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DECLARATION

in respect of the work entitled
MAX STIRNER'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
being a thesis presented by
RONALD W.K. PATERSON
to the University of St. Andrews
in application for the degree of
BACHELOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

I hereby declare that this thesis is based on the results of research carried out by me, that it is my own composition, and that it has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree.

I matriculated in the University of St. Andrews in October, 1951 and followed a course leading to graduation in the Honours Group Logic and Metaphysics - Political Science until June, 1955.

In October, 1957 I again matriculated in the University of St. Andrews and until June, 1958 followed a course leading to award of the Diploma in Education.

In October, 1958 I was admitted as a part-time research student in Logic and Metaphysics and commenced research on the philosophy of Max Stirner, the results of which are now being submitted as a B.Phil. thesis.

The research was carried out from October, 1958 to October, 1961.

The work was supervised throughout by Mr. P.L. Heath, and I wish here to record my grateful thanks to him for his valuable help and advice.

25th January, 1962



Tu 5052

CERTIFICATE

I certify that Ronald W.K. Paterson has spent the equivalent of four and a half terms at research work on the philosophy of Max Stirner, that he has fulfilled the conditions of Ordinance No. 50 (St. Andrews), and that he is qualified to submit the accompanying thesis in application for the degree of B.Phil.

Jan 30th, 1962.

MAX STIRNER'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

as contained in his essay

"The False Principle of our Education, or Humanism and Realism"

by

RONALD WILLIAM KEITH PATERSON.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The present thesis attempts to furnish a critical exposition and evaluation of Stirner's essay on "The False Principle of our Education, or Humanism and Realism"; to establish the place occupied by this essay in Stirner's general system of ideas; and to show how his philosophy of education is related to intellectual movements of his own and other periods. I begin by outlining the main events in Stirner's life and the principal writings on which his reputation rests. There follows a summary, couched largely in Stirner's own words, of the argument of his essay on education. After describing the general forms taken by the humanistic and realistic education against which he was reacting, I attempt to show how Stirner's critique of contemporary education secretes the germ of a definite world-outlook, the epistemological status and validity of which I then discuss. I next examine some of the possible sources of Stirner's ideas, before proceeding to consider, in the first place, the relationship between "The False Principle of our Education" and his earlier examination writing on education, and in the second place, the relationship between the "personalist" morality of "The False Principle" and Stirner's mature philosophy of "conscious egoism" as set out in "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum". Finally, I seek to determine the actual historic efficacy of the essay on education and to evaluate its independent significance as a contribution to educational philosophy.

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of educational ideas, except perhaps briefly, as a contribution to the post-Hegelian educational controversy in Germany. - Even indirectly, as a factor in Stirner's total subsequent influence, the essay cannot be held to have inspired any of the educational ideas of either anarchism or existentialism. - The essay's crucial importance is that it marks a decisive stage in the development of Stirner's characteristic form of nihilistic egoism. - The latent nihilism of its author accounts for the essay's failure to state a positive and coherent philosophy of education.

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Chapter 1

Stirner's Life and Writings

Johann Kaspar Schmidt, who was to become known under his pseudonym of "Max Stirner", was born in Bayreuth on 25th October, 1806, and died in Berlin on 25th June, 1856.¹ The climax of his life, and the justification of his celebrity, was the publication of his masterpiece, "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum", in November, 1844. Apart from this book, in which for the first and only time he gave a minute and fearless account of his ethical position, without euphemism or reserve, Stirner left only his able translations of Adam Smith and J.B. Say, two volumes of a projected "History of Reaction", composed mainly of extracts from earlier writers, and a number of essays and articles. Without doubt it has been by "Der Einzige", a classical text of philosophical anarchism, in which the author revealed himself as the apostle of radical individualism, that Stirner has attracted the greatest attention and exerted the greatest influence. While, after its original meteoric success, the book rapidly fell into almost total oblivion, its significance has been increasingly appreciated since 1888, owing on the one hand to the widely-noticed researches of John Henry Mackay, who began his biography of Stirner in that year, and, on the other, to the growing fame of Friedrich Nietzsche, to whose philosophy that of Stirner bears a superficial resemblance. Since 1914, interest in Stirner, flourishing chiefly in Germany, the United States, and France, has

been predominantly interest in his thought as expressed in "Der Einzige". If this explains the preconception that Stirner is therefore a "homo unius libri", a judgment which students of the philosopher have been too prone to make, this finding does less than justice to some of his minor writings, among which his early essays are of special moment, not only because they are prefatory to his general, finished philosophy, but also because of their intrinsic literary and intellectual merit.

With the exception of certain examination writings, submitted at Berlin University in 1834, Stirner's earliest published work dates from 1842. In January of that year he contributed a review of Bruno Bauer's book, "The Trumpet of the Last Judgment against Hegel, the Atheist and Antichrist", to Dr. Karl Gutzkow's Hamburg "Telegraph für Deutschland", and shortly afterwards he wrote his "Reply of a member of the Berlin community to the tract of the 57 ecclesiastics, entitled 'The Christian Observance of Sunday'. A friendly word to our laymen." While both essays exhibit, in style and composition, Stirner's characteristic pungency and individuality of expression, as guides to the evolution of their author's thought their importance lies in showing us the point from which he set out rather than the path he was to travel. Occasional writings, at least in the sense that each was inspired by the occurrence of a fresh offensive in the contemporary ideological war, they both prove Stirner originally to have been fervidly committed to the critical anti-pietism of the Hegelian Left. In April, 1842, however, he made his first

philosophical contribution to the "Rheinische Zeitung", entitled "The False Principle of our Education, or Humanism and Realism", which appeared in the supplements to the four numbers 100, 102, 104, 109, of the 10th, 12th, 14th, and 19th April, under the signature, "Stirner". This article, though allegedly written in reply to a recent treatise by a conservative German professor, in fact represents Stirner's earliest attempt to define his personal philosophical position. For this reason, and because it displays the first symptoms of his later breach with the Young Hegelians, towards which he thenceforward moved with rapid strides, Stirner's essay on educational philosophy must be considered the earliest intimation of his emergence as an independent thinker.

