

Max Stirner-Preliminary Remarks on the Liebesstaat [Loving State]

aka Preliminary Remarks on the Love-State

Max Stirner

1843

The so-called Epistle of Baron von Stein is well known. From this the opinion has been formed that the later period of reaction alienated itself from the principles expressed in the epistle and turned to a different way of thinking, so that the liberalism of 1808, after a short period, sank into a sleep that has lasted until our own day. However, there is reason to doubt the alleged misapprehension of these principles, and it should also appear outwardly very conspicuous that the same powerful people who a few years earlier, under the most stormy of circumstances, had established a liberal view, should shortly afterwards have so easily abandoned it in order to take the opposite path. If it has at last been recognised that the long-held opinion, that the French Revolution had become unfaithful to itself through the overthrow of Napoleonic imperial rule, was based on a judgment and a superficial one at that, why should there not now be a similar connection between Stein's liberalism and the later, so-called Reaction? Let us take a closer look at the epistle.

As is immediately apparent, Stein has two aims in common with the French Revolution, namely *equality* [*Gleichheit*] and *freedom*, and it only depends on how he determines one and the other. First of all, as far as equality is concerned, he recognises that the supremacy of those who were favoured for their own sake, the privileged, had to be broken, and that a complete *centralization* had to replace the rule of multiple masters. Hence the "hereditary subjugation", which allowed many smaller lords to rule over the subjects of the one lord, the king, should come to an end; only the *one power of subjection* [*Eine Erbunterthänigkeit*] of all should remain and be strengthened precisely by the removal of the many lords. In the same way, the "police power" of individuals should disappear, so that one police force would watch over all subjects. The "patrimonial jurisdiction", which belonged to a few privileged by old laws, was to be replaced by a *monarchic justice*, where the judges alone "depend on the supreme power". Through this centralisation, the *interests of all* are drawn to one point, to the king: henceforth, one is subject only to him, without any other hereditary subservience to other subjects of the king. One is only under his police power; one receives legal judgement only from princely justice; one no longer depends on the will of the "higher-born", but only on that of the "higher-placed" [höher Gestellten]. The doctrine of the rule of law as it is presented in the Epistle, therefore comes down to bringing all

to the same level of subservience. In the future, no subject of the kingdom would at the same time be the subject of a subject [*Unterthan eines Unterthanen*]; the differences in the status of dependence would be balanced out, and one dependence would be the universal dependence.

It is impossible to confuse this principle of equality with that of the French Revolution. The latter demanded equality of citizens [*Bürger*], in the Epistle there is an equality of the subjects, an equality of subjection. A suitable expression of this difference is also found in the fact that the “National representation” is supposed to bring the “wishes” of the leveled [*nivellirten*] subjects before the throne, while in France the citizens, through their representatives, have a “will”, admittedly only as a citizens’ will, not itself a free one. The “subject” may only “wish” for Right [*Recht*].

Secondly, the Epistle does not want mere equality, it also wants the freedom of all. Hence the call: “See to it that each one,” (with this word the quality of subjects is expressed) “could develop its powers in a moral direction [*moralische Richtung*]”. In a moral direction? What does that mean? The physical direction cannot be thought of as the opposite, since the epistle wants to achieve a “physically and morally stronger generation.” It would also be difficult to exclude the intellectual direction from the moral one, since science was favoured as much as possible. The simplest contrast to the moral direction is the immoral direction. But a subject is immoral if he goes beyond the qualities of his subjection. A subject who in state life, in politics, assumed a “will” for himself instead of the “wish” would obviously be immoral; for the moral value of the subject consists solely in submissiveness: in obedience, not in self-determination. Thus the “moral direction” seems to declare itself incompatible with the “spontaneous direction”, the direction towards free will, towards independence and sovereignty of the will, and since the word “moral” points to the desire to be submissive, one will probably have wanted an awakening of the sense of duty, and this will have been the subject of a “desire to be submissive” which understands itself as this “free development of power”. “You are free when you do your duty!” That is the meaning of the moral direction. But what does the duty consist of? The Epistle expresses it clearly and firmly with the words that have become the motto: “In the Love of God, King and Fatherland!” Anyone who develops this love develops in a moral direction; thus moral direction was set as the definite goal of education. It was from the outset a moral or loyal education, an education of morality, to which, of course, religious education must also be added, because it, too, imprinting morality on God, is nothing other than a moral education. And indeed, one is morally free as soon as one fulfils one’s duty; conscience, this power of morality over immorality, the mistress of the moral man, tells the dutiful man that he has acted right: “my conscience [*Gewissen*] tells me so!” Conscience, of course, says nothing about whether the duty followed is really a duty; it only speaks when what is considered a duty is violated. Therefore, the Epistle recommends awakening the conscience. The mission is to inculcate a sense of duty “towards God, King and Fatherland”, to revive the religious sense of the people and to cultivate the education and instruction of the youth. – This is the freedom with which, according to the Epistle, the people are to be made happy: freedom in the fulfilment of duty, the *moral freedom*.

