Individualist anarchists would focus on what one of the young contributors to *Der Einzige*, Erich Barth, called "die Epidemie" of obedience that had struck Germany in the twentieth century (181-183).

August 1914 was revolutionary because it aimed at recasting the ultimate goal of the political and changing the course the French Revolution gave history. The German *Volk* was to redeem humankind and replace the degenerate ideal of freedom that had been invented in 1789. The new keyword, intellectuals like Rudolf Kjellén and Johann Plenge argued, was "order."⁶ The age of Western liberalism, individualism, international agreements, and human rights was over for these ideologues. Humanity had entered a new stage of development: organization at a national level. The meaning of being individual *per se* was nil. It could gain meaning only in relationship to a collectivity. The values of this new era were: "Devotion, faith, integration, heroism; in short, the superindividual,

⁶ "Ordnung ist das große Wort ..., das bedeutet organische Struktur, Hierarchie, Rang-Ordnung." Quoted in Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung*, 280. Kruse highlights the enthusiasm with which the word was used in the immediate pre-war context. According to Theodor Heuss, the term was used only with exclamation marks. "The German secret" was the nation's ability to organize itself, and this organization was possible due to the heroic mentality of its citizens: "the preparedness to fit oneself into society and [...] in the allegedly efficient structure of the bureaucratic authoritarian state" (78). Even among the leaders of the SPD, there were voices stating that "the age of individualism is coming to an end" (Paul Lensch quoted in Kruse 79).

[and] the tested in hardship will to sacrifice.”⁷ As outcome of individual will, freedom made no sense, another ideologue of 1914, Adolf von Harnack argued. Freedom was vigorously doing one’s duty for the nation.⁸

Revolution

When attacking the Spartacist uprising in “The Last Revolution,” Ruest was bearing in mind the August 1914 war-mobilizing revolution and its monstrous consequences. Even if a Bolshevik revolution and a nationalist conservative one emerged from radically different platforms, their means did not seem so different. Both mobilized, asserted a religion of the future, manipulated masses, and aimed at building a new state structure. For Ruest, if another revolution was to take place, its practices had to change. It should be a “revolution of singularities,” oriented not against one form of government, but against the idea of government and citizenship altogether.

These ideas were not original, and Ruest did not pretend they were. His article started with a long quote from Stirner. Ruest was continuing Stirner’s critique of the religious mind and was adapting the latter’s ideas to the postwar context.⁹ In 1914, the state was cherished as a new god, and Stirner’s ideas denounced nationalism, proclaimed the death of the German *Volk*, and called for the affirmation of the singularity of the self. Ruest also showed that this critique of nationalism and

⁷ “Hingabe, Glaube, Einordnung, Heldentum, kurz das Überindividuelle, [das] in Härte erprobte Opfer fordernde.” Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung*, 282.

⁸ Reinhard Rürup, “Die Ideologisierung des Krieges,” 137.

⁹ I should add Nietzsche’s name here as the other formidable critic of religious thinking. However, since the Entente war propaganda machine vilified Nietzsche as the philosopher of war, his presence on the front page might have needed some preparation. It is obvious that *Der Einzige* wanted to free Nietzsche’s name from its pro-war, nationalist, irrationalist, and anti-individualist labeling. They did it, however, with caution.

Mynona that Sombart’s heart was a fake, a metaphor of social control, but so was theory (Friedlaender/ Mynona’s proposal), as long as it was not interrupted by revolt or by counter-theory and subsumed to the experience of the event.

Ruest’s critique of the intellectual continued Friedlaender/ Mynona’s attack on ideologically void spaces and on the passive understanding of autonomy. He and his generation of individualist anarchists also emphasized the singular reading of theory and the reality of the concept as event. They rejected the utopias of intersubjectivity and intellectual representation and unraveled the universalist use and abuse of theory. What they argued instead was, besides the presentism of individual revolt, a theory of sovereign reading, creative (active) forgetting, and adventurous experimentation.

Intellectuals

Individualist anarchists also criticized political and intellectual representation, that is, the assumption that a subject could overcome its individual interest and speak/ write in the service of universal truth and in the name of others. For *Der Einzige*, the “betrayal of the intellectuals” was thus twofold. On the one hand, as Julien Benda argued in his eponymous book, the intellectuals fell prey to nationalist passions, abandoned their “disinterested” view of history and their commitment to universals, and functioned as agents of mobilization. This practice gained salience during the glorious days of August 1914 and their repetition in 1919. But that was just the tip of the iceberg. On the other hand, Ruest and his comrades found Benda’s emphasis on intellectual disinterest and quest for universals as problematic and pernicious as participation in the nationalist delirium.

Universalism was just another cause, another form of mobilization, which stood in contradiction with *Der Einzige*’s quest

the free as one of singularities and as one that had produced and followed their own law and legislation.⁴

The answers these essays give to the question of choice, subjectivity, and agency have only partial relevance in drawing the theoretical profile of *Der Einzige* because they are published in a different context. The questions they ask, however, and especially the framework within which they ask them set the main directions for what I will discuss in this chapter: *Der Einzige*'s conception of language and the journal's critique of the role of intellectual as mediator of linguistic transactions. Even if the other contributors to *Der Einzige* did not share Friedlaender/ Mynona's anarchist reading of the categorical imperative (and self-legislation as basis of autonomy), the latter's essays reveal not only *Der Einzige*'s emphasis on the marriage between revolt and autonomy, but also the journal's suspicion regarding the "floating" or "free" intellectual of the bourgeois era. Friedlaender/ Mynona's frequent use of the word *Gesetz* (law) alarmed Ruest, and the categorical imperative became the bone of contention between him and his brother-in-law; but Ruest shared with Friedlaender/ Mynona the idea that a certain theoretical and philosophical muscle was needed to push and develop Stirner's insights, not so much to describe the singularity, but to temporarily guide the singularity's choices.

Ruest trashed the party bureaucrat and the party avant-garde for their fetishizing of rationality and law and for their universalism. For him, theory did not explain things, but it was useful in the subject's assertion as singularity. By itself, however, theory was not only powerless, but also dangerous. It was powerless because it could not provide a rupture from the "Bestehende," and it was dangerous because of its misuse in universalist contexts. Ruest agreed with Friedlaender/

⁴ "Der intelligente Wille bringt das Gesetz, nach dem er sich richten muss, selber hervor. Er gehorcht nicht mehr dem fremden Gesetz der Natur [...], sondern den eigenen; und wer dem eigenen Gesetz gehorcht, der ist frei." Dr. S. Friedlaender, "Kant und die Freiheit," 145.

the state was not made in the name of liberal democracy (the discourse of the Entente) or in the name of pacifist humanism (à la Romain Rolland¹⁰ and Stefan Zweig).¹¹ If World War I was a clash of *Weltanschauungen*, as war enthusiasts like Thomas Mann argued,¹² *Der Einzige* supported neither. It called for the death of the state and of its main ideological product, humanist discourse and the duties of being human it laid out. Not only nations had to be abolished, but also a certain collectivist understanding of being human. So far, no system had sincerely supported the autonomy of the sovereign singularity.

The key strategy to fight state organization and the universal brainwashing was by resisting humanist discourse and by affirming the singularity schizophrenically and non-dialectically. The Volk is dead, proclaimed Ruest. Long live the *Ich*. Humanity is on its way to the grave, he went on and my *Ich* "is their laughing heir" (1). *Mensch* and *Menschheit* were the abstract principles on which the state was organized. The violence inherent in these concepts needed to be unraveled critically (dialectically). This act of unraveling needed also to target the disciplining nature of conceptual language and the idiom built around the "human," as well as the humanist political imaginary. The identity produced by rituals and concepts needed to be exploded. On the affirmative (non-dialectical) side, the disciplining identity that these concepts induced had to be ig-

¹⁰ Though in a future issue, *Der Einzige* would publish a pacifist article by Rolland's "guru," Mahatma Gandhi.

¹¹ To undo the working of the mobilizing war machine, Ruest argued in his article "—aber lügt nicht zu sehr..", singularities had to detour mobilizing abstractions used by this machine, as well as not fall into the traps of a sentimental pacifism, centered on an discourse of love, which is just another form of humanism idyllically reconstructing the human as a peaceful animal. The same was true with regard to mobilizing postwar socialism or other forms of statist organization like liberal democracy (50-51).

¹² In his famous *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Mann speaks about the conflict between German "Kultur" and its arch-enemy, Western "Zivilisation."

nored and overcome by creation.¹³ But again, Ruest's article stressed, not in a collective way. Not by building yet another machine of order. But differently, without mobilization, without teleology.

One notices that an article like "The Last Revolution" addressed a multitude of issues. As such its very form enacted the generalized rebellion. It was not focused only on one topic, though one could discern that the critique of the idea of a final political cause was given a certain centrality. If revolts should not have a cause that was carved in stone, this should apply to texts and programmatic texts as well. Ruest's writings cultivated serendipity and improvisation. Like revolt itself, writing was supposed to lack an obvious direction. It should also be tormented by passion. This "passion" that made a text unpredictable at the level of content, vocabulary and even in syntax was fueled by Nietzschean affirmation. It constituted the eruption of singularity on the written page and the assertion of the *eventual* nature of the text (text as event), which became more than a mediation between two rituals of signification.

Returning to the critique of revolution, Ruest's logic was the following: since there was no such thing as the human, mobilization was alienating in the sense that it was forcing the singularity into a form of human. Mobilization was *for* something, and that something was built on an essentialized multiple (vs. the singular). Once this essentializing device called *Mensch* was abandoned, and singularity acknowledged, the "for something" of mobilization became relativized to each autonomous I, and no universal and enslaving *telos* could be proclaimed.¹⁴

¹³ Here the concept of creative forgetting, forgetting by and through creation inspired by Nietzsche is essential.

¹⁴ Ruest's position, expressed while the Spartacist rebellion was unfolding, was also consistent with that of most anarchists of his time. In his *Memoirs*, Rudolf Rocker synthesized the post-revolutionary realities of Weimar Germany. Rocker was as skeptical as Ruest regarding the agents of change of the early post-war days. For him, there was no difference between the

Friedlaender/ Mynona's critique of Sombart's liberalist optimism synthesized *Der Einzige*'s position on the social production of meaning. Friedlaender/ Mynona and his colleagues at *Der Einzige*, however, did not react by indulging in ontological and linguistic pessimism, like so many writers of the turn of the century.² Neither did they adopt expressionist irrationalism or Dada's destructive approach to language. In another article, Friedlaender/ Mynona argued that the response to the crisis of the "Unzulässigkeit aller Worte" was to be found in a personal engagement with theory.³ With a certain degree of variation as to how theory worked for the singularity, most of the contributors to *Der Einzige* believed that revolt without theory was unsustainable, as was theory that was not at the same time revolt.

The polemic with Sombart's utopia of the *homo economicus* continued in "Once Again: Werther's Sorrows" (a reply to Sombart's reply). Sombart proposed the ideologically void topos of the heart as the organ of "free-choice." Friedlaender/ Mynona doubted that the heart could function beyond language, as Sombart fantasized. He argued that if one called "heart" the faculty of decision, the heart should not "decide" *as* absolute but *inspired by* the absolute, that is, by singular encounters with a self that was posited as absolute. The heart was real, but not as organ of naïve choice. It had to let itself be inspired by what was purely subjective, by the self's absolute nature which, following Kant, was expressed in the act of legislation. In another article, "Kant and Freedom," Friedlaender/ Mynona developed his argument in favor of an active and rebellious understanding of freedom (against Sombart's passive approach), and depicted the community of

² The paradigmatic example is Hugo von Hofmannstahl's *Brief des Lord Chandos* (1901).

³ S. Friedlaender, "Polarität," 732.

Chapter 3: Concepts, Intellectuals, Disobedience

No Voids

When lambasting Werner Sombart's pro-capitalist individualism in the pre-war *Die Aktion*,¹ Friedlaender/ Mynona started from the following premise: it would be naive to believe that there was such a thing as a free-thinking subject, or at least that such freedom of thought and choice (Sombart's utopia) came, as the promoters of the liberal capitalist state argued, with the air that one breathed. Sombart was at that time already one of the most prominent social scientists in Germany. There were three issues at stake in Friedlaender/ Mynona's critique: 1. he was interested in distancing his brand of individualist anarchism from liberal/ capitalist individualism; 2. he wanted to emphasize that there were no such things as ideologically void areas; 3. he argued that only a combination of individual revolt and theory could serve as a useful guide to individual and public action. For Friedlaender/ Mynona, "suggestion" was everywhere, in the smallest particles of signification. Transformed into an agency of micrological coercion, the state instilled discipline in the most intimate aspects of life, and was permeating every exchange between its subjects. Power and manipulation were inscribed in language and in concepts, as well as in the way they produced self-understanding.

¹ "Wissenschaft und Politik. Ein Wort an Werner Sombart," *Die Aktion*, March 14, 1914, 121-126.

Ruest emphasized that *Der Einzige*'s politics were to reverse the "achievements" of a revolution such as that of August 1914, and the organizing that it produced.¹⁵ Instead of taking pains in building a "we" (the main task of a manifesto), Ruest's piece called on its readers to "dis-identify" and distance themselves from collective causes and to practice belonging to themselves (3). The article addressed its readers with the pronoun *you* (Du) and called on them to rebel, to listen only to their individual voice, ignore the ethical and patriotic imperatives and the perverse definitions of freedom and life worth living that emerged from the delirium of war propaganda and that returned to the present of 1919. If August 1914 was about overcoming individualism and the burden of being oneself and with oneself, *Der Einzige*'s 1919 position was exactly the opposite, that is, fighting the burden of being arrested, as *Mensch*, into a structure. If a philosopher like Max Scheler described August 1914

SPD and the USPD. Both were Marxist and centralist, and the differences between them were related only to the way in which they wanted to seize power. *Der Einzige*'s sibling journal, *Der individualistische Anarchist*, also published pieces incriminating the Räte-style uprisings of 1918 and 1919, and brought to the fore the similarities between 1914 and 1918. For Friedrich Partmuß, the "revolutions" of 1914 and 1918 were the same because their heroes "suchten den Weg zu einem Ideal [...] Die Militäerpartei von 1919: der Spartakusbund, steht nicht höher, als die Kreigbegeisterten von 1914. [...] In 1914 handelte es sich um das Reich, heute um eine Klasse, oder viel mehr: man sagt, es handele sich darum" ("Zur Zeit," 180).

¹⁵ In opposing the spirit of 1914, *Der Einzige* also anticipates the moment of 1933, when again the same mobilization of society takes place. Rurüp highlights that many of the values of 1914 will be reused in 1933. "'Volksgemeinschaft' gegen 'Klassengemeinschaft,' 'nationaler Sozialismus' gegen 'Staatssozialismus,' 'Organisation' als Grundprinzip der sozialen Beziehungen gegen Individualismus und liberale Freiheitsrechte, 'deutsche Kultur' gegen 'westliche Zivilisation,' 'Weltmacht' und 'nationaler Egoismus' – das alles waren Wert- und Zielvorstellungen, an die der Nationalsozialismus in seinem Kampf gegen die Weimarer Republik anknüpfen konnte. Der 'Geist von 1914' bot ein reichhaltiges Arsenal ideologischer Waffen, aus dem die National-sozialisten sich erfolgreich zu bedienen wussten" (Rurüp Ideologisierung 141).

as a moment of communal ecstasy, in which, finally, “we were no longer what we were for such a long time: alone, with a ruptured contact between all levels of life. Individual – people – nation – world – God were suddenly reconnected,”¹⁶ Ruest would value these sufferings as the virtues of the rebel.

The underlying argument for this contrast comes again from Stirner. One of the young contributors to *Der Einzige*, Paul Gurk, synthesized it: “You are all parts, tools, and service each other. Neither is whole and serves him- or herself.”¹⁷ The “sufferings” Scheler mentioned were state induced. They were the effect of the statist production of subjectivity as dependent on a higher structure such as the Church, the Party or the State. The invention of *Mensch*, Stirner had argued, rested on the humiliation and enslavement of the singularity.¹⁸ The state perpetuated itself by using a network of dependencies. The state had perverted the priorities of the Enlightenment. Education, morals, religion and civilization were instrumental not only in

¹⁶ “Wir waren nicht mehr, was wir so lange waren: Allein! Der Zer-rissene Lebenskontakt zwischen den Reihen: Individuum – Volk – Nation – Welt – Gott wurde mit einem Male wieder geschlossen.” Quoted in Reinhard, Rürup, “Die Ideologisierung des Krieges,” 125.

¹⁷ “Ihr alle seid Teile, Werkzeuge und dient einander. Keiner ist ganz und dient sich selbst” (180).

¹⁸ This is the basic assumption of the state theories of Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel. Hobbes legitimizes the invention of a state on the assumption that man is morally flawed. In a state of nature, humans live miserably. They need institutions to mediate their living in common. Rousseau employs a more positive strategy. Man is not evil, only imperfect. Since, however, humans strive for improvement, they need a state because they want to overcome their natural situation of “stupid and unimaginative animals” (28). For Hegel, it is only the state that can give meaning to the individual’s life. In *The Rebel*, Camus highlights that Hegel’s philosophy makes man so dependent on the state that it lays the very essence of being human in the hands of his or her co-citizens. Self-consciousness is the product of my relationship to others. Stirner’s critique starts from the following hypothesis: “Wir sind in jedem Augenblick alles was wir sein können, und brauchen niemals mehr zu sein. Da kein Mangel auf uns haftet, so hat auch die Sünde keinen Sinn” (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 404).

which really begins every day, every minute with me and with you, with my and your simplest decisions” (220).⁶³

⁶³ “Ein ganzer, leibhaftiger, seiner Einzigkeit sich bewusster Mensch” [...] “einer neuen Epoche und Weltperiode, welche man die dritte Epoche nennen mag, die aber jeden Tag, jede Minute mit Mir und mit Dir, mit Meinem und Deinem einfachsten Entschluss des Beginnes auch wirklich be-ginnt.”

herd mentality (167).⁶¹ The meeting concluded, like several others, with the question, What could be done? The author's answer, in the spirit of *Der Einzige*, was: As a group, nothing special except setting a breach (167). A more complete answer would come from Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona. The undermining of "Suggestionskräfte" was still high on the agenda of *Der Einzige* and its group. On the active side, however, there was the will to publish books, gather individuals, and even start schools that would provide libertarian (personalist) education (392). All these efforts were aiming at spreading the virus of autonomy and "sense of singularity" (329).