Why was Stirner at the relatively advanced age of thirty-five before he set his preliminary thoughts down in print, and why was his first important essay concerned with a pedagogical theme? The answer to both questions lies in the history of his early years, which, up to 1839, is largely a record of his successive efforts to complete his own education and to establish himself as a schoolteacher.

Of petty-bourgeois parentage (his father, a flute-maker, died in 1807), Stirner moved in 1810 to Kulm, in West Prussia, where his stepfather had inherited a small business. Of his elementary education we know nothing. We do know, however, that the Ballerstedts, his stepfather's family, had been pastors, a fact which may account for Stirner's considerable biblical knowledge

and may explain why his parents were sufficiently solicitous of the boy's education to send him, at the age of twelve, to live with his uncle, in order that he might attend the celebrated Gymnasium of his native city, where for the next eight years he was a diligent but unremarkable scholar. In 1826, having been certified as "mature" with the highest grade of certificate, he entered the University of Berlin. His intention was to become a teacher at a Gymnasium. In fact, he never taught at a Gymnasium, and it was to be thirteen years before he obtained any permanent teaching position at all. After two years he left Berlin, where, a zealous and conventional student, he had come under the influence of Hegel and Schleiermacher, for Erlangen. The next four years, to 1832, are shrouded in obscurity. Having left Erlangen after a year, Stirner made the traditional "extended journey across Germany", to matriculate for the third time at Königsberg. There, however, he attended no lectures, but was compelled to interrupt his studies "because of family circumstances", the nature of which must remain purely conjectural. Certainly, in 1832 he re-appeared in Berlin, resolved to conclude his education and qualify as a teacher. His earnestness is shown by the fact that, despite two lengthy delays, one due to illness, the other caused by the sudden arrival in Berlin of his mother, now incurably deranged, he eventually presented himself for examination in no less than five departments, as well as in "the remaining subjects" for lower classes, appearing for his oral examination in April, 1835. He had undertaken too much; the

comments of his examiners, who included Trendelenburg and Meineke, were critical, harsh even, and he was finally awarded only the "conditional facultas docendi". He never took the doctor's degree, at that time a prerequisite of an academic career.

Although Stirner was in Berlin during the next four years, his movements have been only partially established. He chose a Real-schule or modern school in which to spend his probationary year, which he was enthusiastic enough to prolong by six months. In 1837 he married, only to become a widower the following year. Finally, in 1839, he obtained his first regular appointment, at a privately-run girls' high school in Berlin, where he successfully taught history and literature for five years, until he resigned shortly before the publication of "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum". In the comparative security which his position afforded, he had the leisure to develop and refine his own thoughts on ethics, politics, art, religion, and education, and it is to this period that his first essays belong. Spending almost every evening as a silent but intimate member of that exuberant and irreverent group of young freethinkers, the notorious "Freien", where he met Bruno and Edgar Bauer, Ludwig Buhl, Friedrich Engels, Julius Faucher, and others equally iconoclastic, it was in this robust atmosphere that he conceived his own original philosophy.

Thus, several factors combined both to delay Stirner's first philosophical statement and to cause him to include educational philosophy among his initial themes. The vicissitudes of his

career as student and teacher had led him to reflect, without loss of objectivity, on the philosophical foundations of his profession. His preoccupation with the moral and metaphysical principles of education had overshadowed his interest in practical problems of teaching method as early as 1834, for his examination essay, "On School Rules", was composed virtually as an exercise in Hegelian dialectic. By 1842, he was beginning to identify, with growing confidence, the basis of his own philosophical convictions, and was prepared to hazard a tentative formulation of it. He was further inspired to attempt this by the stimulating example, and possibly exhortation, of his closest friends among "die Freien". Finally, the Germany of Stirner's day, regarding national education as the lever of national progress and the key to all social and political development, was unusually engrossed by educational problems, so that an essay on educational philosophy, appearing in a prominent radical journal, could not fail to attract the attention both of the friends of the regime and of the young intellectuals who were its bitterest enemies.

There is no record of how the article on education was greeted. It could not, however, have attracted sufficient notoriety to incur the active censure of the authorities, nor could it have been received with complete indifference by his readers, for Stirner was clearly both permitted and stimulated to continue his brief but fertile journalistic and literary career. Between May and December, 1842, he contributed thirty-three articles to the "Leipziger

Allgemeine Zeitung", most of which were chiefly concerned to draw public attention to the abuses of the regime, to the political and intellectual activities of the liberal opposition, and, above all, to the critical work of the Left Hegelians in general and of Bruno Bauer in particular. In June of the same year he wrote another important essay for the "Rheinische Zeitung", entitled "Art and Religion" (in addition to numerous slighter articles, perhaps twenty-seven in all, published between March and October); while the first and only issue of Buhl's "Berliner Monatschrift", which was edited in 1844, included two major contributions by Stirner, one offering "Some Provisional Ideas concerning the State founded on Love" and the other reviewing the German edition of Eugene Sue's novel, "Les Mystères de Paris". Although the first and second of these three considerable essays, both addressed to classical Hegelian themes, show unmistakable signs of the influence of Feuerbach and Arnold Ruge, the way in which Stirner develops his strictures on revealed Christianity and on conventional Prussian liberalism clearly attests his independent ability to extend the critical work of the Left Hegelians in original directions; while in the last, criticising a novel subsequently analysed by Szeliga and subjected to counter-analysis by Marx, the scale of values which he adumbrates no longer merely denotes an extension of the principles of Bauer's school, but constitutes, for the first time, a self-confident repudiation of them.