Just as above the equality of the Epistle was essentially different from that which the French Revolution proclaimed, so here the freedom. Free is the sovereign citizen of the sovereign people – thus taught the Revolution; free is he who loves God, King and Fatherland – so teaches the Epistle: there the sovereign citizen is free, here only the loving subject, over there is *Bourgeois* freedom, here only *moral* freedom.

And this principle of equality and freedom – as equality of subjects and moral freedom, was not only the meaning of that epistle and its authors, but it was the prevailing feeling of the entire people, the new inspiring principle itself, with which they stormed against the Napoleonic superiority. It was revolutionary freedom and equality, transformed into *Christian* freedom and equality. It was, in a word, the principle of the German and especially of the Prussian people rising up against foreign domination, through the so-called Reaction or Restoration period, until – until now, when it has come to an end. Therefore, one must reject as erroneous the opinion that a *political* drive for freedom, similar to the revolutionary one, led the people to victory over Napoleon. If its principle had been the *political* one, the people would not have abandoned it or consented to its atrophy. One does the government an injustice if one believes that it has deprived the people of something they consciously sought. Apart from the impossibility of such a deprivation, the government and the people were truly unanimous in their *Abwehr* [this may mean either defense *of*, or defense *against*, I argue given the following sentence the latter should be read-Note] of political freedom, of that “Spawn of the Revolution.” That was how Frederick William III earned so much devotion and love, that he was, as it were, the perfect personification of that moral freedom, that he was through and through a man of the *cloth*, a man of *good will*: “the just man!”

The centre of moral freedom, as it appears, is the duty to – *love*. As is readily admitted, Christianity is in its innermost essence the religion of love. That is why moral freedom, which is concentrated in the One Commandment of love, is the purest and most conscious fulfilment of Christianity. He who is nothing but love has attained the highest, he is truly free! – such is the gospel of moral freedom. When this conviction awoke in their hearts and filled them with the bliss of a triumphant truth, the power of the despot had to be too small against the force of such a feeling, and Christianity in its most transfigured form, as love, inflaming the peoples, advanced with certainty of victory against the spirit of revolution. The latter had wanted to wipe Christianity from the earth, but it rose up with all the strength of its nature, it stood up to him as – love, and it triumphed, triumphed over a spirit that had indeed been able to crush much in it, but could not crush the one thing, – love. For no matter how much of the Christian had fallen under the strokes of the revolution, love – its innermost being, – had got stuck in the bosom of revolutionary freedom. She harboured the enemy within herself, therefore she succumbed before the enemy when approached from outside.

But let us get to know a little about this enemy of revolutionary freedom, love itself! Love is usually contrasted with selfishness, because it is in the nature of the latter that he who follows it does so *without any consideration for the other, or in a very ruthless way*. Let us now place the value of the human being in self-determination i.e., that it is not a thing or another person that determines him, but that he himself is the creator of himself, thus creator and creature in one, the self-seeking [selbstsüchtige, in a manner, self-addicted] person will probably fall farthest short of this goal. His principle is thus: things and people are there *for me*! If he could add: I am also there for them, – he would no longer be a self-seeking man. He only goes out to hunt for the object of his desire, runs after a girl in list, for instance, in order to – seduce this very dear “thing” (for it is not considered to be more than a thing to him), and so on. To become another man for the sake of this girl, to make something of himself, in order thereby to deserve her: that does not occur to him; as he is, so he is. That is what makes him so contemptible that no self-fashioning and self-determination can be discovered in him.