The first public meeting of the Bund took place on Monday, May 19, and was heavily advertised. Its speakers were Lehmann, Lachmann, Ruest, and Friedlaender/ Mynona, that is, the stars of the individualist anarchist press of the time. Ruest's talk was then printed in the May 25 issue. The change in tone was here even more apparent. It was obvious that the journal had become more militant. But even if Ruest spoke of a Stirner era in philosophy and in the understanding of the political, which he called, together with the Stirner disciples Henryk Ibsen and Rolf Engert,⁶² the *Dritte Weltepoche*, Ruest made sure to keep distance from universalist revolutionary discourse. Even if he beatified Stirner, this new era was not the expression or the "fulfillment" of a theory. The new history of the new era was open. Stirner's legacy needed to be redefined in every moment of the discontinuous time of this history. The new subjectivity of this era was "a whole, embodied person, aware of his uniqueness," who lived in "a new era and world period, which may be called the third epoch, but

⁶¹ Soon the Bund started gaining an identity of its own. The May 18 minutes were framed by an editors' comment informing that it was not them who were writing the materials.

⁶² In fact, Ibsen and Engert did not use the term "Epoche." Their phrase was "Das Dritte Reich" and meant the era of freedom, autonomy and statelessness. Ruest, it seemed, had a premonitory discomfort with the phrase.

generating intellectual emancipation, but also subjection. The invention of the human soul, emotions, traditions, and ends constituted the main tools the state employed in keeping men and women enslaved. They were more effective than its prisons, its madhouses, its army, and its police. Humanism, the religion of the state, injected the subject with the desire to fill a lack. This was statist humiliation. The subject was the effect of this narrative of incompleteness. It was interpellated as incomplete and coerced into identifying with something imposed upon it discursively—an ideal, a spook.¹⁹

Mobilization

The experience of the nineteenth-century modern liberal state reveals that state organization and mobilization are overlapping concepts. A secular state, whose transcendence is history, maintains its structures by mobilizing the minds and hands of its subjects for the making of a better future. I discriminate between the two concepts here, because I address a time period of intense "revolutionary" activity that called for radical breaks with the past, imagined moments of intense historical acceleration (mobilization) and opposed them to periods of historical calm (organization). The reality behind these so-called "decisive moments in history"²⁰ is that the nineteenth-century state had not only intertwined mobilization and organization

¹⁹ In *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, Stirner highlights the various masks of the state. It is a father figure from which the minor child always has to ask for allowance (118-119). It interpellates its subjects as eternal criminals in order to reinforce their moral inferiority: "Jedes Ich ist von Geburt schon ein Verbrecher gegen das Volk, den Staat" (119). It is the doctor that takes care of its patients (220-221). It is that holy institution which makes sure that every self-interested deed is denounced as a profanity (224): "Der Staat hat immer nur den Zweck den Einzelnen zu beschränken, zu bändigen, zu subordinieren, ihn irgend einem *Allgemeinen* Untertan zu machen" (249).

²⁰ As theorized in 1927 by Stefan Zweig in his eponymous classic *Sternstunden der Menschheit*.

in its technologies of subject production, but had incorporated other “revolutions” (like the industrial revolution) into its everyday practices of organization. The state that had moved away from a celestial anchorage had recast its religious thinking upon history. It often survived by declaring states of emergency to cover up its lack of organization and to stimulate and accelerate it—integrating its mobilization strategies within its technologies of self-perpetuation.

This position against the 1914 and 1919 revolutions was reiterated by Ruest in the second issue of the journal. In an editorial titled “Where Are the Intellectuals?” (Wo sind die Geistigen?) he renewed the attack on the socialist camp. He denounced socialist socialization as metaphysics, as a *unio mystica*, in the way Stirner denounced humanism. Looking back at the “trahison des clercs” of 1914,²¹ and at the instrumental role intellectuals had played in the mobilizing process, Ruest asked rhetorically who needed again these mobilizers posturing as mouthpieces of the people in 1919. Who needed their lyrical exhortations and their disciplining discourses? Who needed them to invent common causes and lead nations towards something that was not in the true interest of the singularities that built these nations?

The attack on the socialist camp was probably influenced by the bad news coming from the Soviet Union. Another revolution was turning into a repressive dictatorship of party bureaucrats. In “On Communism and Anarchy” (Zu Kommunismus und Anarchie) and under the pseudonym Panarchos, Raoul Hausmann criticized Marxist communism in the spirit of the 1891 split of the German Left. Communism was again just another statist discourse that had turned men and women into obedient executors of a political master plan.

²¹ As presented in the 1927 eponymous classic by Julien Benda. *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals* refers to European thinkers who abandoned independent critical thinking in favor of supporting state power.

as “Interessengemeinschaft im Stirnerischen Sinne” (143). In this phase, the person in charge of the Bund was Lehmann; later, the job would be taken by Emil Kauder. Lehmann insisted on highlighting the dis-organized structure of the group, which aimed at bringing together revolting *Ich*s. It was an experiment in community, an alternative to mass-suggestion, to communion in (religious) belief gymnastics and to party terror (143).⁵⁹ Participants, he wrote in a later piece, should understand themselves as part of something but should not follow anybody or anything. The association was a place where one “learned” practicing, in common, disobedience, self-affirmation and the rejection of all inherited and unconditionally adopted collective values, [...] templates and mechanics of the spirit (214).⁶⁰ People gathered in this Bund to demonstrate that a community of interest could be built without “ideology, beliefs and catechisms” (215).

Der Einzige published regularly minutes of the meetings of the group. Lehmann reached out to the university and started the “akademische Gruppe des Stirnerbundes,” which met for the first time at the Berlin University on April 11, 1919 (155). The Bund also organized a John Henry Mackay evening, inviting both Ruest and Lachmann as speakers. It wanted to prove that cooperation between the two main Berlin individualist anarchist journals was possible and that *Der Einzige* was willing to acknowledge the merits of the initiator of the German individualist anarchist movement.

A report from April 20, 1919, signed Emil Kauder, highlighted that the Bund was hosting lively debates on themes such as liberty, sovereignty and revolutionary principles. Kauder outlined Lehmann’s presentation, which criticized the German student movement for its conformism, patriotism and

⁵⁹ “Massensuggestion, Vereinglaubensgymnastik, Parteiterror.”

⁶⁰ “Die Ablehnung aller überkommenen, bedingungslos übernommenen Kollektivwerte, [...] der Schablone, der Geistesmechanik.”

sions and manifestos, as well as a celebration of singularities finding each other.⁵⁷

Not much information about the group, its members and activities is available. In its first phase, the group's "official" name was "Society for tragic culture" (Gesellschaft der tragischen Kultur). Nevertheless, this sophisticated name did not last. Its birth was announced in a promotional material titled "A Note to April 1" (Vermerk zum 1. April) and signed, The Editors (115).

The piece was reflecting on three months of *Der Einzige*, and was also marking a slight turn in the interests of the journal. August 1914, the war, and the revolutionary period were no longer the dominant concerns of the journal. Articles turned toward more abstract topics. The journal became less polemical and less interested in addressing present day political issues. Nietzsche's influence increased, and more sympathy was shown to late expressionist literary and philosophical positions. A change of guard also followed. Hilberseimer and Panarchos left, and new names like Arthur Kahane, Paul Gurk and Ernst Roy emerged.

The birth of the discussion group was supposed to mark a more constructive phase in the life of the journal. The fight against "Massensuggestion," the state, and the apparatuses that perpetuated it was complemented by a more positive approach: "the fulfillment of the Schiller-Heine and Stirner-Nietzsche ideal of tragic Dionysian culture as a replacement of rotten Christian transcendence" (115).⁵⁸

Soon, the idea of a society for tragic culture was abandoned. The journal returned to the appellative "Stirnerbund," defined

⁵⁷ "Und ich selbst will hier Eure eigenen Sammlungen, Eure Ich-Dokumente, Bekenntnisse, Manifeste, weiter vereinigen, sammeln, sich finden lassen" (109-110).

⁵⁸ "Erfüllung des Schiller-Heine'schen, des Stirner-Nietzsche'schen Ideals, tragischer, dionysischer Kultur in Ablösung der morsch gewordenen christlichen, jeneseitigen."

The evil of party organization and revolutionary mobilization, the article highlighted, rested on the insulting interpellation of the ordinary human as nothing more than an instrument for the fulfillment of the grand project of building a "better world." Statist communism corrupted the human beings' relationship to themselves (56), life's dynamics, its creativity, "the expansion of one's own experience; the full development of one's will, one's self and other; one's balance above the abyss of death, violence and theft; as well the dissolution of one's borders" (56).²² Seeking collective emancipation through collectivist ethics and law alienated men and women from defining their own law. By essentializing the concept of work, Marxist communism identified the human with his or her social role.

Responding to the realities in the Soviet Union, the article warned that the singularity would always return and ask for what was its own. Sympathizing with revolutionary anarchism, Hausmann did not argue that what had been started in the Soviet Union should be dropped. Unlike Ruest (and closer to Marxism), he hoped that, eventually, the phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be overcome, the revolutionary avant-garde would self-dissolve, decentralized soviets would rule, and the Soviet Union would not become just another centralized state. Revolution's role (even if engineered by an avant-garde) was to break up the state and disentangle individuals from the network of social control. Its final goal was anarchy. The nation would dissolve into singularities who would then create, *ex nihilo*, social life. The anarchy produced by revolution had thus the role of creating a context of self-discovery and of regaining individual sovereignty (in Stirner's terms: *sich eignen*). This experience of anarchy

²² "Die Ausarbeitung des eigenen Erlebens, die volle Entfaltung eines Willens, sein Ich und Du, seine Balance über dem Abgrund des Todes, der Gewalt und des Diebstahls, die Auflösung seiner Grenzen."

constituted the basis of an ethical regeneration that would bestow egos with a mature (responsible and un-naive) political conduct and would offer them the means to understand the compromise society constituted. They would autonomously administer the power given to them by anarchy and start the war of all against all understood affirmatively,²³ that is, the true building of the self without institutional mediation and self-alienation in social roles.

Individual Revolt

Ruest's position was not similar to Hausmann's, in spite of their common Stirnerian background.²⁴ Ruest did not believe in a revolutionary avant-garde— not even a self-dissolving one. He rejected the idea that a violent collective campaign would allow egos to take themselves into possession. He also expressed skepticism regarding the enlightening effects of such a campaign, in particular regarding its possibility to allow egos to re-learn political action and practice it. The war experience and the events of 1918-1919 showed that after a violent event and an implosion of power, individuals, now allegedly in a state of nature, did not experience the radical democratic illumination that would awaken in them a drive to co-exist in a qualitatively superior form of community. Rather, post-event subjects and collectivities acted as agents in what seemed the universal process of the return of the same. If revolution for Hausmann seemed to look like an outburst that would trigger an immediate and reliable spontaneous organization of the masses (as Rosa Luxemburg, the theoretician of the Spartacist

²³ This is different from Hobbes' imagining of the war of all against all. Hobbes' pessimism is influenced by the fear of civil war.

²⁴ Only a few weeks after publishing this article, Hausmann would distance himself from *Der Einzige*'s politics and even write pamphlets against it. I will return to Hausmann's position in Chapter 4, where I discuss *Der Einzige*'s relationship to the Dada movement.

of themselves. This happened not only because the act of mis-recognition sheltered subjects from the active and heroic act of becoming what they were (Nietzsche's argument), but especially because they thought and felt within the self-estranging paradigm of identity and identification (Stirner's point). As discourse, humanism appealed to subjects, Kahane argued, because it focused only on those aspects of the experience of being in common that made things and selves look alike; because individuals were addicted to identity thinking.

The Community of Rebels

In spite of the emphasis on rebellion for oneself (and not for others), *Der Einzige* argued that rebellion was fulfilled only when practiced in common with others. Like the bohemian café, *Der Einzige* itself was such a meeting place of singularities. It provided the infrastructure for them to assert themselves. It was a project, a collective one, but one that sought synergy only in the act of rebellion, not in its content, and even less in time. Every issue could have been the first and the last, and that it existed testified only to the fact that it was able to attract, but not organize, a critical mass of rebels.

In order to confer this rebellion in common a more corporeal (and not only textual) reality, *Der Einzige* existed also as a discussion group, the *Stirnerbund*.⁵⁶ Ruest's article, "Diogenes and His Lamp," voiced the call of an association of rebels, but the call was formulated in such a way as not to suggest the existence of an overdetermining purpose and of underlying principles of organization. Ruest made sure to specify that he was not a leader and even less a prophet. He understood himself only as mediator. The *Stirnerbund* would be a place of gathering, and the journal just a collection of self-documents, confes-

⁵⁶ In November 1919, a publishing house was also founded.

the logic of reformist thinking. Even if contributors thought of rebellion as spreading in space and time, *Der Einzige*'s understanding of time and agency was different than that of reformism.

Unlike the reform doctrine, which was collectivist, the infection metaphor assumed that agency was individual and that change was never for the collective, but always for the one. Reformism implied a certain linear and causal understanding of time and a dialectics of progress, while infection and rebellion represented phenomena that could not be predetermined and whose effects could not be predicted. They counted only as phenomena taking place in the present. For the rebel who rebelled for himself, rebellion was restarted from scratch every single day. Disengagement was momentary and did not build lasting structures for the future such as laws, identities or truth. The time of the rebel was discontinuous; it was made of an accumulation of particles of present.

One of the younger contributors to *Der Einzige*, Arthur Kahane, expressed his vision of disengagement in a programmatically sounding piece, titled "Manifesto of the Unique Individual" (Manifest des Einzelnen) (113-114). The article praised the recluse and the person who did not want to march in a column and for whom freedom constituted a radical inner experience, a setting, a space in which their I could breathe freely. The refusal to march in a column represented the refusal to participate in an alienating experience of time. To be a recluse stood for a choice to exist in the present. Additionally, the enemies of the singularity, be they on the Left or on the Right, aimed to trap its thought not only in the time-horizons of the past and the future, of memory and causes to fight for, but also expose it to calls to unity and to join a multitude (113). As other contributors to *Der Einzige*, Kahane made his duty to indicate the abstract and dis-individualized sense of community and time lying behind such calls. Their effect was a passionate *unio mystica* of subjects with enslaving misrepresentations

League envisioned), for Ruest and other collaborators of *Der Einzige* (Friedlaender included) it would look, as I already suggested, more like an epidemic, like the proliferation of an infection over a longer period of time. The germ spreading from one individual to another was disobedience, *Frechheit, individual revolt*—what Stirner called *Empörung*

Since revolution needed to be abandoned together with the ideas of common cause and mobilizing elite, individual revolt became the mechanism allowing egos to achieve autonomy and thus develop singular goals. "Ich muss mich empören, um emporzukommen," Stirner argued in a quote reproduced by *Der Einzige* under title "On Freedom and Revolution" (Über Freiheit und Revolution) (56). It meant that one needed to revolt in order to break through. For him, *Empörung* did not constitute a struggle against a certain political system, something that revolutions were after, but only the action of working out one's own from "what is" the current predicament (das Bestehende) (354).²⁵ He meant dis-engagement from the organizing and mobilizing networks of the modern state. For individualist anarchists, Stirner's antihumanist position emphasized that central to this "what is" was the idea of the human itself and the way in which subjectivity was constructed within the organizational and statist framework.

As the title of the piece emphasizes, Stirner's critique of the idea of revolution was integrated in the opposition between the concepts of freedom (*Freiheit*) and individual sovereignty or autonomy (*Eigentum*). Freedom was the goal of revolutions. It was negative freedom, freedom *from*. It assumed that there were specific rights that had to be won by means of violence or radical transformation. It assumed the existence of an entity bestowed with the legitimacy to grant these rights. An essentialist understanding of the I derived from here. Revolutions aimed at liberating this entity immobilized in a false identity

²⁵ "Nur ein Herausarbeiten Meiner aus dem Bestehenden."

by apparatuses of discipline and restoring its authenticity via its rights.