The year 1844 marks Stirner's final breach with the family of Young Hegelians. Beginning with the rejection of all ethical norms in the essay on Eugene Sue, it culminated, in November, 1844, with the publication of "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum" and the definitive statement of his nihilistic egoism. The book excited immediate and sensational attention. Representatives of the parties who were the targets of Stirner's scorn promptly sprang to the attack: Feuerbach himself, Szeliga on behalf of Bauer and his disciples, and Moise Hess on behalf of the socialists. Stirner replied to all three critics in the third volume of "Wigands Vierteljahrsschrift", and in 1847 he gave a special answer to the criticisms of Kuno Fischer in "Die Epigonen". By then, however, interest in Stirner's form of strident individualism had effectively subsided, as graver historical forces, portending the upheavals of 1848, gave rise to more urgent intellectual and social alarm. His hour of fame was brilliant but fugitive. What had been at first regarded as an audacious philosophical tour de force soon came to be depreciated as a piece of protracted eccentricity, so that even the seriousness of the author's intentions was questioned; until at last, after this moment of astounded curiosity, the public consciousness moved on to other preoccupations and both Stirner and his ideas fell into complete oblivion, from which neither was to be resurrected during his lifetime.

In October, 1843, Stirner had married for the second time. His bride, Marie Döhnhardt, a young woman whose determination to be

emancipated had led her into the masculine society of "die Freien", brought with her a substantial dowry, and this, combined with his confident expectations of the glory which the publication of "Der Einzige" would bring, made him finally decide to abandon teaching in favour of exclusively literary pursuits. The decision was a fatal one. No business man, he saw his resources quickly vanish in a series of ill-starred commercial ventures; literature proved even less profitable than dairying, which at one stage excited the philosopher's speculations; and his rash enterprises could only end in one way - total bankruptcy. His marriage was equally brief and equally unhappy. Indignant at her husband's financial imprudence and quite incapable of understanding his character or of sympathising with his chosen way of life, Marie Dähnhardt left him in disgust after three years. Apparently unruffled by the collapse of all his undertakings, Stirner made no systematic attempt to salvage anything from the wreck of his life. After the failure of his attempt to obtain a loan by advertising his need in a Berlin newspaper, he generally managed, by adroit changes of address, to evade his creditors, except for two brief periods in 1853 and 1854 which he spent in a debtors' prison. Although his last years were spent almost continuously in Berlin, he saw little of his former associates, confining himself increasingly to the anonymity of his obscure apartments and concerning himself less and less - and finally not at all - either with public events or with literature. When, on

June 25th, 1956, his long decline was prematurely ended by an unexpected infection resulting from a chance sting by a "poisonous fly", the event was scarcely heeded; one or two newspapers belatedly published bare announcements of the death of the author of "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum". A few mourners, among whom were Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Buhl, attended his meagre funeral.

His literary débâcle was complete. Apart from replying to the critics of "Der Einzige", he wrote nothing original in philosophy or literature after 1845. Between 1845 and 1847 he produced his translation in eight volumes of the works of J.B. Say and Adam Smith, entitled "The Political Economists of the French and the English", and in 1852 appeared his last book, "The History of Reaction", the two volumes of which were virtually a compilation of the writings of Burke, Comte, and such contemporary political thinkers as Hengstenberg and Florencourt. His critical commentaries, which he reduced to a minimum, did not profess to represent more than a negligible contribution to the history of economic and political theory. Perhaps because the candour of "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum" had been so absolute, its outspoken author had nothing more to say.

Outwardly, then, Stirner's life must be adjudged a failure. His ideas, his reputation, and his personal happiness all ended in bankruptcy. He himself, however, need not have been dissatisfied with such a life, for it had at least the distinctive

consistency and unity imparted by his own character. A man of modest habits, free from any driving ambition, and with a tendency to be dilatory, he made only a single, comprehensive act of self-assertion in writing "Der Einzige", after which he contented himself with the kind of indolent existence which best accorded with his impassive nature. Although, indeed, no phlegmatic man could have written "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum", the self-assertion of the book is the metaphysical self-assertion of a man who asserts himself purely for the sake of having once conclusively asserted himself and not because he is concerned to achieve any particular object. According to his biographer, Stirner was a reserved, taciturn man with all the self-confidence and self-possession of someone who knows exactly his own possibilities and limitations and who is interested in little beyond these: certainly someone who, with no aspiration to exert influence of any kind, could command the intimate friendship and respect of men like Buhl and the Bauers must have had considerable strength of character as well as intellectual gifts. According to Marie Dänhardt, however, Stirner's chief characteristic was his utter selfishness, that complete indifference to the feelings or opinions of others which marks the deliberate and unabashed egoist. Stirner the man, like Stirner the philosopher, thought only of himself.

Chapter 2

Argument of "The False Principle of Our Education."

Stirner opens his essay on "The False Principle of Our Education" by affirming the paramount philosophical significance of educational policy. "Die Schulfrage ist eine Lebensfrage"¹ - the educational problem is the problem of life. The battlefield of German intellectual life is strewn with the corpses of contending political, social, religious, scientific, artistic, and ethical doctrines. Since "the word" which will express the spirit of the age must be discovered by our enterprise, since we are the creators of the word, it is vital to know "if we are being conscientiously educated to occupy the place of creators, or if we are being treated only as creatures, whose nature merely admits of some kind of training."² All social questions are finally reducible to this one, for efficiency entails persons who are efficient, and a perfect community entails persons who are perfect in themselves.

Stirner refers scathingly to a recent essay by the aged Professor Theodor Heinsius, entitled "A Concordat between School and Life, or a Compromise between Humanism and Realism, considered from the national point of view." For Stirner, all compromise is weakness, an offence against "the spirit of the matter",³ which is served only by trenchant resolution. He is, however, prepared to accept Heinsius' historical sketch of the period between the Reformation and the Revolution as

one in which society embodied a division between rulers and ruled, powerful and powerless, "majors and minors", namely as an epoch of subjection. Throughout this epoch, education, as a "power" by means of which its possessor could rise to a position of authority, was necessarily the exclusive domain of a few, since authority could not be shared by all. The Revolution, in destroying the master-servant relationship, introduced a new principle: "Every man is his own master",⁴ with the consequence that thenceforward the task became one of discovering a form of education which would be truly universal. This conflict between exclusive and universal education has continued in various guises down to the present day, and Stirner agrees to designate the opposing parties by their customary names, Humanism and Realism.