The lover is quite different. Self-seeking does not change a person, love makes a different person out of him. "Since he loves, he has become a completely different person," one is wont to say. But as a lover he also really makes something of himself by eradicating everything in himself that contradicts the beloved; willingly and devotedly he allows himself to be determined, and transformed by the passion of love, he turns to the other. If in selfishness the objects are only for me, in love I am also for them: we are for each other.

But let us leave selfishness to its fate and rather compare love with self-determination or freedom. In love, man determines himself, gives himself a certain character, becomes the creator of himself. But he does all this for the sake of an *other*, not for his *own sake*. Self-determination is still dependent on the other: it is at the same time determination through the other, is – passion: the lover *allows* himself to be determined, determined by the beloved.

The free man, on the other hand, determines himself neither through nor for another, but purely from himself; he hears himself and, in this self-examination, [*Selbstvernehmen*] finds the drive to self-determination: hearing only himself, he acts rationally and freely. There is a difference whether one is determined by an *other* or by oneself, whether one is a living one or a reasonable one. Love lives on the principle that everyone does what he does for the sake of the *other*, freedom lives on the principle that he does it for his *own sake*; there I am driven by consideration for the *other*, here *I* am driven by myself. The loving person acts for *God's sake*, for the sake of his *brothers*, etc., and has no will of his *own*: "Not my will, but thy will be done" – that is his motto; the rational person does not want to realise any will other than his own, and also respects the one who has his own will, not the one who follows the will of another. Thus *love* is well justified against *self-seeking*, since it is nobler to make the will of another one's own, and to carry it out, than to be involuntarily goaded by the desire excited by some thing. It is nobler to determine oneself according to another than not to determine oneself at all, to let oneself go; but love is not justified against freedom, because in *freedom* only self-determination becomes truth. Love is indeed the last and most beautiful restriction [*Unterdrückung*] of oneself, the most glorious way of self-annihilation and sacrifice, the most blissful victory over selfishness. But by breaking the self-will, which is only stubbornness and desire, it does not allow the will to arise that gives the human being the dignity of a free human being. That is why we must distinguish between two things in love. Held against self-addiction, man celebrates his glorification in it, for the loving one has, if not his own, at least a will, and the self-addicted one has none. The loving one exercises self-determination, because he makes something of himself for the sake of the other and transforms himself into the form appropriate to him, the self-addicted one does not know self-determination and persists in his crudeness without in any degree becoming his own creator; the loving one is an image of himself, in that he seeks and finds himself in the other, the self-addicted one a creature of nature, a – creature which neither seeks nor finds itself. But how does love appear in the face of freedom? The Bride of Corinth utters those gruesome words with which the horrible crime of love against freedom is revealed:

"Here victims fall,
Neither lamb nor bull,
But human sacrifice unheard of!"

Yes, "human sacrifice unheard of". For what makes a human being a human being in the first place, the free will, is shattered by love, declaring its kingdom to be the only one that can bring

salvation. It thunders out from its sovereign throne and, lifted high on the shoulders of slaves, it proclaims the sole dominion of the *weakness of will*.

Because not everything can be said in every time, we break off here and leave it to a more favourable opportunity to set forth the phenomena of the Loving State in detail. Everywhere we shall encounter the principle that the loving person does not have wills but desires, and we shall see how prophetic were the great words of the governor of Berlin, Count von Schulenburg: “Calm [*Ruhe*] is the first civic duty [*Bürgerpflicht*]!” In the arms of love the will rests and sleeps, and only the wishes, the petitions, keep watch. A struggle, however, also pervades this time of the love-regime: it is the struggle against the *loveless*. Since unanimity is the essence of love, since princes and peoples are united in love, they must eliminate what wants to loosen the covenant of love: the *malcontents* (demagogues, carbonarii, Cortes in Spain, nobility in Russia and Poland, etc.). They disturb trust, devotion, harmony, love; “restless heads” disturb the tranquility of trust, and – tranquility is the first civic duty!

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Translated by the same method of mechanical processing and terminological editing, a later and also to-my-knowledge untranslated text of Stirner's, covering notions of self-determination, subjection, and a critique of mere selfishness. It is available in his *Kleinere Schriften* or at Wikisource here: https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Einiges_Vorl%C3%A4ufige_vom_Liebesstaat

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