Individualist anarchist critique of revolution stressed that freedom and revo-lution were unsustainable approaches to change because they called on singularities to fight for something that they already had, autonomy. The error of revolutionary collectivist thinking was that it posited freedom before autonomy, and that it valued an abstraction—the socially and politically defined subject—more than the reality of the concrete singularity, its *Eigenheit*. In the words of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, freedom functioned as longing for something and awakened the wrath against that which one did not have. On the contrary, the practice of egotism called on celebrating oneself and as such eliminating unfreedom in the present. I am sovereign, Stirner argues, already when I say it! Revolt has no future, no transcendence, and no grand battle to prepare for. It is just disobedience practiced at every moment of one's everyday life.²⁶

Inspired by Stirner, Friedlaender/ Mynona wrote a “presentist” manifesto in *Der Sturm*. It was the manifesto of his anti-humanist revolt.²⁷ According to Dieter Lehner, this essay had a significant impact on the bohemia and on the avant-garde circles. As the title already suggested, the article argued against the idea of revolution and the transcendence that it presupposed. Under the rubric “my strategy of rebelling,” it advocated the practice of rendering oneself *indifferent* in the spirit of the early Romantics. Indifference, creative indifference, was

²⁶ Die “Freiheit” weckt euren Grimm gegen Alles was ihr nicht seid; der “Egoismus” ruft Euch zur Freude über Euch selbst, zum Selbstgenusse; die “Freiheit” ist und bleibt eine Sehnsucht, ein romantischer Klagelaut, eine christliche Hoffnung auf Jenseitigkeit und Zukunft; die “Eigenheit” ist eine Wirklichkeit, die von selbst gerade so viel Unfreiheit beseitigt, als Euch hinderlich den eigenen Weg versperrt. Max Stirner, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 180.

²⁷ “Ich bin präsent. Menschen waren oder werden.” S. Friedlaender, “Präsentismus,” 253.

Ruest's antihumanism was thus based on an act of constant de-centering, inspired by Nietzschean affirmation, which, as Jacques Derrida maintains, is

the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, without origin, which is offered to an active interpretation. *This affirmation [which] determines the non-center otherwise than as loss of the center*, [...] affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology—in other words throughout his entire history—has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play.⁵⁵

This quote harks back to Ruest's vision of a post-statist politics. In an article titled “Diogenes and His Lamp” (Diogenes und seine Laterne), Ruest proposed a Nietzsche-inspired idea of overpolitics—without, however, the Nietzschean aristocratic claims attached to it. This politics was not based on essences, antagonism, competition and did not lead to war. It was not a politics that antagonized and killed, but one of letting life live itself as life without transcendent administration (“Politik des Lebens,” “Überpolitik”). This politics, he concluded, would “seek people and not bring them together” (110).

There was no unity among the contributors to the journal with regard to the way in which “de-humanizing” should be practiced. It would be a mistake, however, to surmise that their critique of revolution and their emphasis on rebellious dis-engagement from state structures functioned according to

⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” 292.

ors.⁵² Newman rightly argues that *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* constructs a theoretical “un-man” that can produce a duly critique of the state and that this “un-man” is not an essence of some sort, and that it “does not exist in the individual prior to ideological interpellation. Rather, the ‘un-man’ is a spectral excess produced through the process of interpellation—[which] only comes into being once an ‘essential’ identity is constructed for the individual.”⁵³ The un-man is thus explored by a rebellion against one’s own ideologically constructed identity, but again without taking into account that this rebellion can succeed only within what Stirner called the *Verein der Egoisten*.⁵⁴

Contributors to *Der Einzige* believed that individual revolt granted a break with ideology as a possibility in the present, that is, in the momentous, temporal and ephemeral act of rebellion itself, and that this practice was not to be performed in isolation. It was to be achieved within a community of rebels, that is, not only as subject of rebellion, but also as object of it. Moreover, the singularity existing in a community without essences, without a discourse on man, was no longer the object of interpellation. Interpellation rested on an underlying humanizing principle. As long as there was no *Mensch*, as long as no *we* was posited, the mediating agent who perpetuated ideology was missing. Ideology could not work without identity, that is, in a community where everybody was a radical other.

⁵² Stirner’s approach has opened various paths to reading power, which are traceable in the writings of philosophers of the Frankfurt School or the European post-68 generation. Stirner’s emphasis on egotism also inspired his detractors. Early critics such as Szeliga and Marx and Engels misread him as idealist and petty bourgeois. Even in the writings of recent philosophers like Jacques Derrida, the suspicion of idealism does not fade away.

⁵³ Saul Newman, *Specters of Stirner*, 326.

⁵⁴ In his reading of Stirner, Gerhard Senft highlights that Stirner did not call for solitary struggle; only for struggles of solitaries for becoming solitary in common (Schatten 14).

Friedlaender/ Mynona’s translation of Stirnerian disobedience. Being indifferent meant neither disregard for the other nor an idealist utopia of insulation “from the outside.” Singularity was understood discursively, and indifference referred to a practice of actively balancing the binary oppositions that constructed the singularity and its “Eigentum.” “I am a royal nothing,” Friedlaender/ Mynona wrote. This meant not a negative zero, but a neutral, medial, indifferent absence on the basis of which the I could dance “within the chaos of all negations and positions.”²⁸

Younger contributors like Gerhard Lehmann criticized revolution employing the concept of obedience (Gehorsamkeit).

Gehorsamkeit was Hörigkeit (bondage) subordination to an idea (64).²⁹ It was the state of a mind possessed by the spooks of an abstraction. The revolutionary mind could not be autonomous; it just perpetuated structures of subjection. In order to gain autonomy the idea needed to be permanently renewed.³⁰ This renewal could be granted only by a generalized practice of disobedience that would become instrumental in the dismantling of organizations. The practice of revolt was

²⁸ “Ich bin das kaiserliche Nichts: nicht die negative Null, sondern die neutrale, mediale, indifferent, die ich personifizierte und mit der ich wie als Stein im Chaos aller Negationen und Positionen tanzen kann.” Dr. S. Friedlaender, “Präsentismus,” 253. I will offer a detailed analysis of Friedlaender/ Mynona’s reading of Stirner and of his concept of indifference in Chapter 4.

²⁹ “Gehorsamkeit ist Hörigkeit und Unterordnung unter eine Idee! [...] Wenn es noch irgend einen Gedanken gibt, den ich seit der Kindheit übernommen habe ohne ihn zu prüfen, wenn es noch irgend einen Gedanken gibt das Macht über mich hat, so ist das Gehorsam—Gehorsam im Glauben (64).” *Gehorsamkeit * engendered organized communities. Opposed to both reform and revolution, Der Einzige aimed at building a certain culture of civil restlessness that would render mobilizing machines dysfunctional. As Michel Foucault argued in the History of Sexuality, “the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know” (62).*

³⁰ “Unser Zukunftsideal—wenn das Wort nicht zu schmierig klingt—unser Zukunftsideal ist derart, dass es sich stündlich realisiert” (64).

this bold self-affirmation, and the repercussions of this practice within the realm of the political were the rendering dysfunctional and spontaneous of the body politic.

The centrality of the concept of suggestion for *Der Einzige*'s political analysis reveals that it adopted Stirner and Nietzsche's reading of the state as a structure similar in constitution and practices to the Church. If differences between these two institutions existed, they were limited to their disciplining spectacle. In *God and the State*, Bakunin argued that "There is not, there cannot be, a State without religion," that is, without religious forms of understanding political life (84).³¹ The theoreticians of the modern state themselves highlighted this symbiosis. In his *Social Contract*, J.J. Rousseau emphasized that the structures of the state could not stand together without the neo-pagan cult of the state (40). Although Rousseau opposed Christianity and referred to it as a religion of servitude, he called for the state to invent a religion for itself, a "profession of faith which is purely civil [...] without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or a loyal subject" (186).³² This religion administered the desire of the subject, incited the flame of identification with the nation and helped to grant spectacular reality to the abstract idea of the common interest. It was this desire/ flame/ *Rausch*, this opium that "suggested" (as *Der Einzige* put it) the self-understanding of the singularity as citizen, that transformed the community into the *unio mystica* within the body of the nation.

Here is how important religious thinking was for theoreticians of the state like Rousseau:

³¹ For Bakunin, Protestantism was the state religion *par excellence*, especially in its deist forms. Deism embodied the symbiosis of reason and faith, making one work for the other as a unitary whole in the service of the state.

³² For Rousseau, this religion meant putting forward "dogmas" that were "simple and few in number, expressed precisely and without explanations or commentaries," for people to believe in (186).

the state discursively as definition and control over *what is* (the predicament). Its power is perpetuated by and through its subjects' actions and within language and its practice. According to Newman, the liberating potential of Stirner's philosophy rests in this investing of the ego with the virtues of a "counter-ideological specter that escapes subjectification through its resistance to symbolization." Newman concludes that

We must, as Stirner suggests, continually work on ourselves to resist ideological subjectification, and re-negotiate our position in ideology, seeking 'lines of flight' from it. Stirner calls this strategy of permanent resistance and renegotiation, 'ownness'.⁴⁹ Ownness is a form of positive freedom, in which the individual re-negotiates his subjectivity, creating his own forms of freedom, rather than it being handed to him as part of a revolutionary programme.⁵⁰

Newman thus astutely argues that egotism is a tool of disengagement and of rendering interpellation superfluous. What he does not deal with is the material dimension of Stirner's egotism and the fact that this egotism works on a communal level as a practice of interrupting the verbal and material perpetuation of ideology. For Ruest and most of the contributors to *Der Einzige*,⁵¹ this communal dimension of autonomy, ignored by Newman and many Stirner scholars, was critical in the act of revolt. The fact that revolt was individual and *Empörung* egotistical did not mean that they were solitary endeav-

⁴⁹ That is, what I call here sovereignty or autonomy.

⁵⁰ Saul Newman, *Specters of Stirner*, 328.

⁵¹ In Chapter 4, I highlight that one of the contributors who read Stirner in a solitary and idealist key was Friedlaender/ Mynona.

Saul Newman has tried to demonstrate that Stirner's egoism envisions a subjectivity that can overcome ideology in an Althusserian sense. It can reach a point of non-determination "from which resistance to these humanist discourses can take place" (322).⁴⁷ In an article titled, *Specters of Stirner* (an indirect response to Derrida's comments on Stirner in *Specters of Marx*), Newman discovers in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* a theory of a spectral excess, able to escape ideological determination and act as a non-essentialist point of departure from which a critique of ideology may be constructed.

Newman's reading of Stirner is an effort to go beyond the structuralist and poststructuralist (Foucauldian theory of power) approaches to ideology (and, I would add, the state), which posit that "an uncontaminated point of departure outside ideology is itself ideological."⁴⁸ Newman's piece discusses the Althusserian contention—also highlighted by Stirner—that there is no human essence beyond the grasp of ideology, as rationalist Enlightenment thinkers surmised, and that all human interests are constructed by ideological apparatuses; in short, that the spooks of ideology are everywhere, existing at the roots of social existence, and that there is no beyond to ideological interpellation—something that will exist as the truth that ideology distorts.

Newman's approach is rightly based on Stirner's more sophisticated concept of the state rather than that of other anarchist philosophers. Unlike them, Stirner understood

⁴⁷ Saul Newman, *Specters of Stirner*, 322. A parallel between Stirner and Althusser's view on statist subject-production reveals surprising similarities. Althusser's concept of interpellation resembles Stirner's *Sparren*. The former produces the subject, the latter the *Mensch*. Althusser's contentions that the main purpose of ideology is "constituting concrete individuals as subjects" (Lenin 116), and that ideology is so pervasive in its constitution of subjects that it forms their very reality and thus appears to them as "true" or "obvious," could have been very well taken out of Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*.

⁴⁸ Saul Newman, *Specters of Stirner*, 322.

If anyone, after having publicly acknowledged these same dogmas [of state religion], behaves as if he did not believe in them, then let him be put to death, for he has committed the greatest crime, that of lying before the law.³³

For individualist anarchists the act of disobeying, of breaking this spell of "suggestion" was the revolutionary act itself. There was no need for another transcendence, for another definition of the meaning of life, for another religion to legitimate it, and for another promise placed in the future. There was no need for another mass mobilization. Revolt was the antonym for religion. *Der Einzige*'s intervention and its prospects for change centered on what Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community* called the permanent interruption of the myth of the state.³⁴ The goal of interruption—Stirner's *Emporkommen*, Friedlaender/Mynona's living in the present or Lehmann's *Ungehorsamkeit* regarding one's own subjective construction—was to make these communities un-mobilizable. The war-experience highlighted the destructive character of essential communities. Because they were created on essences and sameness, states and revolutions invented a radical other that was un-subsumable to the essence. This radical other became the enemy, be it that of the class struggle or of the other as nation, and this led to wars, Ruest argued in his article "Attila the Plague of God" (*Attila die Gottesgeißel*) (36-38).

³³ J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 186.

³⁴ Nancy's *The Inoperative Community* is a project similar to *Der Einzige*. It is an effort to define a community that is not one of humans or individuals, but one of singularities. It advocates a practice of revolt that consists in the affirmation of these singularities (their "passion for being") against their essentializing as humans.

Antihumanism

It was with calls for humanism, morality and culture, that the state mobilized against this Other. In another article, titled "... but Don't Lie Too Much!" (—aber lügt nur nicht zu sehr!), Ruest expressed his outrage with the many definitions of justice, humanity, culture and peoples' and human rights that the press was generating, regarding this intense verbal output as a conspicuous form of violence in times of peace.³⁵ Essences, Paul Gurk argued in "The Drive to Kill" (Der Trieb zu töten) (296-8), triggered a permanent state of war of the singularity with itself. He analyzes the way in which mortifying oneself and others in the name of ideals brought war to the core of human civilization. War was another grand mobilizing machine. It was thus no surprise that the American radical writer Randolph Bourne coined the phrase "War is the health of the state" during this period. The modern state was in a permanent state of war because it needed to reinforce the rule of the ideal.³⁶

Individualist anarchism is not another ideology, but a hybrid assemblage of un-pious "ideologies" coming from singularities, whose important duty, Stirner argues, is to remain disobedient including toward anarchism itself (and not turn it into a religion).³⁷ This was possible, *Der Einzige* argued, if all these ideologies were not predicated upon the collective subject with a telos. Among singularities that did not share humanity, everyone was an other. Within this predicament, assimilation to sameness became inconceivable. Interruption of myth, Nancy highlights, is not a myth itself. Nancy emphasizes that inter-

³⁵ "... zu keiner Zeit des Friedens war je von ewiger Gerechtigkeit, von Menschentum und Bestimmung, von Humanität und ungeschriebenen Gesetzen, von Kultur und Völkerrecht und siegreichen Ideen so geschwätzig die Rede. Seit wann hatte Macht und brutale Gewalt so viele Worte gemacht?" (50).

³⁶ See Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 359.

³⁷ Saul Newman, *Max Stirner*, 183.

singularity's production as subject. Every form of work that was not egotistical was exploitation, Ruest argued in "Work and Disappointment" (Arbeit und Verzweiflung) (97-99), concluding that work could only be *yours* (98).

Work as social control meant control over desire. Subjects were given reasons to work, and work was advertised as an activity that would instill meaning in the desert of subjectification. Ruest believed that World War I revealed the absurdity of metaphysical investments of work and duty. Because death was individual, it questioned the identification with an abstract *askesis* of work. In front of death, which was individual, the singularity understood that nothing was worth dying for. In war, one worked, fought or died for the state's interests, and not one's own.

Ruest constantly returned to the idea of war in order to highlight that humanism and not man—like Hobbes put it—was evil (50). War represented the ultimate practice of mobilization: the subject was placing even its own life in the hands of the state. Nothing could illustrate better the alienating nature of humanism than the experience of the soldier on the frontline. The solitude of death revealed the discrepancy between being-human and being-singularity. In this predicament, the singularity realized that it was to die not in its own name in that of something that would not die together with it, that is, "man."

The Subject of Revolt

A question that *Der Einzige* answered incompletely—or maybe intentionally left unanswered—was the question regarding the subject of revolt. Who "owned" the I (*Ich*) that decided to revolt, and how individual were the experiences of this revolt? How could this I escape the ideological apparatuses of the state that had produced it—what Stirner called the spooks (Sparren) in the subject's head?

not far from that of Aristotle who argued that the slave was that human being with whom somebody (or something) else could *do something*, who “does not belong to itself,” who was a “piece of property” that is “meant for action,” meant to serve a purpose that transcends his or her interests.⁴⁴

This approach also brings to the fore, as Roberto Esposito has shown, that a person is characterized by the act of ownership.⁴⁵ This means to have property over objects or people-objects, but it also means, for Stirner, to have property over oneself, to be autonomous. Ruest completed Stirner’s insight by focusing on work and the protestant ethic. He anticipates Nancy’s position that community cannot be produced through work (and is inoperative). For Ruest the protestant ethic of work represented another form of this enslavement of the singularity and its reduction to a means within a larger scheme of things. In this context— but also within Marxist discourse⁴⁶ —work was a form of social control and a useless effort to overcome the despair triggered by the

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 59. Nietzsche reasserts Stirner’s antihumanism in his critique of the state. The state, like religion before, is the new moral and political organizer. It is the new idol, “the coldest monster” (Also Sprach, Werke 48), a place where all singularities lose themselves (Zarathustra 50). The starting point is: “Der Mensch ist eine Sache die überwunden werden soll” (Zarathustra Manuscripts 11). The chapter “Vom neuen Götzen” is a diatribe against the state. The state is evil because it controls morality, not only because it is repressive against life (“Staat nennen sie den langsamen Selbstmord von ganzen Völkern”), but also because it pushes its subjects in a futile rat race: “Sie klettern übereinander hinaus und werfen sich in den Abgrund – aber ein Anderer grunzt ihnen schon wieder zu und er stieg noch höher” (71). The state cannot be reformed. “Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous: there begins the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune” (Zarathustra 51).

⁴⁵ Roberto Esposito, *Persons and Things: From the Body’s Point of View*. New York: Polity, 2015, 16-19.

⁴⁶ According to Ruest, socialism and communism also tried to confer meaning to the social practice of work. Nevertheless, like other religious discourses, the meaning they came up with was collective, abstract, extra-individual.

ruption is only a “trembling at the age of being,” and not a code of conduct.