Until the 18th Century era of "Enlightenment", higher education rested firmly in the hands of the Humanists, its objects being an understanding of classical antiquity and a knowledge of the Bible. This bias in favour of the ancient world was clear evidence of the low value set on "das eigene Leben",⁵ on a life of one's own, and of how far we were from creating the forms of beauty from our own originality and the content of truth from our own reason. Because subservience to the classical disciplines in education corresponded to the subservience of servant to master in social life, and because the formal Graeco-Roman culture was analogous to the formal domination of ruled by the rulers (who had merely to attain a certain level of mental superiority), humanistic education, the sine qua non of

superior social status, was essentially an "elegant" education, directed to the cultivation of taste and a sense of form, threatening latterly to degenerate into a shallow concern with grammar.⁶

With the Enlightenment, the recognition of universal, inalienable human rights became associated with the demand for universal education. The new education was to yield knowledge which would have "reality", because it "had been lived".⁷ Conceived as a preparation for life, stressing the practical and useful, realistic education would destroy "the priesthood of the learned" and liberate the masses from their "laity".⁸ The role of the school was to promote our mastery over all the miscellaneous data of our environment, by ensuring that nothing of concern to us in the environment was utterly foreign to our knowledge or completely beyond our control, and by establishing a pedagogy which would enable everyone to "find his way about" in his world and in his age.⁹ In so far as it was universal and, by giving men experience of what was useful to them, fostered independence, the realistic pedagogy claimed to incorporate the ideals of equality and of freedom.

Stirner, however, rejects both humanism and realism, for both are concerned only with the temporal and external. "Spirit alone is eternal, and comprehends itself."¹⁰ Thus, as ideals, the understanding of the past and the control of the present are equally lacking in finality, while mere equality with other subjects and mere freedom from external authority are equally subordinate to the eternal ideal, which is that of a person who is "free in himself"¹¹ and who enjoys

"equality with himself".¹² Just as the humanistic ideal of elegance degenerates into "empty dandyism", the realistic ideal of utility leads to a "vulgar industrialism". The cynicism of the one and the materialism of the other must capitulate to the ideal of a person in whose nature the mundane and the eternal have been reconciled, and who, in his new-found "unity and omnipotence", is sufficient unto himself, because what remains external to him is no longer foreign to his being.¹³

Humanists and realists alike recognise that the aim of all education is to foster adroitness, or skill in manipulating the data of the environment. Now, although the effective manipulation of data¹⁴ is supremely a formal activity, involving generalisation and representation, and although the improvement of teaching techniques has made it increasingly possible to embody such formal values in a realistic pedagogy, this is precisely what the realists have failed to do. The humanists rightly exalt formal education; they wrongly refuse to admit that this consists in the utilisation of all kinds of data. The realists are right in stressing the utilisation of all data; they err in their underestimation of formal education. Their distrust of abstraction and speculation is plainly exhibited by the realists' marked hostility to philosophy, which they characterise as "idealistic nonsense", undermining morals in Church and State. Why are philosophy and abstraction so repugnant to them? "Because the realists are themselves abstract, because they have abstracted themselves from personal perfection, from the ascent to redeeming truth!"¹⁵

This does not mean that education should be put in the hands of the philosophers. It must rather be confided to men who are more than philosophers, but who are infinitely more than humanists or realists. The Reformation period, the era of freedom of thought and conscience, having achieved its consummation in philosophy, will now die, and will be followed by the era of will. Knowledge itself must die, to flower again as will.¹⁶ Although the philosophers are themselves the heroes who will accomplish this transfiguration, they too must die, destroying themselves to bring about a new freedom, the freedom of the will, and to create an eternal ideal from the ashes of a principle which is temporal and contingent. True knowledge, if it is to cease to be "material, formal, positive" and become "absolute",¹⁷ must undergo a catharsis, by dissolving itself into oblivion and emerging as a simple human force - as will; just as, in the same way, a man, by sinking all his cares in this elemental force and emerging as fresh and "naive", will thereby be enabled to find his human vocation in the purifying flame of what is now "moral knowledge".¹⁸

The basis of education is not to be will in its original form, however, but rather "will-knowledge", "das Wissen-Wollen", knowledge which fulfils itself as will.¹⁹ Unless knowledge becomes thus purified and distilled, it will remain a burdensome chattel, and can never become "personal", that is, fully and intimately integrated with the free, mobile personality of its possessor. Freedom is ultimately to be achieved only when the concrete material data, having been "annihilated",²⁰ are transformed into Spirit and assimilated into

the unity of the self by a process of abstraction. There is no freedom without abstraction.²¹

The man in whose nature the purpose of the new education will find expression is the "personal" or free man, for whom truth consists in self-manifestation, in freedom from everything alien to his individuality, and in complete abstraction from all authority. Far from producing such "true" men, the schools, both humanist and realist, have propagated nothing but acquisitiveness, servility, and mechanical self-seeking, combined with a repugnance for all knowledge which does not directly further a man's material interests. In establishing the principle, specially associated with the name of Diesterweg, whereby the child learns by discovering and interpreting the elements of his own experience, the realists have indeed made a significant advance; but the knowledge thus gained remains "positive" knowledge, barren of any creative, speculative quality. It remains the knowledge of the "sensible" man who understands the external world of things, and is not yet the knowledge of the "reasonable" man who understands himself.²²

The schools of the humanists and realists are menageries, breeding mere "scholars" and "useful citizens",²³ whose chief characteristic is their submissiveness, for they have learned to accommodate themselves to the world of positive knowledge, just as they will later have to accommodate themselves to the world at large. The schools, crushing the healthy spirit of opposition in their pupils, produce men who are studious instead of creative, cultured instead of self-assertive, passive slaves instead of free men. If education is to

be revolutionised, the teachers must cease to be teachers and become collaborators, recognising self-confidence, self-consciousness, and freedom as ideals for their pupils, who, in their new-found self-knowledge, will for the first time possess an incentive to emancipate themselves from ignorance.²⁴

Although the realistic doctrine: "Everything must be taught with reference to practical life",²⁵ is unquestionably excellent, the conception of "practice" which is derived from it is generally a misguided one. True practice does not mean to toil through life like some animal, but is exemplified rather by the free man who practises a life of creative self-manifestation. The "practical education" of the realists produces "principled people", not "principal persons".²⁶ There is a world of difference between men who are true to their convictions, and in whom their convictions, acquired but not assimilated, reside so inflexibly that they are from the beginning petrified and inert - and men whose entire character is constantly in a state of flux, constantly undergoing dissolution and rejuvenation, but who are the truly "eternal characters" because their contingent, momentary existence issues from the creative activity of the "eternal Spirit" in them. If the former are to achieve perfection, they must bring themselves to suffer the beatific agony of ceaseless transformation and rebirth.²⁷

The deepest knowledge remains no more than an impersonal commodity until, having vanished into the invisible core of the self, it is resurrected as will. This metamorphosis occurs when knowledge,

transcending objects, becomes "knowledge of the Idea" - a kind of "self-consciousness of Spirit", and yet at the same time (by entering into "the instinct of Spirit") becomes "unconscious knowledge",²⁸ in much the same way as a great number of particular experiences may resolve themselves into a single general propensity by which, from moment to moment, our conduct may imperceptibly be determined. Knowledge, in fact, becomes self. Now that the task of education is seen to be the development of "sovereign characters", we begin to understand that childish self-will is as natural as the childish desire for knowledge, and that, so far from attempting to weaken self-will, we must help the child who is learning to feel himself as a person. Only when the pupil's independent pride, which is valid and proper, has degenerated into defiant insolence, which threatens violence to the teacher's own freedom, is the latter justified in curtailing his absolute liberty of self-expression. Even then the adult will rely, not on the antique and wicked notion that a frightened child is better than an impertinent one, but solely on the firmness of his own personality, unsupported by external instruments of authority.²⁹

Although the realists have rightly condemned the "lifelessness" of humanism, they have failed to see that the school should constitute more than a preparation for life: it should, in its own right, be life, for to live means to be free. Man's highest need is not satisfied by a bourgeois education which equips him to work his way through the

world, but only by a free, personal education which empowers him to strike the fiery sparks of life from his own being. Even the demands made upon us as members of society cannot be perfectly met until we have created ourselves as persons. True freedom is the freedom of the will, moral freedom, excelling the purely theoretical freedoms of thought and conscience, which are consistent with outward and factual subjection, and identical with true equality, which must always be the equality of free persons.³⁰

Stirner closes his essay by justifying his use of the term "moral" to designate his educational philosophy, on the grounds that, although the end of education has always been in some sense moral, the conception of self-will which he has adumbrated is sufficiently graphic to distinguish his philosophy from the traditional ideas of moral culture. Whereas these seek to reform character by inculcating a set of convictions, Stirner proposes to revolutionise it by originating persons on an entirely new principle, and thus his followers may fittingly be styled "personalists".³¹ It is from the personal, and not the national standpoint that education should be judged, since only the free person can truly be both a good citizen and a refined gentleman, so embodying and transcending the ideals of realists and humanists alike. When "will-less knowledge" has been transformed into "self-conscious will", and not till then, we can begin to re-create ourselves as free persons.³²

Chapter 3Stirner's Critique of Humanism

This early essay from Stirner's pen has a dual interest. In its doctrine of "personalism"; in the vigour with which it celebrates the primacy of man's moral over his intellectual nature; in its aggrandisement of the sovereign individual who recognises no external authority; in its enthronement of active and deliberate self-consciousness as the governing ideal of a libertarian education; in all these, the modern reader can discern the germs from which the author's final philosophy of extreme egoism was soon to be formed. Thus, even from this single essay, the student of Stirner can gain portentous insights into the genesis of the author's later convictions. The essay has more than a purely embryological significance, however. Besides being a theoretical exposition of a general philosophical standpoint, this article, and its publication in a leading organ of liberal opposition to the established authority, represents an overt political act, a calculated affront to orthodoxy in that very province where the latter's ascendancy was most prized and most necessary, namely in education, and simultaneously a challenge, a positive manifesto outlining an alternative pedagogy with revolutionary implications.

It should be remembered that large-scale State enterprise, in the sense of an acceptance by the State of concrete social and economic responsibilities, is, except in the narrowly administrative and military

fields, a relatively modern departure, and that the great German experiment in national education which followed the ignominy of Jena was in many respects a startling and novel development. By making educational re-organisation a central feature of national reconstruction, the Prussian Government was inviting critics to identify its educational policy with its political purposes and to seek in the decrees of the "Minister der Geistlichen-und Unterrichtsangelegenheiten" an accurate guide to the movement of official opinion. If to progressive thinkers, as to the government, the notion that education was of crucial social and political importance was axiomatic, this only served to make the former still more sensitive of State surveillance of education, and still more resentful of the advantages thereby conferred upon the regime. The new system of education was, however, more than a merely utilitarian undertaking, controlled by the State, serving national needs, and to be judged on its practical, effective merits. It had received the seal of philosophical sanctification. It had been intellectually underwritten by its spiritual authors, who were thinkers like von Humboldt, Fichte, and Schleiermacher, as well as by scholars and teachers like Hegel, F.A. Wolf, and Niebuhr, whose achievements within the system helped to make it illustrious. The conceptions by which it was explicitly dominated were derived from literary and philosophical sources, from Kant, Goethe, Herder, and Schiller, and were founded on the best and most venerable elements of the German cultural tradition. To repudiate the prevailing educational standards was to attack that tradition. In rejecting the parallel foundations of German education, in denying both Humanism and Realism, Stirner

declared his hostility, not only to contemporary academic methods, but also to the civilisation in which these were rooted.