For *Der Einzige*, the assertion of the *Nichts*, as the absence on which the I was built, was the guarantee that another mythology did not come into being. Nancy argues that a “myth of the absence of myth” is not a myth in the totalitarian sense because its narrative is not only undermined by the absence at its core, but also because it only produces a closure of history as opening. It “is itself neither another myth, nor a negative myth (nor the negative of a myth), but it is a myth only inasmuch as it consists in the interruption of myth.”³⁸

Interruption is performed in a singular voice, and it takes place, as Friedlaender/ Mynona stressed, only in the present. It rejects the future and transcendence. It is not the voice of a *we* speaking in the name of a *we* and for a *we*. It is the *Einzige* (the singularity) asserting itself as its *Eigentum* (sovereignty, ownership), which stands as the basis of an ethics and politics of the singularity. It “presents [in Nancy’s words] the mythless truth of endless being-in-common, of this being *in* common that is not ‘common being.’” The community itself cannot control it and it is incapable of founding or containing.³⁹

Lehmann believed that disobedience triggered the “Lockerung” of the state structure. It produced a state of dysfunction that spread gradually, like an epidemic, throughout the entire mechanism of generating collective servitude. Revolt, unlike revolution, did not proclaim that there was something like an outside agency that could intervene and change the structure. Everything happened from inside, monistically, rejecting any transcendent locus, other than the singularity, its continuous becoming and its trace of interruption, which would serve as the anchorage of change.

³⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 61.

³⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 62.

Because it refused constructing an Other as enemy, or a conflict between multiples, revolt spoke the idiom of what Deleuze and Guattari call a minor language. Minor language opposes the idea of dialect, which accepts transcendence, and is the language of revolution. Dialect and minor language are both “deviances” from the major and normative idiom. Minor language, however, thrives within the major idiom and does not try to center itself in an irreconcilable difference. The dialect essentializes this difference and aims at separating (dividing) and at producing an autonomous multitude.

Minor practices are subversive, and they seek neither to establish boundaries nor to become hegemonic in an appropriated territory. They do not impose order and oppose with the aim of replacing. No revolution, no turnover of a certain order is desired. Separations and essential oppositions are prerequisites to exclusions and conflicts. Minor practices are rebellions unfolding within what the contemporary individualist anarchist philosopher Hakim Bey calls the “the fractal dimensions invisible to the cartography of Control,”⁴⁰ whereas dialects aim at constructing a new topology.

By imagining change as the effect of practices of *Lösen* und *Lockern*, Lehman advocated such a minor approach. His argument was that one cannot defeat a closed movement by countering it with another essence, but only by “letting the inertia of this movement dissolve and loosen, only by injecting self-consciousness and strength into individuals.”⁴¹ The Stirnerian *Empörung* was the practice that produced this dissolving and loosening (*lösen* und *lockern*). *Der Einzige* imagined itself as a site of such revolts aiming at this loosening of the “what is,” the predicament (*das Bestehende*). *Lockern* created space for

⁴⁰ Hakim Bey, *TAZ*, 103.

⁴¹ “Man kann eine geschlossene Bewegung nicht dadurch besiegen, dass man ihr eine Einheit entgegengesetzt, sondern nur dadurch, dass man die Inheit dieser Bewegung sich lösen und lockern lässt, nur dadurch, dass man den Individuen Selbstbewusstsein und Stärke einflösst” (65).

self-organization, self-knowledge, and self-affirmation. It was a reaffirmation of Eduard Bernstein’s famous saying that “the movement is everything: the goal nothing” (*die Bewegung ist alles, das Ziel ist nichts*) which the statist socialist movement had misinterpreted. And because it was aimless revolt, pure assertion of *what I am* and *what I want* without a program, *Empörung* questioned the necessity of revolutionary institutions. Change would be produced by the restless agitation of the undocile and uncontainable body of the self-controlled singularity. If something would break organization apart, it would not be the workers with weapons in their hands. They were the agents of the eternal return. Change was more likely to come from the provoking demeanor of the bohemian, the unruly rambling of the outcast, and the outrageous attitude of the egotist.

All anarchist critiques of the state promoted de-centralized, federalist or, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, rhizomatic forms of organization. Regardless if they were nineteenth-century Kropotkinists or philosophers of difference of the post-1968 era like Nancy, they argued in favor of a polity that, “in contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths,” were “a-centered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying [...] without a General and without an organizing memory or a central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states.”⁴² It was a form of life-sharing that had no history, no principles, no objectives, and for which questions like “Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for?” were “totally useless questions.”⁴³

What made Stirner and *Der Einzige*’s critique of the state unique within the anarchist spectrum was their antihumanism. Humanism turned the subject into a means. Stirner’s logic was

⁴² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

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Constantin Parvulescu
The Individualist Anarchist Discourse of Early Interwar
Germany
2018

Retrieved 3rd September 2020 from www.academia.edu
Original contains a section called "Issues of *Der Einzige* and
Key Articles" and an extensive bibliography, which have
not been included here.

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

taken up by anybody, including Stirner, in the
realm of investigation.²⁸

Theory of Events

Philosophy, as the practice of clarifying concepts, came under Ruest's ridicule. In an article titled "Der Einzige defends Itself as Egotist" (*Der Einzige bewährt sich als Egoisten*) he responded to two letters to the editor, which he reproduced at the beginning of his piece. Both letters came from people who referred to themselves as philosophers, and who raised objections with regard to the way in which Ruest and Stirner used the concept *Ich*. Dr. Fritz Stern addressed the logical and theoretical malfunction of the Stirnerian understanding of the self. Stern seemed a defendant of individualism. He drew on Fichte and opposed Fichte's *Ich*, as the relationship of conscience to itself, to Stirner and Ruest's who, according to Stern, regarded it as nature, that is, as more than its discursive representation.

The two letters asked Ruest to clarify concepts, a provocation an individualist anarchist intellectual could not take on.²⁹ Accepting a theoretical discussion meant recognizing the regime of *Geist*, intersubjectivity and the practices of consensus-building such as the "disinterested dialogue," that is, the reconciliation of the irreconcilable on humanist presuppositions. For Ruest, Dr. Stern inhabited an environment in which one could find the time and the peace to clarify concepts, follow logical threads, strive for the accuracy of statements, and detail demonstrations. This was the comfort

²⁸ "Diese Unmöglichkeit, eine Verständigung über die Auffassung der Werturteile eines Anderen zu erlangen, diese, wie mir scheint, stärkste und natürlichste Begründung des Egoismus, ist noch von Keinem, auch von Stirner nicht, in den Bereich der Untersuchungen gezogen worden." Benedict Lachmann, *Protagoras, Nietzsche, Stirner*, 71.

²⁹ The other letter came from the socialist philosopher Arthur Goldstein.

zone of Order under the shelter of the Law. To such an idyllic imagining of disinterested thinking (“die Klärungen theoretischer Fragen in seinem Hause” (26)), Ruest proposed an understanding of thinking that performed its operations in the haste and turmoil of the battlefield (“tumultuarischen Zeiten”), within a “war of all against all.” The illusion of universalism could emerge only in the literary salon or in the academic seminar room, but not when encountering irreconcilable singularities.

Ruest acknowledged the temptation of buying into the philosopher or intel-lectual’s role and of participating in the social ritual of clarifying and integrating concepts.³⁰ He adopted, however, Landauer and Lachmann’s position against the mortifying nature of concepts and the fear of the unknown they carried, even if he was aware that he was in part contradicting himself. His anarchism was philosophical, and his immanentism—being non-conceptual within the regime of concepts—was often close to self-contradiction and hypocrisy.

What made it authentic is perhaps explained by Rudolf Rocker, one of Germany’s most popular anarchists. In his memoirs, he synthesizes the platform of the French theoretical anarchist journal *En Dehors* as follows:

We love the fight for the sake of combat, without taking into account the benefits of a winning idea. There is no infallible touchstone for the truth yet, and the ideal of a coming Golden Age has not yet been revealed. Life itself is an eternal change of ideas and phenomena that are not bound to

³⁰ “Ich habe mich an diesen “Klärungen” nach besten Kräften beteiligt, aber meines Wissens nie einen Zweifel darüber bestehen lassen [...], dass ich diese Klärungen keineswegs in alle Ewigkeit fortzusetzen gedächte, sondern mit der etwa einmal geklärten “theoretischen Fragen” mit gemeinster Schlichtheit und brutalen Egoismus zu meinem Nutz und Frommen bedienen würde” (26).

any particular formation. We feel driven by new thoughts today and do not know where they are going to take us. It is the movement itself that changes all forms of existence and breaks new ground. Nothing is worse than the absolutism of ideas that pretend to be able to explain the world according to certain models. Every absolutism is a reaction and a sin against the spirit. That's why we only live today and do not ask what the future will bring to us. We only know the fetters that push us today, and they have to be blown up.³¹

This platform which could have been published by *Der Einzige* on its front page and could have been signed by Ruest or Lehmann highlighted the ambiguous relationship of individualist anarchism with theory and concepts. Dialectics and thought anchored solely in the present allowed an excuse for the necessary self-contradiction of the egotist and could explain why Ruest was not hypocritical when he declared himself both a revolted egotist and a philosopher and manipulator of concepts. But dialectics and presentism also challenged the possibility of knowledge. They suggested that

³¹ "Wir lieben den Kampf um des Kampfes willen, ohne auf die Vorteile Bezug zu nehmen, die der Sieg einer Idee mit sich bringt. Es gibt bis jetzt keinen unfehlbaren Prüfstein für die Wahrheit, und das Ideal eines kommenden Goldenen Zeitalters ist noch nicht entschleiert worden. Das Leben selbst ist ein ewiger Wechsel der Ideen und Erscheinungen, die an keine bestimmte Auffassung gebunden sind. Wir fühlen uns heute von neuen Gedanken ergriffen und wissen nicht, wohin sie uns tragen werden. Es ist die Bewegung selbst, die alle Formen des Daseins ändert und neuen Möglichkeiten Bahn bricht. Nichts ist schlimmer als der Absolutismus der Ideen, die da vorgeben, die Welt nach bestimmten Vorlagen umzudeckeln zu können. Jeder Absolutismus ist Reaktion und Sünde gegen den Geist. Deshalb leben wir nur das Heute und fragen nicht danach, was uns die Zukunft bringen wird. Wir kennen nur die Fesseln, die uns heute drücken, und sie gilt es zu sprengen." Rudolf Rocker, *Aus den Memorien eines deutschen Anarchisten*, 114. Rocker did not actually believe in this platform.

thought developed only in the present. Based on the refusal of unity, they criticized the functioning of thinking, even of the legitimacy of asking oneself philosophical questions, as the question implied looking into the future.

But an overall refusal of knowledge, of concepts and of intellectual exchange was not something that one would find in the pages of *Der Einzige*. *Der Einzige* defended its theoretical position by arguing that there was no knowledge that a singularity or a community *had to* possess. There was no constitutive text like a bible or a constitution that a community of rebels needed, which was essential to the subject's self-understanding. Their criticism against the organizing power of concepts did not mean, however, refusal *tout court*. The intervention of the journal was the best proof that ideas needed to be fought at least in part with ideas. *Der Einzige* did not advocate irrationalism or silence; it only advocated certain practices of dealing with concepts. An *Ich* without concepts was defense-less in the face of ideology. Unconnected or atomized selves could be as easily manipulated as those who identified with causes. This was why the journal existed, and this was also why it tried, in a different and non-authoritarian way, to "bring singularities together." Concepts and knowledge were double-edged swords: tools for both submission and liberation.

If one wants to elicit an answer to *Der Einzige*'s take on concepts, and, more generally, to its mission as a concepts-producing journal, one needs to return to Ruest's phrase of "tumultuarische Zeiten" and its reference to the epistemological disorder in which the singularity processed the what is. Ruest's irony regarding the philosophical seminar was aimed at a certain utopia of knowledge (and polity) that strove towards ideals of order, clarity, non-contradiction, and purity. History had shown and would show how destructive such thinking was. The more order, unity and purity a system engendered at its core, the more destructive it became at its margins and in its encounter with the Others that it produced. Thinking in tumul-

tuous times meant accepting the impurity, the temporality, and the impro-vised character of thought. It meant acknowledging the temporality of concepts as events,³² as engendering and arresting contradictory forces that change directions and intensities when wandering, as signifiers from one mind to another. Instead of transmitting or organizing, concepts “collided” with others, “destabilized,” “inspired,” opened and closed doors, and were at the same time causes and objects of intellectual plundering, ridicule and abuse.

Tumultuous times revealed the agonistic epistemological context of conceptual production (in the chaotic struggle of all against all). Nevertheless, this predicament also emphasized the improvised and creative aspect of the process. If a concept’s function was to name something, to carry with it some sort of personal referentiality, it also had another function, that of separating as forgetting and overcoming. This was the creative and rebellious potential in the employment of the concept, and this is why *Der Einzige* expressed so much interest in the act of creation, in genius, *Rausch* (ecstasy), and especially, in Nietzsche’s concept of active and creative forgetting—all in relation to the idea of individual revolt and its emphasis on the present.³³

One of the most dedicated promoters of this positive and non-dialectical idea of rebellion was Friedlaender/ Mynona. He published both theoretical and fictional pieces dealing with this topic. His novella, *Der Schöpfer*, appeared in installments

³² As Deleuze and Guattari would later use the term in *What is Philosophy?*.

³³ For Stirner, it is ignoring the spooks in one’s mind. Nietzsche develops his theory of creative forgetting in his famous essay “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.” Continuing Stirner’s ghostly vocabulary, he calls for the abandonment of the past because it “returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment” (61). For *Der Einzige*, creative forgetting is revolt, *impertinent* demeanor with regard to history (that is, selective and not submissive), and allowing the subject to think ahistorically, in the present.

in *Der Einzige*, filling four issues of the *Beiblatt*, while his philosophical pieces, though with a thrust slanted towards idealism, continued his pre-war “presentism” and “indifferentism.” Already in his *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, Friedlaender/ Mynona argued that “unlearning to relate superstitiously to existence is the propaedeutic to the act of creation.”³⁴ In a piece titled “Imitative” (signed S. Friedlaender), Friedlaender/ Mynona expressed his view on “tumultuous times.” Truly tumultuous were the times that could liberate the genius of the individual. For Friedlaender/ Mynona, everybody was and had genius, and could overcome, creatively and non-dialectically, the *Bestehende*. Living in tumultuous times meant living *as if* one had genius, *as if* one could reach to a point beyond differences, beyond conceptuality, and re-create the world according to one’s own. Becoming genius, Friedlaender/ Mynona wrote in another article, was syno-nymous to becoming self; to taking one’s fate in one’s hands, setting oneself as ultimate goal and understanding that beyond the *Ich* in which one was “thrown” rested only the *Nichts*.³⁵

Only the person who has the courage to disregard all known knowledge has among many qualifications also that of a philosopher³⁶ (315).

Knowledge was thus approached from a different angle than usual: as a burden. The effort to “improve” knowledge or “expand” it, was, as Ruest’s critique of the intellectual revealed, a participation in a ritual of social control. Instead of being part of the ordering process, Friedlaender/ Mynona prescribed

³⁴ “Das Verlernen des Aberglaubens an das Vorhandene ist die Propädeutik zur Schöpfung.” Salomo Friedlaender, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, 322.

³⁵ “Nietzsche und Strauß—immer wieder” (314-316).

³⁶ “Nur der Mensch, der den Mut hat, auf alles bekannte Wissen zu pfeifen, hat unter vielen Befähigungen auch diejenige zum Philosophen” (315).

human, rebellious, an-archic (without ultimate principles), disinterested in producing sovereign bodies, fearless of chaos, and with its “Sach’ auf Nichts gestellt”?

forgetting— making oneself a *tabula rasa* of all conceptual arsenal one is given (and the structures of difference they engender) (112). Forgetting was essential, as Blücher also emphasized, for escaping the vicious circle of ideology and to rethink ethics and politics.

Ernst Roy, another wunderkind of *Der Einzige*, also developed his notion of tumultuous times in a series of articles. The concept he proposed was *Rausch* (intoxication, euphoria and intensity). In the spirit of the industrial revolution, the time of *Rausch* was concentrated time. *Rausch* meant schizophrenic rupture from history. It was a strategy of liberatory forgetting and of envisioning one-self in or as the center of the world (221). Roy followed his guru Friedlaender/ Mynona, but unlike Friedlaender/ Mynona, he was more concerned with the idea of accelerated existence than with the present. For him, *Rausch* was not only intoxication but also intensity. His position seemed to mix individualist anarchism with futurism (whose manifesto was published in 1909). It regarded the subject as a machine. Tumultuous times represented a context that could stimulate mental acceleration and exponentially increase the subject’s productivity. It was this acceleration that could lead to the fall of all barriers and inhibitions of the mind and allow limitless creation—the true and heroic virtue of the genius (233, 280).³⁷

Daimonides—who mainly contributed to the *Beiblatt* —also highlighted the relationship between creative forgetting and revolt, following his mentor’s (Friedlaender/ Mynona) equation, genius = rebel = philosopher. In a series of aphorisms, Daimonides synthesized the theory of creative forgetting, arguing that one is not a blank page, but a “*tabula rasa*”—that is, not pure void, but a palimpsest, something that had already been written upon, and that creatively (selectively, turning memory against itself) erased the previously written and thus appropri-

³⁷ For Roy, the embodiment of this intense genius was Nietzsche.

ated it non-dialectically. Originality and autonomy, another aphorism suggested, were connected to criminality, that is, to the act of destroying-ignoring-forgetting of the past and the established order (119).