The "Humanism" from which Stirner apostatised was neither identical with the humanism of classical antiquity, although it sought its ancestry in Hellenic ideals, nor with the Renaissance humanism of Melancthon and Sturm, although this had once conquered German education. By "Humanism", Stirner chiefly denotes that characteristic revival of interest in Hellenic classicism which pervaded German life and thought during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, and which, unlike Sixteenth Century "Ciceronian Humanism", looked for inspiration to the great Athenian epoch, rather than to the Augustan age. The neo-humanism of Goethe and Schiller was based on a spiritual relationship which was held to obtain between the cultures of modern Germany and ancient Greece, a relationship which, although recognised and articulated since Winckelmann, received its philosophical foundation only from von Humboldt. Because of this organic union of the two cultures, German neo-humanism was not merely imitative of classical models, but was deemed to be capable of original creation in its own right, so that native German works were competent to rank as authentic, even meritorious, examples of classical literature. In this way, the Eighteenth-century subordination of the German personality to French culture, with its courtly ideal of the "galant homme", was ended by the new humanism, which was accordingly well-fitted to support the awakening national consciousness which marked the opening of the century.

Palpably, therefore, Stirner's contemptuous invective against the education of the "good citizen", against the education designed to equip men for the service of the State, carries considerably more than its superficial force. By choosing to heap scorn upon the very source of national self-respect, and so openly violating the idea of German national identity, he unambiguously declared himself an enemy of patriotism and an enemy of Prussia, and he declared his disaffection not only by his literal defiance of authority, but, more subtly, by his rejection of the classical culture which was supposed to express the spiritual nature of the emergent state.

It is in the critical and destructive portions of his essay, however, that Stirner is least original, and most typical of the "Young Germany" of his day. Dependably, his asperities against the formal humanistic education then given to the Prussian gentry and bureaucracy made excellent copy for the "Rheinische Zeitung", for their author was manifestly denouncing a philosophy of education which was associated with the political supremacy of a definite class. While, as suggested above, Stirner's denial of the traditional culture had more than a narrowly contemporary political significance; while it foreshadowed the total repudiation of German society (and indeed of the very notion of society) which he was to effect in "Der Einzige"; and while these implications may, already in 1842, have been present to his mind; yet the immediate force of his article derived from its virulent condemnation of the received academic ideals of his day, those identified with the existing Prussian establishment, and it is accordingly as a

contemporary tract, rather than *sub specie aeternitatis*, that it deserves initially to be judged.

In his critique of humanism, Stirner incidentally furnishes a graphic and faithful account of the classical education of the time.¹ (It is not surprising that he was competent to expound the characteristics of both humanistic and realistic education, for, although he had never been a "Gymnasiallehrer", he was himself a product of the classical education of Gymnasium and University, he had studied education, and had taught in a "Realschule" as well as in a higher "Töcherschule".) The Gymnasien of the 1840s did indeed offer a more liberal curriculum than had the grammar schools of the previous century, where Latin Composition had been virtually the only principal subject. They did indeed profess to afford an "all-round education", and the curriculum drawn up by Süvern,² which shows the direction in which the authorities would influence individual schools, did reflect this ideal by devoting a total of 110 hours per week (over the whole ten-year course)³ to such supposedly "realistic" studies as mathematics, the natural sciences, history, and geography. This does not mean that Stirner's arraignment of humanism was a posthumous, trite denunciation of a pedagogy already superseded in practice. While his delineation of humanistic instruction was, of course, also true of German schools of earlier generations, it remained pertinent and valid as a description even of post-Napoleonic education. Even in Süvern's curriculum, Latin (76) and Greek (50) were together granted more teaching hours than all the "realistic" subjects combined; when German was added,

the exclusively literary studies represented 170 weekly teaching hours over ten years, perhaps no longer amounting to a monopoly of the curriculum, but undeniably exhibiting a very pronounced hegemony, which the teaching of French in most Gymnasien would decisively enhance.

Moreover, since 1810 the higher education of teachers had been strictly regulated, so that in Stirner's generation most teachers in Gymnasien had received a thoroughly classical education, many of them at the University of Berlin, where a high premium was still put on philological studies. Finally, the regulations governing the "Abiturientenexamen", or Leaving Certificate, plainly illustrate the bias in favour of humanistic culture. As late as 1863, twenty years after Stirner wrote, a candidate could be declared "mature" if his results in Latin and German were satisfactory and if his performance in Greek was above average, irrespective of his achievements on the "realistic" side of the examination. Lest it be thought that the inclusion of the native language as a privileged subject signified incipient modernist sympathies among the official examiners, it may be apposite to quote a specimen question set by them for the German essays: "How did Athens come to be the centre of the intellectual life of Greece?"⁴

Such was the historical educational system against which Stirner rebelled. Homer, Sophocles, Cicero, Thucydides, Livy, Horace, Ovid - these formed the content of the instruction received by him as a pupil; Lessing, Goethe, Schiller - these were given to him as models and "authorities" when he became a teacher. Although it was no longer

true that higher education, as in the pre-Enlightenment era, "rested almost entirely on the understanding of the classics",⁵ it remained the case that the forces of humanism, which were still by and large supreme in the Gymnasien, "sought their paragon in antiquity".⁶ That other "antiquity" which was Stirner's target, Biblical antiquity, also continued to enjoy educational priority. In Süvern's archetypal curriculum, religious instruction was granted a total of 20 teaching hours per week over the ten-year course, exactly the same proportion as that afforded to instruction in the natural sciences. Admittedly, in Prussia of the 1830s and '40s religious instruction was regarded as a "realistic" subject, presumably because its linguistic content was low, at least as it was taught in the schools, and because it was directed, unlike Latin and Greek, but like geography and science, to an understanding of cosmic processes. In Stirner's view, however, the moral and social influence of religious instruction (as distinguished from its data) operated to form the kind of personality, and supported the kind of ethical ideal, associated with the education of the humanists.