Dealing with Concepts

Ruest developed his theory of writing in tumultuous times in “Now for the Fourth Time: Revolution—a School Program!” (Und zum 4. Mal: Revolution— ein Schulprogramm!) (121-126). He was here at his most revolted. His piece addressed a multitude of issues. The piece was programmatically chaotic because it was designed to build a contrast with the words “school” and “program” in its title. In terms of style, it was close to incomprehensible, but this turbulent idiom was willingly employed in order to express singularity and the fact that the author was in possession of his “Sprache.”³⁸ What it staged was a dramatic struggle with concepts, use and abuse of theory, an mix of the personal and the public in logic and communication. The idea of rebellion in language was transmitted by words, by representation, but it was also directly enacted in Ruest’s perplexing sentences, in syntax and in the agonistic style that dashed from one frontline to another. The text not only prescribed egotism and revolt; it performed them. After all, this was what *Der Einzige* was all about: disobedience, egotism, impertinence, rebellion—displayed, exemplified, and to a cer-

³⁸ Ruest addressed his readers directly in the second person, capitalizing the informal second- person pronoun *Du* in order to highlight their sovereignty as egos encountering the text. The polite form of the second person, *Sie*, was avoided, probably because it involved an artificial I to I relationship, inscribed with social codes. The capitalization of *Du* put the accent on the reader as a radical other. Capitalized *Du* underscored the hiatus in the transmission of information between author and reader and the discontinuity in the process of communication implied by the interaction of egotists.

to have seriously considered the reservations mentioned above. What Bookchin’s approach has however in common with my project is that his critique of individualist anarchism also entails a historical pilgrimage. The time and place he and I revisit are similar. The actors, however, differ. Facing the fall of the Left in “ad hoc adventurism, personal bravura [...], celebrations of theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and anti-organizational commitment to imagination, desire, and ecstasy,”¹⁶ in other words, the overtaking of the radical Left by individualist anarchism, Bookchin chants an elegy to the days of Rosa Luxemburg who was murdered just when *Der Einzige* was starting. While Marcuse’s experience of German Soviets brought him close to anarchism, Bookchin does exactly the opposite. He softens the radicalism he has embraced during the 1960s and, oblivious to the failures of the revolutionary Left throughout the twentieth century, revisits its beginnings in order to look for answers and concepts.

To the question *Quo vadis* twenty-first century Left, the individualist anarchist answer is “we don’t know,” or, better, “we shouldn’t know,” which has indeed been embraced, as I mention in the Introduction, by various prominent contemporary thinkers of the Left. My analysis has aimed at emphasizing that a reading of the German 1918-1919 period can provide a framework within which one might discover an answer. Bookchin’s elegy for the “Left that was” suggests that the old radical Left needs another chance. In the other corner of the ring, postanarchists believe that the twenty-first century Left should be inspired by the Left’s mavericks.

The dilemma then is: Shall the Left replay the twentieth century, re-organize, renew its discourse according to global relations of production and preach revolution bearing in mind its failures and excesses? Or should it look for a radically new way of understanding the political: local, dis-organized, amoral, a-

¹⁶ Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism*, 9.

Murray Bookchin's *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, which dismisses individualist anarchism in the style of Marx and Engels (*The German Ideology*).¹⁴ Individualist anarchist positions are petit bourgeois, Bookchin argues. He doubts that individualist anarchist "counter-cultural" discourses can generate change and true movements if they eliminate organization from their center. By rejecting strategies and the rational articulation of goals, counter-cultures are not able to defend themselves against the seductive nature of capitalism. They will either indulge in generating false rationalizations serving the capitalist order or break up in splinter groups soon to be crushed by multinational power dinosaurs.¹⁵

Bookchin's reservations are important for the regrouping of the Left in the twenty-first century in spite of the fact that his pamphlet is overall a superficial analysis. For example, he does not give credit to contemporary individualist anarchism

¹⁴ Murray Bookchin borrows Marx and Engels's narrow understanding of self-interest, essentializes it as personal profit in liberal-capitalist key, and misreads individualist anarchism's understanding of autonomy as insulation from community and as petty bourgeois "do my own thing" mentality: "The ego, identified [by individualist anarchists] almost fetishistically as the locus of emancipation, turns out to be identical to the 'sovereign individual' of laissez-faire individualism. Detached from its social mooring, it achieves not autonomy but the heteronomous 'selfhood' of petty bourgeois enterprise" (52).

¹⁵ Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism*, 67. This critique is not new. These questions are a mantra for the critics of the 1960s movement. In *Die 68er Bewegung*, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey voices the mainstream negative assessment of the German '68 movement. The German '68 did not engender significant changes in German political life because its eclectic program has not given birth to political organizations. Fluid disorganized movements die out once people get tired of revolting. Only enduring organizations like political parties and NGOs can continue their impulses in "post-revolutionary times." Ironically, this argument is internalized by '68ers themselves. In *Der Bildstörer*, Daniel Cohn-Bendit uses it in order to legitimize his candidacy for the European Parliament on the lists of the German Green Party.

tain extent, theorized. In writing, performance as Bakuninian "propaganda by the deed" mattered as much as the meaning of the generated words.

In "For the Fourth Time..." Ruest battled with the idea of representation and the illusion of empowerment it brought about. He also attacked the school system, which he described as a place where one was not only taught to obey, but also to believe that there were people who could know one's problems better than oneself. In addition, he criticized intellectual division of labor and then embarked on a quest for the precursors and theoreticians of disobedience in German culture, drawing a pedigree for *Der Einzige* that included romantic poets like Friedrich Schiller and Heinrich Heine, and philosophers like Nietzsche, Marcus, and Friedlaender.³⁹

Once this "tradition" had been established, Ruest made sure to remind his audiences that he did not intent to create a canon, and added that these names have been highlighted not with the purpose to be adored and their writings obeyed.⁴⁰ He targeted the transmission and administration of knowledge, and called for an end of philosophy as apparatus of organization of knowledge. Knowledge, Ruest had learnt from Stirner, needed to die and be reborn as will.⁴¹ It needed to be forgotten and then re-appropriated in textual acts of writing or life. This was active forgetting. Knowledge as object, as something that was owned, as body of known facts, traditions and laws was mostly a burden as long as the rebel was not able to absorb and transform it into deed— something that was a proof of his sovereignty.

³⁹ Ruest saw in Schiller a proto-anarchist. Schiller understood philosophy not as an accumulation of knowledge but as permanent revolt. "Schiller unser *Schiller, der Tell-Schiller: war Anarchist" (124).

⁴⁰ "Glaubt keinem großen Manne mehr [...], glaubt Euch selbst und reißt die Augen auf" (122).

⁴¹ "Das Wissen selbst muss sterben, um im Tode wieder aufzublühen, als Wille" (125)

Intellectuals, philosophers and educators, that is, the agents that administered this body of knowledge, often forgot that texts existed to serve the singularity in its quest of “becoming what it was” and advocated the memorization and reproduction of knowledge.⁴² Ruest called for revolts in the schools where teachers taught obedience and in communities where intellectuals or philosophers arrested the future with their universalizing discourses. He was contemplating a new era that followed the failed “project of the Enlightenment” and the capitalist-democratic state, with their pillars in private property, education, a limited version of individual freedom, religious belief, and ethics of work. These practices needed to be discarded in order to allow the return of free thought.⁴³ Ruest envisioned a leap from the era of the spectacle of knowledge, thought and abstraction (the “Denkperiode”) into a time of post-knowledge, post-philosophy and singular thought (125). True intellectual practice was not manipulation of concepts but revolt and *singularization*.⁴⁴

Authority

It was not unusual for individualist anarchists to explain their rapport with the author of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. After all, they needed to justify a certain form of proselytism. In his book on Stirner, Mackay also tackled the issue. Mackay came up with a simple answer. Stirner himself had already

⁴² Might 1919 be the year of the death of the intellectual/ philosopher? “Dreimal schmisst Ihr ‘raus, dreimal nahmt Ihr Euch Universallehrer, 1789, 1848, 1873—dreimal bekam Euch der Bakel wieder! Zum vierten Mal—: 1919?” (123).

⁴³ A return to “den Mutterschoß der Erde [...], damit eine neue Freiheit, die des Willens, von ihren edelsten Säften sich nähre” (125).

⁴⁴ “Vielmehr, ist die höchste Praxis die, dass ein freier Mensch sich selbst offenbart, und das Wissen, das zu sterben weiß, ist die Freiheit, welche Leben gibt” (125).

Landstreicher), the columnist of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. Faun writes of himself that “I, Feral Faun, became... an anarchist... a writer... a Stirner-influenced, post-Situationist, anti-civilization theorist... if not in my own eyes, at least in the eyes of most people who’ve read my writings.”¹¹

Feral Faun’s theory of the “feral revolution” involves—besides Stirner’s egotism, Nietzschean wildness and the individualist anarchist challenge of living dangerously—the diffuse understanding of power in the lineage of Foucault, the centrality of play and the emphasis on the transformation of everyday life promoted by Situationists.

The feral revolution has no program. It is adventure, getting “wild.” It is individual and aims at un-domestication, liberation of instincts and desires, and, in Stirnerian lineage, at re-endowing the singularity with the existential self-confidence and self-mastery that he or she has lost with the rise of authority. “To set up ‘revolutionary’ programs [Feral Faun argues] is to play on this fear and distrust, to reinforce the need to be told what to do. No attempt to go feral can be successful when based on such programs. We need to learn to trust and act upon our own feelings and experiences, if we are ever to be free.”¹²

The response from the more organized anarchist movement to the rise of postanarchism has been virulent. It focuses on the danger that awaits radical movements in “late capitalism”: the apparatuses of power and persuasion transform the movement into a subculture, isolate or commodify it (turn it into something “cool”), render its revolutionary edge innocuous, and administer it as a safety valve for the stability of the system.¹³ Such a pamphlet against the new individualist anarchism is

¹¹ Feral Faun, “The Last Word.”

¹² Feral Faun, “Feral Revolution,” 30.

¹³ The postsocialist anarchists themselves have acknowledged this threat. Feral Faun offers a scathing critique of the niche mentality in “The Anarchist Subculture: A Critique.”

than anarchy itself: “Anarchy is the name we have given to the arrow aimed at the heart of every dinosaur.”⁷

Hakim Bey’s work confers more philosophical depth to this resurgence of radical anarchism. His texts combine a romantic/mystic language with the anti-essentialist and antihumanist idiom of individualist anarchism and poststructuralism. He too advocates individual revolt in an era of diffuse and overwhelming bio-political power that can no longer be “overthrown” by revolutions. Revolutions can engage only simulacra of the state machine, and, history has shown, these revolutions end up reproducing organization. Bey’s suggestion is: if collective rebellion proves impossible, “then at least a kind of clandestine spiritual jihad might be launched,” which will produce Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ).⁸

Reminiscent of *Der Einzige*’s emphasis on revolt as existing in the present, TAZ are areas provisionally liberated from mediation (the law, the spectacle). The Occupy Wall Street event was perhaps one of the most visible TAZs in recent history (even if imperfect from an individualist anarchist perspective and conspicuously temporary). A TAZ replaces “all forms of organization, tactics and goals,” and dissolves before becoming organized and before the state can crush it.⁹ The “movement” that produces these TAZs is called by Bey “immediatism.” The tactics of immediatism are those of starting “projects that are founded on nothing.”¹⁰ Stirner’s motto, the motto of individualist anarchism, which appears in quotation marks, is erroneously attributed by Bey to Nietzsche, highlighting again that Stirner and individualist anarchism are often delivered in a Nietzschean wrapping.

Another proponent of individualist anarchism in the post-socialist and post-anarchist movement is Feral Faun (Wolfi

solved the problem of authority. Authority had been undermined within the signifier itself. Stirner’s style was undoing the master-disciple relationship, so Mackay needed not worry about the way in which he adopted Stirner’s concepts. Stirner’s writings were not systematic but fragmentary, and they were not written to persuade but to inspire autonomous thinking. Stirner did not rely on an inflammatory rhetoric, as Nietzsche did, but expressed himself in a dry, informative, and sometimes ironic tone that prevented the reader from identification.⁴⁵ For Mackay, Stirner did not call for proselytizing. He was an egotist writing for other egotists. He did not speak with the superiority of a priest, as the mouthpiece of some god or grand idea. He left posterity his words to do what they pleased with it. He wrote primarily for himself and for the joy of writing, and not considering an audience, which he wanted to persuade. He was not responsible for his words in front of his readers and his readers had also no duty to obey, respect or adore them.⁴⁶

Ruest and his colleagues were more scrupulous than Mackay. Ruest discussed his relationship with Stirner in “The Last Revolution.” For Mackay, the issue of authority was solved by the rhetoric of Stirner’s writing. Ruest, however, did worry whether he was behaving like a disciple and whether he had allowed Stirner’s concepts to control his thought. He also wondered whether he turned Stirner into a philosophical Messiah. Ruest came up with the following answer, which was perhaps not the most inspired, but at least testifies to the effort of anarchists to outline modes of non-authoritarian intellectual coop-

⁴⁵ In fact, this was one of the main reasons why Mackay did not regard Nietzsche as a follower of Stirner, as so many individualist anarchists and the editors of *Der Einzige* did. Nietzsche’s passionate style betrayed eagerness to educate and to create apostles (Mackay Max 18-19).

⁴⁶ “Er überlässt es uns, Das, was er sagt, zu glauben oder zu verwerfen [...] Er spricht kaum von uns; kaum dass er zu uns spricht. Er spricht von sich und immer nur von sich. [...] Er that, was er gethan, für sich, weil es ihm Freude machte. Er fordert keinen Dank und wir schulden ihm nichts.” John Henry Mackay, *Max Stirner*, 150-151.

⁷ The Curious George Brigade, *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs*, 23.

⁸ Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 18.

⁹ Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 101.

¹⁰ Hakim, Bey, *Immediatism*, 1.

eration and to disentangle intellectual affinity and admiration from obedience and control. Ruest considered that he wrote inspired by the “light” that Stirner had thrown upon him. He did not *follow*

Gedankensphäre (2), and used it for his interests. His relationship to Stirner was one between two egotists. This was made possible not only by Stirner’s style, but also by the fact that Ruest did not let Stirner’s authority possess his mind. He was continuously rebelling, and his readers should do the same. “What the hell, become your own followers,” he pep-talked his readers (3). “Oppose much, and belong less” (61).⁴⁷

Mackay’s thesis that authority could be sufficiently undermined by “style” was unsatisfactory for Ruest. The latter understood that language *was* authority, and that it took more than fragmentary writing to dismantle it. One needed to read disobediently, and refrain from letting oneself hypnotized by the organizing power of a text. Respect for the text was damaging to the reader. The anarchist paradigm was one of abuse. Communication between egotists was an act of mutual theft, use, mis-use, ab-use for the sake of one’s own interests.

Intellectuals in Times of Turmoil and Confusion

The egotist argument against the authority of the intellectual was not only backed by theory, but also by an actual historical predicament. *Der Einzige*’s premise was that 1919 was a time of utter bewilderment, and as such this time placed a question mark on intellectual authority. If the human mind had been so abused by state and war propaganda, who had the right to claim epistemo-logical authority in 1919? If subjects lived in hallucinating times, who had the legitimacy to universalize?

⁴⁷ “Widersetzt Euch viel; gehört wenig.” This is the title of one of Ruest’s articles.

It is no surprise then that one of the main polemics that divides the contemporary American (and Western) anarchist scene is that between these newly emerged individualist anarchists (who have grown up reading Foucault and Derrida, re-considered Nietzsche and Stirner, and filtered them through Guy Debord and Raul Vaneigem) and thinkers like Noam Chomsky, representing the “old school” of anarcho-syndicalists or anarcho-communists, who, due in part to their ties to the sixties’ student movement, still have their landmarks in Spanish anarchism, the revolutionary theories of Rosa Luxemburg, and the free-unions movement.

A representative work for this new postsocialist trend is *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs*, written by a collective calling itself The Curious George Brigade. The group uses the metaphor of the dinosaur in order to emphasize anarchism’s nostalgia about turning into a mass-movement, of becoming “mass-ive.” The illusion that dinosaur-culture political projects entertain is that they “believe [that] if they can reach enough mass, through parties, organization and movements [they] can challenge the master dinosaur [the state/ capital] and tear power away from it.”⁵ Against such illusory practices, the collective recommends, like *Der Einzige* almost a century before, the rejection of organization, and it envisages revolt “not as a mass of isolated consumers following established ideologies, but as individuals creating our own futures.”⁶

The reproach that this new generation of individualist anarchists directs against the older one is that the latter had never mustered the courage to push anarchy to its ultimate consequences: chaos, wildness, play, or nothingness. This is why a true movement does not need a defined political aim other

⁵ The Curious George Brigade, *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs*, 9.

⁶ The Curious George Brigade, *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs*, 23.

to re-read the Enlightenment not as a radical process of secularization, but almost as its opposite, that is as a completion of the project of Christianity. From a similar standpoint, in his book *Freiheit, Individualität und Subjektivität* (Freedom, Individuality and Subjectivity) Mümken presents Stirner as the inventor of modern anti-essentialism, anticipating the antihumanism of Michel Foucault—an anti-humanism posited against the triumph of the secular bourgeois reason.³

US postanarchism (or postsocialist anarchism) combines poststructuralist and Situationist insights, and sometimes Frankfurt school critical theory. Michel Foucault is the inspiring figure. He represents for the postanarchist movement what Herbert Marcuse had represented for the German 1968 generation: a thinker who never regarded himself as an anarchist but whose concepts, because they had marked a break with the traditional Left, inspired young activists and intellectuals to reconsider anarchism. Poststructuralist concepts reveal a genealogy of radical thinking that goes back to Stirner and Nietzsche, ironically confirming Horkheimer's end-of-career apprehension that it will be Nietzsche (that is, the Stirner in Nietzsche) and not Marx who will have had the greater impact on the political thought of the end of the twentieth century.

The literature of contemporary US anarchist writers such as Hakim Bey and Feral Faun expresses this trend. If academics like Todd May and Saul Newman engage poststructuralism historically in order to highlight its anarchist roots and to suggest that anarchism could be the source of progressive activism in the era of biopolitics, postanarchism uses the concepts of poststructuralism in order to start a new movement that departs from the widespread tactics of traditional anarchism.⁴

³ Jörg Ulrich, "Warum die Menschen wollen, was sie sollen."

⁴ Saul Newman, *Postanarchism*.

Who could and dared to be the next Hegel? Who had the right to talk about *Geist* and the end of history in an era in which one's sense of self, one's values, truths, hopes, and dreams had been so violently confused?

The answer was, of course, nobody. On the other hand, a certain degree of authority and "pedagogy" were expressed in the pages of *Der Einzige*. Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona understood that pretending to speak without authority was an ideal as fake as that of a traditional philosopher's claim to speak in the name of the universal.⁴⁸ The authority residing in language was practically insurmountable. In spite of their efforts to theorize against authority, to incite readers to disobedience, and to use a certain self-deconstructive style, the medium that they were using, language, remained the instrument of order, organizing and conveying commands.

In the context of mass communication, their position as editors was of course also one that implied authority. They understood that, although they were fighting statist propaganda, they were, at the same time, caught in the practices of universal complicity and generating power. It was pure cynicism to believe that things could be totally different. This more "constructive" approach surfaced in the later issues of the journal after starting the Bund. An article written together by Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona in May 1919 synthesized this new tactics ("Und zum Vierten Mal: Revolution – ein Schulprogramm" 136-139⁴⁹). Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona conceded that *Der Einzige* was also committed to "educate." The authors referred to *Der Einzige* as an emanation from egos for egos, but did not hide the fact that they understood that they were universalizing too, and that this practice was problematic. Making concessions to their initial anti-mobilizing intran-

⁴⁸ This can be another reason why the editors of *Der Einzige* never recommended themselves as anarchists. They never assumed the authority of speaking without authority and called themselves individualists or egotists.

⁴⁹ It bears the same title as Ruest's article that I discussed above.

sigence, Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona acknowledged the necessity of a transitional phase, in which some propaganda as anti-propaganda was necessary. The objective: until singularities can function in their own language (139).⁵⁰

The pedagogy that Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona referred to was, however, anything but dogmatic. They employed a broad set of modifiers to indicate its non-authoritarian character.⁵¹ As in the case of their politics, which was not mythological because it was based on the interruption of myth, their view on knowledge and on the role of the intellectual returned to Stirner's anti-essentialist position. Knowledge was construed of as built upon nothing, and this nothing guaranteed that every edifice of knowledge was, at any moment, susceptible of falling apart.

To break the continuum of authority, contributors to *Der Einzige* used explicit calls on the reader, asking them not to obey and not accept uncritically what was just being argued. Gerhard Lehmann, for example, fractured the argument of his piece "Apologetisches" with the following remark: "if you want to follow me, do it; if not, don't."⁵² Ruest asked his readers to relate to texts as egotists. He himself was one. He followed his interests. He wrote about a world as he saw it and about how he wanted it to become. Nobody had to follow him. There were imperatives, desire and subjection in his sentences. Readers should not obey. Ruest was both subject and object of the universal brainwashing of 1919. Readers should take only what they pleased, because they were egotists, too. In an anarchist journal, there could be no principle of authority

⁵⁰ "Bis wieder Alle, Allen und in ihrer Sprache wieder verkehren können."

⁵¹ They regarded it as "füßige, widerspruchsvolle, nie erstarrende Richtungsmöglichkeit, Selbstregulierbarkeit aller Lehren, Meinungen, Erfahrungen zu diesen einzigen Sinn und Zweck wieder, welcher – Das Leben heißt" (139).

⁵² "Wenn ihr mir folgen wollt, dann tut's, wenn nicht, lasst's bleiben" (65).

2013, as the publication of the Max Stirner Society (in a more academic context).

The Leipzig version of the journal had as main contributors independent Stirner scholars such as Bernd Kast, Bernd A. Laska, Ibrahim H. Türkdogan, Christian Berners, and Maurice Schuhmann. Though not an academic journal, this new *Der Einzige* was a Stirner studies publication with limited interest in anarchism and politics. It appeared three times a year, published usually thematic issues with titles such as "Max Stirner and Individuality" and "Max Stirner and the Marquis de Sade," and aimed at marketing Stirner's thinking to philosophy readers. The same goals were followed by the 2008-2013 series.¹

The Stirner-inspired individualist anarchist tradition is continued by another German journal, published in Hamburg, titled *espero. Forum für libertäre Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsordnung* (Forum for libertarian social and economic order). It is the monthly of the Mackay-Gesellschaft and is edited by Uwe Timm und Jochen Knoblauch. The polemic anarchist direction of the journal is highlighted in the self-promotional blurb "*espero* remains a nonconformist journal that addresses issues and themes that are tabooed and ignored by the media, parties, and unions."²

Stirner's ideas also inform the US-inspired German postanarchist group postanarchismus.net. Authors like Jürgen Mümken and Jörg Ulrich continue the work of Hakim Bey, Todd May and Saul Newman, trace the commonalities of anarchism and poststructuralism and re-read anarchist texts as an addition to post-structuralism's scarce political output. Jörg Ulrich's *Individualität als politische Religion* (Individuality as Political Religion) deploys Stirner's antihumanism in order

¹ An increase in activity took place in 2006, which marked 200 years since Stirner's birth.

² No. 13, March 2006.

Epilogue: Individualist Anarchism in the Twenty-First Century

In this Epilogue, I will briefly discuss resurgences of individualist anarchist thought of the end of twentieth century and the first decade of the 21st century, in particular writings from before the 2008 crash. Most of these texts index movements of the Left that have still not gathered enough momentum to attract public and scholarly attention. This shows, among other things, that individualist anarchism still faces problems liberating its discourse from the suspicion that it feeds concepts to the libertarian Right and that the most important post-World War II avatar of the Stirnerian singularity is the Randian superhero. All things considered, progressive, leftist individualist anarchism still awaits a second or a third Renaissance and insightful reinterpretations of Stirner alongside those of Todd May and Saul Newman.

Anselm Ruest tried to revive *Der Einzige* in 1920, 1923 and 1933. These attempts produced a body of texts, most of them signed by Ruest himself, which continued the ideas of 1919, but their originality was limited. The *Beiblatt* was abandoned and Friedlaender/ Mynona contributed only occasionally. A new *Der Einzige* reappeared in 1998, in Leipzig, edited by Kurt Fleming, with no other connection to the interwar weekly except the fact that it also derived its title from Stirner's opus. It appeared in this format until 2006, and then, from 2008 to

for them to respect: not even property of ideas, not even accuracy or truth. In the same way, Ruest or any other editor of *Der Einzige* did not feel responsible in front of their readers for what they wrote. Why should there be a "respectful" way of handling a text? Individuals were to interact without normative or institutionalized control.

Der Einzige's effort to create a climate of writing without authority and egotist reading was an effort to break with what Jacques Rancière would later call, in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the order of explication. The order of explication organized and limited production of meaning. It imposed the "authority of the author," and welded signified and signifier into a whole. Thus, it became instrumental in keeping individuals in a state of mental inferiority and dependency on explicators.

By positing the discursively uncontainable, yet concrete singularity, *Der Einzige* developed an anti-pedagogical pedagogy. This pedagogy countered the ontological humbling of the singularity on which the state and all institutions of control were built: the assumption that one's thoughts and deeds were imperfect and that they needed a superior agency, like God, the State, the School, Art, or the Intellectual, to compensate for their inferiority. This pedagogy thus aimed at fostering the growth of an autonomous and un-humbled being, and an understanding of singularity beyond master-narratives of lack.

Der Einzige's pedagogy promoted a radically democratic understanding of reading. Symbols were not only tools of organization and transmission, but also stimulators, provokers of one's singular creativity. They were built on nothing, on an absence of meaning that placed knowledge in the hands of the individual reader. The journal tried to break apart the "hierarchical world of intelligence"⁵³ by demonstrating that "there is nothing beyond the written page, no false bottom that necessi-

⁵³ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 8.

tates the work of *another* intelligence, that of the explicator” to clarify things.⁵⁴

The culture of disobedience assumed equality between its readers. Since meaning belonged to everybody and since egoists could plunder texts and build meaning autonomously, a process of radical emancipation was posited that was oblivious to dogmas or transcendent authority. This emancipation did not offer a key to knowledge but a different understanding of it: “to know that no one is born with more intelligence than his neighbor.”⁵⁵ Emancipation was the consciousness of this equality.

⁵⁴ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 10.

⁵⁵ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 71.

of a promise of a hidden meaning—but only an inkling, only a frustrated, unsatisfied hope. Change is engendered without authority. Moreover, the anamorphic mechanisms of the grotesque, described by Peter Fuß as inversion, distortion and mixing (*Verkehrung*, *Verzerrung*, *Vermischung*), opposing the structure-forming and *organizing* mechanisms of hierarchization, dichotomization and categorization (*Hierarchisierung*, *Dichotomisierung*, *Kategorisierung*), emerge rather from an immanent becoming that functions without principle. These mechanisms work non-dialectically, based on an immanent power of language to produce difference:

Aligning, discriminating and sorting are the classical Apollonian mechanisms of morphosis. They face the grotesque-Dionysian mechanisms of anamorphosis.³⁹

The grotesque is thus cause without causality, agency without authority, production of difference without principle, without an “*arche*,” that is, anarchical.

³⁹ “Reihen, Unterscheiden und Sortieren sind die klassisch-apollinischen Mechanismen der Morphose. Ihnen stehen die grotesk-dionysische Mechanismen der Anamorphose gegenüber.” Peter Fuß, *Das Grotteske*, 236.

At the center of Friedlaender/ Mynona's story is the assumption that a rose is the father of a girl. The world of empirical knowledge cannot, of course, accept such an explanation. Consequently, it reacts as it always does to what it cannot understand. It represses it. Using the literary strategy of the fantastic, the story absorbs into its vortex of absolute questioning the mechanisms that produce certitude in the world of positive, empirical, ergo unilateral knowledge. Of course, again, there is no clear message that emerges from the narrative, but one can read it, all the auctorial practices of deconstruction considered, as revealing how the regime of truth produces institutions repressing otherness (the paradox of the grotesque itself), that which they cannot appropriate.³⁷

In his insightful study on the grotesque, Geoffrey Harpham speculates with Levy-Bruhl and Levi-Strauss that the grotesque functions within the order of the pre-logical. Grotesqueries "stand at a margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing the world, of dividing the continuum of experience into knowable particles."³⁸ For Harpham, "grotesque" is a word that stands for the momentary paralysis of language and signification. The reader is not able to find the words to describe what he or she sees, which in turn makes them reflect not only on language and signification, but also on the ideological and political context underpinning them.

Meaning is being torn apart in grotesque representation, Harpham argues, and is also radically re-ordered. Readers never settle in the intermediary realm of the grotesque; they "escape" it by producing semantic closure. Harpham concludes that this is emancipating. It generates the uncanny intuition

³⁷ The piece becomes a reflection on the grotesque as the absolute intermediary and an unassimilable other.

³⁸ Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque*, 3.

Chapter 4: The *Beiblatt*: Individualist Anarchism and the Grotesque

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Though printed together, *Der Einzige* and its *Beiblatt* did not build a unity. One could envision their relationship as one of mutual interruption. It was a solution for the different philosophical standpoints of the editors. Ideological consensus (unity) was in fact not sought. *Der Einzige* regarded itself as an intervention *against* unity. Within *Der Einzige*'s take on rebellion, interruption played a central role. One part rebelled against each other; the parts rebelled against the whole, and the singular against its appropriation by the collective.

Difference was the "deal" behind the Ruest-Friedlaender/ Mynona collaboration. For some time, their conflicting individual positions intertwined. Friedlaender/ Mynona would experiment with the individualist anarchism framing of his work; and Ruest would tolerate the questioning of his theses and cohabit with Friedlaender/ Mynona's growing post-World War I essentialist path.¹ At this time, both editors reached the peak of their popularity. The idea of *Beiblatt* seemed to be something they both agreed on as a temporary collaborative. The project originated in their radical back-

¹ Friedlaender/ Mynona published just a few articles in the main section. They were all signed "Dr. S. Friedlaender." He contributed a piece of fiction for every *Beiblatt*, all signed "Mynona."

ground. According to Exner, the supplement carried out the bohemian imperative to laugh “at all forms of political, scientific, religious, and also literary and cultural power and authority.”²

The *Beiblatt* published grotesque fiction and poetry, and its textual strategies were inspired by the Scheerbartian thesis that power can be laughed into irrelevance. The first *Beiblatt*, titled *Der Exkaiser*, already expressed this stance. Besides carrying a motto by Stirner that championed for caricaturing high thoughts and values as a practice of and for the sovereign singularity, the supplement published texts that, in terms of both form and content, aimed at exposing power and its mechanisms to irony and ridicule. As the heading suggested, the main target was the monarchy, whose return many a German politician of the early Weimar days, Ebert included, was still envisaging. Friedlaender/ Mynona and Scheerbart’s pieces made sure to portray this possible return as an outrageous relic in the history of human self-oppression.

“The Well-Tanned Flee: A Rococoterie by Mynona” (*Der gut bronzierte Floh. Eine Rokoketterie von Mynona*) (8-9) depicted in racy and absurdist colors the manners of the royal entourage, employing humor to stimulate readers to contemplate with disobedient eyes the spectacle of power, and question themselves as spectators and the legitimizing effect of their spectatorship. Scheerbart’s contributions, one suggestively titled “Laughter is Forbidden” (*Das Lachen ist Verboten*) (10-11), also drew on the grotesque to plunder oppressive institutions of their legitimacy. In this last piece, the twelve kings of the world do not allow their subjects to laugh while watching court ceremonials. Harsh punishment awaits the non-compliant. Scheerbart highlights the disciplining effect of committed and serious spectatorship. Only in a serious world and in front of dedicated eyes, organized power can perpetuate itself.

² Lisbeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik*, 180.

expressionism) against a world that is saturated with knowledge, with answers; a world dominated by what Kant calls the intellect. It is the paranoia of deductive thinking that is tackled by Friedlaender/ Mynona’s grotesques like “Neues Kinderspielzeug.” Expressionist literature employs as alternatives the irrational and the mystical (following romanticism). What characterizes Mynona’s textual tactics is not the quest for the irrational as meta-rational, that is, as an alternative way to institutionalized intellectual activity. Mynona is old-fashioned and his work also does not seek a leap into another regime of thought, as Tucholsky prescribed with regard to irony and satire. Mynona looks for no alternative from without, but tries to interrupt what is from within. He works with the paradox, and his grotesques compel their recipients to think and rethink the contrasts and in-congruences that they take in when they consume texts.³⁵ The higher goal is to stimulate readers to reuse what they already have: rational language.

“The Vegetablian Fatherhood” (*Die vegetabilische Vaterschaft*), published in the supplement *The Men Eater* (*Der Menschenfresser*) is such a response to a world saturated with knowledge. Positivism is already questioned in the opening paragraphs of the story. Here, Mynona inserts a critique of the binary system of oppositions and structural limitations (repressions) that this thinking works with. The discursive grid that the regime of truth casts over nature discriminates between various aspects of reality and segregates them beyond any recovering connection. Friedlaender/ Mynona protests to this predicament, commenting that such separations produced as if one had used scissors seem to be the work of pedantic thinkers going against the nature of things.³⁶

³⁵ Kathrin Kötz, *Die Prosa Paul Ostajens*, 47.

³⁶ “Überhaupt ist diese wie mit der Schere geschnittene Abtrennung der Wesen das Werk gelehrter Pedanten, die nicht wissen, dass sie gegen den Zusammenhang der Natur sündigen, wenn sie trennen, ohne gehörig zu verbinden” (45).

the tools to become free consciousnesses able to perform the transvaluation of all values preached by Zarathustra?³³

Leafing through the journal, the reader will notice that the theories of the modern educator connect to theses that are central to the literary project of *Der Einzige*: the struggle against organization, against the production of the ethical and repressed subject, and the *Beiblatt*'s belief in the liberating power of laughter, which according to Mynona, should be taught early to all children.³⁴

This story serves also as example of how to tackle the issue of authorship and authority with regard to *Der Einzige*. The author Mynona disappears behind the balanced structure. If the confused reader would like to know "what Mynona thinks," he or she cannot find out from this text. Mynona is after all only a pseudonym, *Anonym* (anonymous in German) written backwards. Since the God of the twentieth century has died, so have its authors. The reader should not be given transcendent guidance—guidance from the author. It's up to the reader to decide whether to agree with the libertarian educator or not. In the absence of a guiding authority, reading becomes an emancipating exercise. If closure is desired, it lies in the hands of the reader. In front of balanced structures, the reader can experience his or her autonomy of thought.