Thus, when Stirner refers to the ancient world (both Hellenic and Judaic) as a "mistress" to whom pupils are subservient, he is depicting a state of affairs which was actual and general. He condemns humanism because it involves the submission of the pupil to a classical culture which is alien to him - not only in the sense that the pupil is German and the culture predominantly Greek (for neo-humanism aspired to promote a truly classical national culture), but also in the sense that the pupil is a unique person for whom any purely literary culture is

extraneous and superficial. In addition, the heteronomous classical disciplines are inimical to the special metaphysical status of the individual, both ostensibly and more profoundly. According to Stirner, the person is at once "continuously appearing temporality" and "eternal spirit", simultaneously a local, phenomenal, contingent individual, and an infinite, timeless universal; and in either aspect he is exempt from the monopoly of a culture which is both temporal and derived from an alien epoch. To the pupil of 1842, ceaselessly "dissolving" and re-creating himself as a free person, the civilisation of the Fifth Century B.C. is a recalcitrantly foreign and remote figment, devoid of pertinence and immediacy. But the pupil must also be an "eternal character". Since, on its more momentous plane, his nature is indeterminable, and abstracted from the contingencies of time and place, to subordinate his spirit to the objective, historical Graeco-Roman literature is to impose upon it an intolerable and indecent constraint, which would subjugate the limitless and the imprescriptible to the finite and the secular. Humanistic education, then, is hostile to the life of the individual in both its phases: to his diffuse, transient, empirical existence, as well as to his essential, inner unity as absolute Spirit.

To this philosophical arraignment Stirner, as a vehement Young Hegelian, characteristically annexes an exposure of the social and political bias of humanism. The accession of Frederick William IV in 1840 had ushered in an era of absolutist reaction, which stimulated the younger members of the radical Left, deprived of overt political

activity, to engage in a journalistic and literary campaign against the Government. Ruge, the Bauers, Feuerbach, Buhl, Marx, Rutenberg, Strauss: these and their followers, in a succession of books and articles, declared, from their several standpoints, their opposition to the deepening conservatism of the regime. Precluded by police supervision and the prevailing censorship from explicit political agitation, they conducted their offensive in philosophical or theological disguise, for in striking at traditional religion and philosophy, both of which were enshrined in the very heart of the Prussian orthodoxy, they conceived themselves to be striking a blow at the major intellectual bulwarks of the existing state. In venturing to discuss education, that acropolis of authority, Stirner, too, was obliged carefully to skirt the edges of political comment. Although he prudently shrouded his strictures on contemporary education in the cloak of a historical sketch of post-Reformation ideas, the artificiality of this device must have been transparent to all but the most innocent of his readers, among whom may well have been numbered the official censors, who were as notorious for their obtuseness as for their severity.

Stirner alleges that humanistic education is inherently "exclusive" education, the education of a class, from which other classes are debarred. Nowhere in the essay, however, does he venture to give a circumstantial and perspicuous account of this class, of which humanism is the creature and instrument. Instead, he prefers to

make oblique, figurative references to "the rulers", "the powerful", or "the majors", whose chief attribute is the power which they wield over the "servants" or "minors", by whom they are vastly outnumbered. Classical culture and hierarchical government brilliantly fortify each other, since, in each, superiority is indispensably conferred upon an elect few. In an age when to govern required no special qualifications, the role of education being to identify rather than to train the governors, it had above all to be distinctive, a function which a pre-eminently literary culture indisputably fulfilled. This culture was common to all the European aristocracies of the post-Napoleonic Restoration. As Balston, the Eton master, said to Sir James Stephen in the year of Stirner's essay: "Stephen major, if you do not take more pains, how can you ever expect to write good longs and shorts? If you do not write good longs and shorts, how can you ever be a man of taste? If you are not a man of taste, how can you ever hope to be of use in this world?"⁷ When Balston and Stirner were teachers, Peel's House of Commons was still peopled by "men of taste", while the France of Guizot and the Austria of Metternich, like the Prussia of Frederick William IV, openly followed domestic and foreign policies which were conceived by feudal aristocrats in the interests of their class, and executed by feudal aristocrats or their agents. An education which, in the words of Spencer a few years later, created "men who would blush if caught saying Iphigénia instead of Iphigenía"⁸ plainly equipped men only to be courtiers, and was indeed more appropriate to the Europe of Castiglione and Cellini than to that of Faraday and Bunsen.

In part, therefore, Stirner is attacking the education of the aristocratic reactionaries who ruled Prussia and Europe. Already, however, this classical education was no longer distinctive of the class which it supported and symbolised, for since 1810 the great expansion of higher education throughout Germany had brought into being a highly literate and self-conscious middle class, some of whom were recruited to the service of the state, but many of whom were now restive for political emancipation. The policy of the Government being to assimilate this new class of citizens culturally to the land-owning nobility whom they might serve, access to the higher forms of humanistic education, as dispensed in the universities, was virtually confined to students from the classical Gymnasien. While, for a few years after 1832, certain branches of the public service had accepted the Leaving Certificate of the Realschule or the Higher Burgher school in lieu of that of the Gymnasium, by 1842 a pronounced reaction against this trend was in progress; it was to continue for the remainder of the reign, becoming specially pronounced in respect of university entrance. Thus, in 1863, two years after the close of Frederick William IV's reign, there were 1,765 "Abiturienten" from the Prussian Gymnasien, of whom 1,563 went to universities, but only 214 from the Realschulen, of whom none went to a university.⁹ Hallowed as it was by the blessing of the King and his Government, the ascendancy of humanism was marked and enduring.