Many scholars of the grotesque have emphasized the puzzling effects sought by this literary genre and its open-ended rhetoric. In Friedlaender/ Mynona's case, practicing the grotesque represents a rebellion (complementary to that of

³³ If the puzzled reader returns to the beginning of the text, he or she will notice that the story displays a motto from *Also sprach Zarathustra*: "Aber nun lasst diese Kinderstube, meine eigne Höhle, wo heute alle Kinder zu Hause sind" (21).

³⁴ "Dass die Kleinchen über Alles lachen, auch über die Kehrseiten des Lebens, das ist geradezu die herrliche Ausdehnung der strahlenden Heiterkeit auch über alles was sonst so schnöde von ihr Verlassene und nur dadurch so Triste. Das ist der Humor, welchem künftige Geschlechter, so erzogen, nichts mehr vorenthalten werden!" (22).

Prohibiting laughter thus becomes a preemptive act of controlling the conditions of disobedience. Laughter itself is not disobedience; it is un-identification, interruption. Laughter is, like growth or entropy, the expression of an ontological dynamics. Controlling laughter, Scheerbart suggested, constituted an intervention that reached farther than police repression. Scheerbart's piece brought to the fore the tactics of a power that no longer tried to control opinions and actions, but instincts and life-drives. It was a power that tried to redefine life, and laughter was one of the means to make life reemerge free from social and political production.³

The suggestion was that intellectual projects, individualist anarchist included, needed to employ a more complex approach. A theoretical/ philosophical commitment, involving identification with a cause, was not sufficient.⁴ There was a need for a double, for a shadow questioning every aspect of the project. This was the function of the *Beiblatt*. It was there to present individualist anarchism with a Janus-face, as a constructive venture and its parody—creation and destruction

³ Laughter and perplexity represented translations of Stirner's liberating egotistic *Frechheit* (impertinence) and of Nietzschean affirmation. For Stirner, Ich "amüsiere mich nach meinem Geschmacke: je nach meinem Bedürfnis zerkaue ich die Sache, oder ziehe nur ihren Duft ein" (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* 396). Having a playful attitude towards everything, toward the "serious" issues, asserts the I as an *Eigner*. Grotesque laughter was thus a creative form of forgetting and of interruption both of the self-sufficiency and of the anxiety that followed the critical act, the radical dismantling of subjectivity performed by Stirnerian analysis. Grotesque laughter worked both for and against subjectivity; it asserted it as singularity, and it bewildered it as politically constructed self. It was not an expansive and delirious laughter, but one that "stuck in one's throat." This, as it will be argued, is a different notion of both the grotesque and of laughter than that of Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*.

⁴ I have showed in the previous chapters the way in which theoretical texts deal with identification and cause. Philosophical seriousness—as expressed in systematicity, collective utopias and "revolutionary humanisms"—has already been ridiculed on Ruest's territory.

of meaning. Together, the two sections of the journal reveal *Der Einzige*'s double approach to philosophical issues, as well as its inner dynamics: on the one hand, the solemn face of the engagement in an existential project, and, on the other, what Erich Mühsam called *Ulz* –(to) spoof and make fun of.

According to Mühsam, *Ulz* was a practice of derision and self-ridicule dear to the literary bohemia. *Ulz* complemented daytime intellectual engagement and militancy with nocturnal subversion. It was more corrosive than “Spaß” and more profound than “lustiger Unfug.” It negatively challenged or ridiculed projects, but at the same time, affirmatively, explored the limits of meaning and asserted alternative logics. It was an exercise in semantic decadence and universal corruption of values performed in the heretic milieu of the café, at the margins of the organized world and of one’s intellectual project. At the same time, like the existential project of the bohemia, it positively experimented with new ways of bringing together and articulating meaning.

The *Beiblatt* and its *Ulz* represented a multiple practice of othering. An othering that originated in the tension between the literary and the theoretical; an othering of seriousness through laughter; and an othering that, as interruption and self-irony, was implicit in the idea of individualist anarchist rebellion. According to Mühsam, *Ul*k is “witty self-criticism, robust irony of one’s own behavior, exaggerated exaggeration of the ridiculous aspects of what one loves; the checking of the quality of one’s ideals in the test tubes of the grotesque.” The more one takes life and its problems seriously and is engaged in their solving, the more one needs the gymnastics of *Ulz*, and keep the one’s psyche in shape with the help of laughter.⁵

⁵ “Geistreiche Selbstkritik, robuste Ironisierung der eigenen Gebarung, übertreibende Herauskehrung des Lächerlichen in dem, was man liebt, Erprobung seiner Ideale in Reagenzglas der Groteske.” Erich Mühsam, “Unpolitische Erinnerungen,” 631, 638. Ludwig Meidner, Kurt Tucholsky and Otto Erbe praised the bewildering landscapes of Friedlaender/ Mynona’s stories,

It is super easy! One should manufacture hollow soldiers with sieve-like openings. If they tumble over, they spray red-dyed water.³²

In the following six paragraphs, the text goes on advising that this play kit should also include a mass grave, a hospital for the wounded with surgery tables where amputations could be performed. Games should depict barricades, revolutions, slaughterhouses, brothels, scenes of arson, robberies, acts of terror, cemeteries, crematories, famine, asylums for homeless, prisons, and guillotine executions. But when the reader can finally decide that this disturbing rhetoric is after all delirious, and that it represents a parody of the libertarian discourse on non-repressive education, and, consequently, the reader can regard the story as a satire against the phony morality of Western culture which has distanced itself physically and morally from the violence on which it is constructed, Mynona inserts two frustrating last paragraphs that undermine this reading. Even irony needs balancing. In other words, balancing is never enough, equilibrium is not perfect, and each final intervention calls for another. So Mynona increases “confusion” with a twist. Were the arguments of the educator so delirious after all? Isn’t lying to our children the worst thing we can do? Is this early exposure really preparing children against phony bourgeois morality? Is false consciousness truly generated by artificial fears and pruderies? Could psychological damage be only a ruse? Shouldn’t parents and educators trust the innate innocence and amorality of the singularity? Wouldn’t this early exposure teach them to laugh and own, later, as adults,

³² “Man führe Blut ein (natürlich künstliches!), und sofort macht es auch den Kindchen mehr Spaß. Das ist kolossal leicht: man verfertige hohle Soldaten mit siebartigen Öffnungen. Purzeln sie um, so verspritzen sie rotgefärbtes Wasser” (21).

every statement has shadows— like Janus, two faces. Every statement also means something else, something that is not specified, but whose existence is suggested. The participation of the reader as polarizer is needed to produce that other meaning.

Mynona's fiction employs irony when tackling ethical positions. "A New Toy for Kids" (Neues Kinderspielzeug) published in the second *Beiblatt* (*Der Unmensch*—with a pacifist theme), provokes the reader by displaying a confusing complicity with the perverse and the abominable. The story is staged as a talk given by a libertarian education reformer. In sober language, the reformer suggests that, in the spirit of truth and realism, toys should more accurately reflect the deeds of man. Toys should help children explore the action on frontlines, crime sites, brothels, and politics. Children should not be kept away from the realities of murder, war, prostitution, and propaganda. It is better to expose them to such issues at an early age, the reformer argues, because their gaze is not yet perverted by moral dogmas, and their curious eyes will record facts just the way they are, as yet another aspect of life.

Placed amidst provoking titles such as "Murder Joy" (Mordjubil) and "The Militarism of the Old Indians" (Der Militarismus bei den alten Indianern), Friedlaender/ Mynona's piece develops this argument of libertarian child-rearing, supported by the anarchist movement, to its ultimate consequences.³¹ It brings it in a gray zone where every statement becomes spectral, that is, it multiplies its meanings getting closer to its opposite. The edgy nature of the reformer's statements makes his authority crumble, leaving the reader all by himself or herself to judge his theses (bordering on delirium):

One should introduce blood (obviously artificial),
and it will immediately be more fun for the kids.

³¹ *Der Einzige* published numerous articles on libertarian education especially in the second part of its existence.

The second *Beiblatt*, titled "Der Unmensch," bearing the same Stirner motto, published "Will, Will, Will: A Strike of Life by Mynona" (Wille, Wille, Wille. Eine Lebendigschlagung von Mynona) which was another such example of *Ulk*-making. This short story, written for the supplement, occupied its entire printing space. It intervened "*Ulk*-wise" in a polemic started in the main section concerning the "idealist" nature of Stirner's thinking. There, responding to critics, Ruest defended the materialist nature of individualist anarchism.⁶ Mynona's input complicated, grotesquely, the Stirnerian-Ruestian premise and experimented with turning upside-down the latter's apology. Mynona's hero could rise above himself and emphatically transcend the material sphere, kill symbolically his own body as prison of the soul, and thus exist only as spirit using as many bodies as he wanted.

Mynona's piece served as a questioning from an idealist position only in so far as it entered into a dialogue with Ruest's piece. In spite of its "idealist"-sounding plot, Mynona's story did not convey an outspoken position of its author. It was the nature of the grotesques to remain ambiguous and aim only at decontextualizing and recontextualizing ideas. While the spirit bound to materiality was presented as impotent and eternally incomplete, the "liberated" one grew cruel and tyrannical. Its disregard for flesh turned into disregard for life, pain and feelings. The soul without the body was a monster.

"Will, Will, Will" turned upside-down another central concept of individualist anarchism: revolt. If revolt was understood as disobedience and resistance against a higher power, be it natural or human-made, Mynona's story playfully depicted the anarchist utopia of autonomy as total submission to all the powers that could dominate the subject, asking whether the

and enthused regarding the "Bierulk and the Kabarettfrozelei" of his subterranean comic (in Exner Fasching 337).]

⁶ I discuss this article in Chapter 2.

impulse behind autonomy was not sadistic; whether the soul sought anarchy to escape responsibility to the body— his or her own, or of others.

While the example above shows how the *Beiblatt* complemented as other and as Jungian shadow the main section, the Janus-face metaphor also sheds light on the relationship between Friedlaender and Mynona. Friedlaender/ Mynona regarded his intellectual project in dual terms as well. In the spirit of his polarism, he conceived of his intellectual self as a split persona: the thinker and the satyr, the essayist and the author of grotesque pieces, the philosopher-king and the clown.⁷ In his autobiography, Friedlaender/ Mynona argues that Friedlaender invented Mynona as his grotesque scribe. However, the relationship between the two faces of the mask was, as in the case of the journal, not linear. Ideas did not simply migrate from the philosophical text to the literary one.⁸ The philosopher's concepts were neither "visualized" nor "tested" in his short stories. Friedlaender/ Mynona kept his two personas apart, estranged, un-reconciled, "de-familiarized." Paradoxically, Ernst Marcus, the thinker who converted Friedlaender/ Mynona to Kantian idealism, advised him to keep a diverging relationship between his two voices in order to avoid becoming unilateral and dogmatic. Art and metaphysics should

⁷ Friedlaender/ Mynona identified himself as a synthesis of Kant and clown "bizarre Personalunion [...] von Asket und Lüstling" (Exner, Fasching 29).

⁸ Some Friedlaender/ Mynona commentators, like Peter Cardorff, have tried to reconcile the philosopher with the clown. I have chosen a slash as separator between Friedlaender and Mynona because, alongside other commentators (Kötz, Exner), I argue that the tension between the two profiles is more complicated than a simple hyphenation. Here is Kötz: "Mynonas in die Form der Grotteske gegossenen 'Erzeugnisse des Denkens' sind keineswegs Ableitungen seiner philo-sophischen Erkenntnisse, sozusagen populär gemachte Geisteswissenschaft" (*Die Prosa* 60).

of fear. And because the act of rendering uni-lateral is repressive, ghosts haunt it, intensifying its *horror vacui*. If choice is order cast upon that which cannot be ordered, revolutions are shifts from one act of rendering unilateral to another caused by the dread of the questions these ghosts may ask.

Mensch (the human) is the original act of unilaterizing, Friedlaender/ Mynona's philosophy argues. The effort to overcome humanity has produced history—an alienated version of it—and temporality divided between the past and future and action between negation, dialectics, and progress. This is why every truly radical rebellion has to be antihumanist. Produced as *Mensch*, the singularity cannot live freely, dangerously, without principles, in the Dionysian feast of balancing poles. The voids and abysses between the poles horrify the human and cause it to cling to presences and turn them into universal laws.

The grotesque aims at undoing this habitus. Stories without agenda have the effect of confusing and provoking the reader in unexpected ways. Faced with a "balanced" structure, readers feel lost and discomforted. This frustration should thus help the reader realize how dependent he or she is on authority in his or her encounter with literature. The negative reaction triggered by the balanced structure highlights the degree to which authority has perverted readers. In fact, a balanced structure emerges as an exercise in empowerment. However, long years of discipline have warped the singularity against its desire. The euphoria of empowerment and autonomy is thus replaced by the frustration of the subject and its nostalgia for being administered.

The grotesque employs not only the strategies of violent representation, but also the provocative approach of irony. Irony is instrumental in creating a double language, in interrupting the auctorial voice, and endowing the text with spectrality. The double language is the language of the counterposed poles. Irony draws the reader into the polarist game and reveals that

bolic order is the organizing project of modernity. *Der Einzige*'s critique of intersubjectivity is derived from the critique of Enlightenment's emphasis on education, seen as the effort to build communities through the practice of reading and symbolic mediation. Its project is, from this point of view, an effort to sabotage the dialectical fervor of the civilizing process, of overcoming one order by *mobilizing* for another.

At the level of literary discourse, Mynona's grotesques reflect the puzzlement of a mind that is still functioning under the "old regime" of knowledge, founded on intersubjectivity, humanism, and universalism. The puzzled mind is the mind of the enlightener, the mind that looks for the underlying principle, for the constitutive sign, for a presence where there is only absence. If, however, nothing is bewildering anymore, and no singularity seems to await closure with regard to itself and its sovereignty (a closure that, after all, will constitute the pretext for another dialectical opening in the cycle of "restlessness and anxiety") then the work of art loses its ideological function, and a mythic and organizing closure is not awaited from it anymore.

In the polarist terms of Mynona's *Creative Indifference*, the grotesque is an experience of balancing. A paradoxical image is put together. If a grotesque effort lacks telos, this absence is not understood in terms of art for art's sake. The grotesque is not suspension of direction as in a phenomenological or Adornian utopia of art. The grotesque is neither the engaged art of the naturalists nor decadent aestheticism. In contrast to the latter, it does not assert the singular in an act of circular referentiality. Instead of teleological reduction or the forging of a pure language of art, the grotesque is a double move of, first, feverishly asserting life, and second, of tearing it apart, as in a bacchanalia, having it diverge toward opposites.

The grotesque, however, does neither reconcile nor convey a choice. That would be all too human. Friedlaender/ Mynona (like Zerzan) argues that choice (unilateralizing) is the outcome

converge on their own in a way that was beyond the power of their author.⁹

The Friedlaender vs. Mynona relationship is better documented than the tensions between *Der Einzige* and its *Beiblatt*. It has an explicit philosophical underpinning in Friedlaender/ Mynona's pre-war philosophical essays collected in *Schöpferische Indifferenz*. Given the ideological tension between Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona, this tension can be extrapolated to the interaction of the two sections of the journal—at least with regard to the way in which Friedlaender/ Mynona understood his (and the *Beiblatt*'s) intervention as part of a polar whole. These texts celebrated a dual construction of experience, and advocated an arrival at a point of in-difference beyond binary oppositions through a practice of antagonizing contrasts. The point of in-difference constituted the moment of equilibrium between these diverging binaries.

It was antagonizing and not reconciliation, dialogue or dialectical progress that lead to the balancing of poles. It was *Ulk* expressing the tension between the main part of the journal and its *Beiblatt*, and the Janus-face metaphor indicating the relationship between Friedlaender and Mynona. The double face asserted the singularity of the indefinable whole, escaping discursive mapping as interrupted construct, as pure present and presence that has overcome binary determinations; simply put, as *creative nothing*.

Daimonides

The supplement had few contributors. It mostly included texts signed "Mynona." Aside from occasional pieces by Walter

⁹ Lisbeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik*, 320. The parallels will meet in the twenties. It is interesting how later in his life, that is, after his inner "unification," Friedlaender/ Mynona does no longer clearly distinguish between his two personae.

Mehring and a series of materials signed with untraceable pseudonyms such as Tristram Hilarius, Curd Viereck, and Till Jesuitenjäger, the names that appeared with certain regularity were those of Daimonides (Karl Döhmman, Dr.) and Paul Scheerbart.

These three main contributors to the *Beiblatt* belonged to three different generations. Scheerbart, late romantic and early expressionist, had already passed away. Mynona was a prominent figure of German modernism. Daimonides was just emerging with the post-World War I individualist anarchist movement and the Berlin Dada. Scheerbart was regarded, like Stirner and Nietzsche in the main section, as a precursor. Mynona, as editor, stood for the present; Daimonides for the future. The first issue of *Der Einzige* carried a selection of Scheerbart's pieces that helped set a direction for the supplement.¹⁰ In subsequent issues, Daimonides published his "Mynonal-Sonette."

Daimonides, like Scheerbart, was a member of the pre-war individualist anarchist inner circle. Mynona's influence on him was obvious. He published mainly poems matching the paradox-seeking grotesque of the *Beiblatt*. Like Mehring, he was also active in the Dada movement. In his memoirs, Mehring recalled that Daimonides/ Döhmman was yet another Janus, a highly-educated intellectual, initiated in Hindu culture and at the same time a rowdy Dadaist and bohemian of the Johannes Baader circle.¹¹

Daimonides did not regard his double allegiance as problematic. Dadaists like Raoul Hausmann, however, did. They separated from individualist anarchism to move toward more orga-

¹⁰ Titles include "Die Zukunft der exmittierten Potentaten," "Staats-Photographien" and "Das Lachen ist verboten."

¹¹ "Ein durchaus seriöser Gelehrter, Sanskritkenner und, [on the other hand], in den Mußestunden, der 'Dada-Daimonides'" and Dada-pianist of the circle of Johannes Baader. Dieter Lehner, *Individualanarchismus und Dadaismus*, 345.

assert a totality. On the other hand, we have a grotesque of the eternal metamorphosis, of anything goes, that bewilders because it reveals that no synthesis is possible and because, unlike in dialectics, change emerges without an essential narrative of history. The singularity's gaze at these cultural artifacts is also different—one the one hand, the self-warping gaze of identification, on the other, the perplexed but at the same time empowering gaze of being singular.

Anarchist thinker John Zerzan criticizes the social practice of art starting with its origins in the "synthetic grotesque" of the Altamira and Lascaux cave paintings. His observations are critical for the understanding of the grotesque of the *Beiblatt* as an effort to undo established artistic practices and the symbolic thinking that they involved. Zerzan, like Friedlaender/ Mynona and *Der Einzige*, finds the origins of artistic expression in the double effort to overcome the idea of the eternal present (see Friedlaender/ Mynona's "Präsentismus") and to organize communities by mediating singularity along the ritual of "reading"—that is, decoding and identifying with symbols. All that is spontaneous, organic and instinctive is to be neutered by art and myth.²⁹

From this perspective, the grotesque is an effort to destroy the symbolic order in which art participates. In another essay with a conspicuous Stirnerian title, "Running on Emptiness," Zerzan equates the emergence of symbolic thought with a "restless spirit of innovation and anxiety," engaged in "continually changing symbolic modes" and seeking "to fix what cannot be redressed without rejecting the symbolic order and its estranged world."³⁰ For individualist anarchism, the sym-

²⁹ John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*, 65. Past and future are invented by desire. "It was social anxiety; people felt something precious slipping away (Zerzan Elements 63)." Art played a mnemonic function. "Art, with myth closely following, served as the semblance of real memory" (Zerzan Elements 64).

³⁰ John Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness*, 3-4.

was a “modern” genre. It was a genre of hope and progress, engaged in the enabling of the transition from one moment in history to another. As in Hegelian dialectics, satire invested negation with the power to carry on this shift.

In contrast to this “genre of hope,” the *Beiblatt*’s grotesqueries highlighted the absence of a collective perfection project or, as Ines Hofmann puts it, they were, “liberated from thoughts of improvement.” The grotesques of Mynona only alienated, Hofmann argues, indicating a world in which the subjective was fading away.²⁸

For Mynona, the grotesque fought for the abolition of *all* norms, hence also of the idea of the universalizing norm itself as a means of creating communities. For individualist anarchists, the *Ich* was built on nothing; the only norm was *my norm*. Any synthesizing transcendence was alien to the singularity and was regarded as grotesque. Thus, alongside with nothingness, the only other accepted universal was the grotesque. This may sound paradoxical, but it was a consequence of Stirner’s ontology. Because the *Ich* rested on nothing, everything and nothing could be grotesque at the same time. *Everything* was alien and ill-formed because egos constructed representations following a logic that was singular, but was asserted as intersubjective. *Nothing* was alien and ill-formed because once abandoning hope in intersubjectivity and universalism and trying to construct communities with and within interruption, one developed different faculties of contemplating the singularity, which were not based on the identity principle.

This dual nature of the grotesque is demonstrated by Geoffrey Harpham in the opposition between the “religious” grotesque of the cave paintings and the grotesque ornament of the Renaissance. On the one hand, we have a grotesque that is synthesizing, that “looks odd” because it tries to produce and

²⁸ Ines Hoffmann, *Sinnlichkeit und Abstraktion*, 35.

nized and more militant forms of social struggle. Hausmann, who adopted an overtly hostile attitude toward *Der Einzige* after Ruest edited an article he submitted (in order to make it sound more individualist anarchist than it was),¹² qualified Daimonides’s individualist anarchist allegiance as senile “daimonidale Mynonanie” devoted to ethical laws.¹³

Daimonides’s style resonated with Mynona’s decadent/deconstructive approach to the writing of literature. Using uncanny and grotesque assemblages, his work contributed to the supplement’s main effort to highlight the normative, subjectivity-producing and authoritarian project underpinning literary conventions. As Dieter Lehner highlights, his collages of disciplined poetic form, residual philosophical scholarship and excessive sensuality comprised a rebellious praxis that focused on the politics of the literary text or, as Lehner puts it,

¹² The article, with the title “Pamphlet gegen die weimarische Lebensauffassung,” was published in the April 20 issue of *Der Einzige* (163–4). Hausmann published a response to Ruest’s adjustments in *Die Erde*, drawing on an earlier anarchist debate. In 1919, as correspondent of the anarchist and Dadaist Zurich based journal *Dada*, he reported on the “boxing match” between, on one side, Stirner and Friedlaender/ Mynona and, on the other, George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde. For the latter, the attack against the cult of individualism (in art) was aimed at differentiating their projects, like *Die Pleite*, *Der blutige Ernst* and later *Der Gegner*, from expressionism. Grosz wrote against Friedlaender/ Mynona’s *Schöpferische Indifferenz* that “jede Indifferenz ist konterrevolutionär” (Exner Fasching 300). Hugo van den Berg argues that Friedlaender/ Mynona enjoyed a more positive reception in the Dada circles than Ruest (*Avantgarde* 349). Hausmann’s caricature “Dr Max Ruest,” published in *Der Dada 2* depicts Ruest as “Stirner’s Hinten.” Hausmann also published a “positive” caricature of Mynona titled, “Portrait einer alten Frau (Dr. S. Friedlaender-Mynona).”

¹³ Dieter Lehner, *Individualanarchismus und Dadaismus*, 347. Allusion to Daimonides’s “Mynonal Sonnette” and to one of the titles of the *Beiblatt*, “Der gestirnte Himmel.” It is also a response to Daimonides’s essay, “Zur Theorie des Dadaismus,” in which Daimonides highlights the individualist-anarchist underpinnings of Dadaism.

on “on the continuous disenchantment process of the artistic individual.”¹⁴

Mynona

Friedlaender/ Mynona scholars remember his involvement with *Der Einzige* for two reasons: first, because the *Beiblatt* was the place where he published his novella *The Maker* (*Der Schöpfer*); second, because the main section of the journal hosted Dr. Friedlaender’s piece “Mynona,” which, according to Exner, was the only theoretical reflection on the grotesque provided by German expressionist literature. Most of the other Friedlaender/ Mynona contributions to the *Beiblatt* had already been printed in the pre-war expressionist press, mainly in *Die Aktion* and *Der Sturm*.¹⁵ Only “Der Schöpfer,” “Wille! Wille! Wille!” and “A Lot of Money” (*Viel Geld*) were new.¹⁶ But even *Der Schöpfer* was not truly written to be published in *Der Einzige*. It ended up there because of Friedlaender/ Mynona’s complicated relationships with publishing houses.

I am, however, more interested in the un-original (republished) work that appeared in the *Beiblatt*. Being earlier pieces, they tend to be more radical and less infused with idealism. Moreover, I argue, the choice of republication betrays an effort on behalf of Friedlaender/ Mynona to experiment—for the last time—with an individualist anarchist framing of his work, before fully converting to that which Ruest so much hated, the categorical imperative. By placing his earlier pieces in the *Beiblatt*, Friedlaender/ Mynona offered them and, I argue, his work in general, the chance of a different reading. I suggest

¹⁴ Dieter Lehner, *Individualanarchismus und Dadaismus*, 356, 345.

¹⁵ “Das weise Raubgetier,” “Der verliebte Leichnam,” “Die Jungfrau als Zahnpulver,” etc.

¹⁶ Libeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik*, 179.

transvaluation of all values, the grotesque laughter cultivated by *Der Einzige* expresses the joy of overcoming “holy” forms of authority to which a construct like the sublime exposes the singularity. And if this laughter is, as it has been said, a laughter that “sticks in your throat,” the reason for that should be found in the handicapping effect of structures of authority on the singularity. By producing the singularity as human and the self as subject, power turns autonomy into an unconsciously dreaded state of being.

The grotesque of the *Beiblatt*, however, should not be regarded as producing the laughter of the Nietzschean satyr. No doubt, there is *Spott* (satire) in the writings of Scheerbart and Mynona. The latter’s 1919 book project, which he called an un-novel (*Unroman*) was titled *The Ridge of the Scoffers* (*Der Bank der Spötter*). On the agenda of the *Beiblatt*, *Spott* came always with a twist. It was not what Kurt Tucholsky advocated as a utopian act of criticism, in which one regime of truth, beauty and morality was lambasted in the name of another.²⁶ The *Beiblatt* lacked this second regime of truth designed to substitute the hegemonic one. A close reading of Friedlaender/ Mynona’s grotesques reveals that ridicule did not point to a utopia hidden behind the curtain. In the world of dead gods, satire had to be rethought. Ruest defined *Der Einzige* as an anti-dialectical project. *Der Einzige* emerged from the ruins of the Hegelian world of the spirit associated with the bloodbath of World War I and in thoughtful opposition to dialectical materialism.²⁷ The grotesque of the *Beiblatt* confirmed this position. Like critique and dialectics, satire, as Tucholsky understood it,

²⁶ “Der Satiriker ist ein gekränkter Idealist: er will die Welt gut haben, sie ist schlecht, und nun rennt er gegen das Schlechte an” (Was ist Satire? 75).

²⁷ “Gleichsam unter den zusammenbrechenden Trümmern einer seit Hegels Tode unterminierten Geisteswelt, und im durchdachten Gegensatz zur Weltanschauung des dialektischen Materialismus.” Sigrid Hauff, “Maßnahmen des Verschwindens,” 93.

at the core of each object, a world that is out of joint, and whose de-centered sliding cannot be contained. It records the traces of a subjectivity that has lost its appetite for identification. Rage, nostalgia and commitment (piety), the three main affects of unity according to the Stirnerian logic, are replaced by fascination with perplexity, an addiction to a devilish game of provoking singularities to reconsider their images, and to respond to their existential puzzlement with a burst of liberating laughter.

Laughter plays an important role in the literary practices of the *Beiblatt*, and differentiates its Scheerbartian direction from other understandings of the grotesque. Pamela Kort locates this trend in the German art and literature of the turn of the century. In this place and time, the grotesque becomes less demonical and more fantastical and comical.²³ Laughter is for Friedlaender/ Mynona the creative principle. It un-essentially constitutes the Ich. Thus it has to be a coarse laughter, crude, violent, which explodes *Differenz* and produces singularity, the undifferentiated self. Thus creation has no logic, no purpose, no commitment, and no meaning. Laughter, Cardorff highlights, is an antidote against drowning in the world of differences. It helps one escape it uninjured.²⁴

The grotesque of the *Beiblatt* can be differentiated from the gothic and the sublime according to these features. A grotesque text in the service of the sublime as understood by Kantian aesthetics would contradict the spirit of *Der Einzige* and its ethos of empowering readership. Kantian sublime, with its awing religious connotations, is a presentation that overwhelms the body or the mind and inspires infinite authority.²⁵ Inspired by Nietzsche's Zarathustra and his

²³ Pamela Kort, "Grotesk: Eine andere Moderne," 19. Kort studies Scheerbart's equivalent in painting, Arnold Böcklin.

²⁴ Peter Cardorff, *Friedlaender (Mynona) zur Einführung*, 85-86.

²⁵ Kathrin Kötz highlights that the understanding of the grotesque as opposite to the sublime was not unknown to Hegel, Kant and Hugo (41).

that Friedlaender/ Mynona scholarship profit from this reframing and regard his writings, *Schöpferische Indifferenz* included, from a perspective different than that usually employed: late expressionism, polarism, formalist theories of the grotesque and, most importantly, the employment of a certain auctorial continuity which leads to the quest for finding red threads connecting his pre- and post-Kantian conversion writings. Continuing Dieter Lehner's analysis—who traced the individualist anarchist dimensions of Friedlaender's writings, his pre-war polarism in particular—I focus on the individualist anarchist potential of Mynona's grotesqueries.¹⁷

My interpretation is that Friedlaender/ Mynona's participation in the project of *Der Einzige* was part of his polarist intellectual practice. It was meant to critically balance the growing closure of his thought that occurred after finishing *Schöpferische Indifferenz*. He apprehended, I argue, that both individualist anarchism and grotesque fiction were, like *Ulk*, a necessary gymnastics aimed at warding off the temptations of dogmatism.¹⁸

¹⁷ Lehner calls Friedlaender/ Mynona's philosophy a synthesis of Nietzsche and Stirner, a philosophy "des vital-selbstherrlichen Individuums" (77). He argues (and I agree with him) that *Schöpferische Indifferenz* is much more informed by Stirner than Friedlaender/ Mynona is willing to admit (75). Lehner's reading of Friedlaender/ Mynona, however, is not safe from criticism. Van den Berg believes, in contrast to Lehner, that Friedlaender/ Mynona overcame Stirner's influence. Yet he notices some similarities: Friedlaender's use of the concept of "schöpferisches Nichts," his skepticism vis-à-vis humanism and his focus on the autonomous I. For Van den Berg and for most Friedlaender/ Mynona scholars, Friedlaender/ Mynona is, at this point, already an idealist. He labels Friedlaender/ Mynona's philosophy as "idealism without god." The spirit precedes matter and can determine it. The world cannot be ultimately known, it is subjective representation; yet god from the skies is dead (350).

¹⁸ David Weir has argued in favor of a rethinking of the Western literary canon of modernism via the philosophy of Stirner. In his view, Stirner's radical individualism is one of the main sources of inspiration for literary modernism and its subjectivist textual tactics (175).

The titles Friedlaender/ Mynona chose for the supplement testify to his acceptance of the individualist anarchist challenge. The *Beiblatt* bore as mottos long quotes from *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* and changed its name with every issue. It started with antihumanist headings such as “The Unman” (Der Unmensch) and “The Man Eater” (Der Menschenfresser); it further integrated Stirnerian spectrology in “The Godly Swineherd” (Der göttliche Sauhirt), “The Unselfish Mummy” (Die selbstlose Mumie), “The Ideal Spook” (Das ideale Gespenst) and “The German I-ling” (Der deutsche Ichel). It sometimes addressed directly the Stirnerian heritage in “The Stirnered Sky” (Der gerstirnete Himmel), or expressed the questioning of established philosophical discourse in “The Philosophical Shepherd” (Der Philoso-Viehtreiber) and “The Belated Ascetic” (Der nachträgliche Asket).

Stirner’s *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* was a critical analysis of state structures and of the production of the subject in the organized community. It neither detailed an intervention against them nor explained the practice of individual rebellion. It only briefly sketched the undepictable utopia of the “community of egotists.” It was Ruest and Friedlaender/ Mynona’s task to continue his legacy and provide a positive textual and corporeal example of it. In a pre-war article, Friedlaender/ Mynona argued that, as genuine follower of Stirner and Nietzsche, he was able to refine egotism to perfection by giving it a metaphysical basis.¹⁹ He developed Stirner’s position in the realm of creative thought and literary expression by putting them in the service of the production of the sovereign singularity. As Rüdiger Safranski has it, Stirner’s (and Friedlaender/ Mynona’s) thinking is an act of rebellion that aims at achieving the freedom of pure creative thought.²⁰ For both Stirner and Friedlaender/ Mynona, “thinking, is creation; one’s thought is the

¹⁹ S. Friedlaender, “Absolutismus,” 162.

²⁰ “Die Freiheit zum schöpferischen Denken, was bedeutet, dass man sich nicht unter der Gewalt des Gedachten beugt. Man muss der Erzeuger

created, and freedom of thought means that the creator stands before his creation” and is not in any way its captive.²¹

It is this emphasis on rebellion as creation (and thus on the overcoming of Hegelian negativity) that connects Stirner’s work with that of Friedlaender/ Mynona, as well as the hypothesis regarding the nothingness upon which this creative sovereign singularity is built, which Friedlaender/ Mynona calls “das schöpferische Nichts.” From this point of view, I argue with Lehner, that Friedlaender/ Mynona’s work builds a bridge between Stirner and literary modernism, and that the *Beiblatt* is an example of such an interface. It is, indeed, a late effort; one that comes after the followers of Friedlaender/ Mynona’s ideas have already established their own movements—for example, the Dada groups—and have chosen more organized forms of political militancy, like Spartacus and the KPD (German Communist Party). It was not, however, less creative than the Dada publications.²²

Grotesque

Friedlaender/ Mynona’s grotesque is the art of conjunction without reconciliation. In the spirit of polarism, it is a practice of producing divergence. It represents the ontological fracture

seines Denkens bleiben.” Rüdiger Safranski, “Nietzsche. Biographie seines Denkens,” 26.

²¹ “Denken ist Schöpfung, der Gedanke ist Geschöpf, und Freiheit zum denken bedeutet, dass der Schöpfer über seinem Geschöpf steht; das Denken ist Potenz und darum mehr als das Gedachte, das lebendige Denken darf sich nicht in die Gefangenschaft des Gedankens begeben.” Rüdiger Safranski, “Nietzsche. Biographie seines Denkens,” 26.

²² For Lehner, Mynona is the connecting element between the Stirner Renaissance of the 1890s and the anarchist aesthetics of the post-WWI Dadaists like Baader and Huelsenbeck. Mynona was an educator of the young avant-gardists. His influence was two-fold: first, his grotesques anticipated the Dada collages/ montages/ experiments; second, his polarist philosophy was a theoretical starting point for the Dada insurrection (72).