Why was classical culture a chosen instrument of aristocratic supremacy? To understand Stirner's answer it is necessary to under-

stand his conception of the knowing self and its relationship to the external world. The essence of his position is contained in his statement that "the sole educational value of all given material is that children can learn to initiate something with it, to use it."¹⁰ The relationship of the child to the world of objects is one of "Behandlung", of manipulation or utilisation by the child of the natural data presented to him. Having "overpowered" the natural order, he can "utilise" its members by transforming them, by purging them of their objective status, subjectifying them, and assimilating them into the unity and privacy of his self. In education, we learn to conduct our commerce with the natural world, which we learn to control, in order successfully and deliberately to exploit it, the whole process being analogous to an act of consumption, whereby we render docile and domestic that which was intransigent and foreign.

It is important to realise that when Stirner refers to "Behandlung" or "Nutzen", he does not merely designate an objective procedure whereby the self conducts a directed transformation of the environmental subject-matter: since the activity of the self transforms its environment in a unique and conclusive way, by a kind of metaphysical alchemy in which the public external world undergoes a transubstantiation into the spiritual property of a specific individual, this activity is more akin to ingestion than to manipulation. Now, for Stirner, the entire exercise amounts to a conversion of the material into the formal. Still emphatically a Young Hegelian, he continues to assign to "self-consciousness" a cardinal role in his philosophy, and, viewing

consciousness as an essentially cognitive state, he imputes the principal formal characteristics of ratiocination to the activity of the self as experient. To experience the world is to appropriate it, but this is an operation in which the subject is required to classify, systematise, and generalise the material data presented to his consciousness, and is therefore one in which he is compelled to "abstract". On the assumption that the individual possesses a faculty of abstraction, which may be more or less "adroit", Stirner accepts the development of formal dexterity in this sense as a major educational ideal. He concedes that humanistic education supremely embodies those formal principles in accordance with which all conceptualisation, all specifically intellectual practices, are regulated. Since the matter of ancient culture is uniformly inappropriate to modern civilisation, only the "formas" or "phantoms" remain to edify our consciousness, and hence the humanists, while sponsoring a native culture of which the substance and content have genuinely contemporary origins and relevance, distinctively set store by an acquaintance with traditional grammatical and metrical rules and with the outward, linguistic organisation of classical knowledge.

Stirner contends that humanism, so construed, is a militant ally of hierarchical authority, in which power is predominantly vested in a tiny, self-perpetuating ruling class. In support of his thesis he advances a number of arguments, and his essay elsewhere makes clear certain other considerations forming the basis of this proposition. In the first place, he draws attention to the correspondence between

the formal qualities of classical learning and the formal nature of social superiority, which the attainment of a determinate level of mental culture automatically confers. He does not intend this merely to be a trivial verbal parallel. He is maintaining explicitly that social eminence is founded on a narrow kind of merit, namely on linguistic sophistication; and, more obliquely, that there is a significant similarity between the intellectual discipline of humanism, with its accent on characterisation, denomination, and classification, and the rigorous organisation of aristocratic society, with its dogmatic stratification and the finesse of its complex social distinctions.

Secondly, Stirner notices how circumscribed is classical literature in its ambience and interest, neglecting the world of natural phenomena and focussing exclusively on human personalities and events. This artificial restriction reinforces aristocratic sovereignty in several ways: it is arbitrary, like the class by which it is esteemed; it is, similarly, strictly defined and hostile to innovation, especially the introduction of extraneous matter; it habitually results in works of art which reflect the life and manners of the higher strata of society; and, by disregarding scientific and industrial developments, it confirms the aristocratic prejudice against the advancing economic revolution.

Next, Stirner shows how the traditional education enhances and gives currency to the idea of hierarchy. The master-servant relationship, already implicit in the attitude of reverence and

humility with which the classical scholar adopts ancient authors as his models and arbiters, becomes incarnated in the schoolroom of the humanists, where the teacher exercises a physical, mental, and moral dominion over his submissive pupils. The intellectual discipline resident in formal studies is matched by the severe decorum practised in the actual work of teaching, and both contribute to maintain the indispensable absolutism of aristocratic society in general and the Prussian state in particular.

Finally, Stirner furnishes an explanation of the humanists' penchant for the "elegant", the exquisite, and the refined in literature and art, and of their patronage of these values in education. In constructing its "exclusive" world, the aristocracy has sought every means of differentiating its members from the vulgar masses, and has in consequence contrived artificial graces, manners, and embellishments, with which to overawe and impose upon its inferiors. Because their rulers gratify this taste for the stylised and formal in almost every aspect of life, the schools of the humanists are distinguished by their insistence on rhetoric, grammar, and literary composition, subjects superbly fitted to inculcate verbal fastidiousness above all else.

Stirner begins his essay by affirming his concern "above all, with what is to be made of us",¹¹ and he reserves his most vitriolic acerbities for the type of personality conceived and propagated by the dominant classicism. When he portrays the character of the "dandy", slavishly obeying the ukase of empty conventions, he is

presenting a double indictment. His immediate aim is, by personifying the aristocratic society of his generation, to demonstrate the vanity and superficiality of its pretensions. In this, he is mainly conducting a typical, if unusually vigorous, exercise in anti-authoritarian polemics. His personification of the humanistic ideal is not, however, merely an eristic device. It is a conscious attempt to align a kind of character then widely regarded as enshrining the most exalted ideals with a character of an utterly different conception, and to negotiate the most intimate comparison of the two; for he can now no longer defer expressing his conviction that the individual person, in his absolute singularity, is the unique and original value by which all moral and educational practice must be judged.

Because the imperfections of the humanistic personality are inescapably the obverse of its genuine merits, he perceives that the former are indissociable from the very nature of humanism. While the ideal of the scholar and the gentleman is not an unworthy one, in order to appraise its validity we must inspect the degenerations from the ideal, rather than its paragons. Indeed, in the case of humanism, to realise the ideal is necessarily to pervert it, since the erudition of the scholar is possible only to one who is prepared to subordinate his own authentic insights in his vassalage to the civilisation of which he can never be more than a minor auxiliary, and the urbanity of the polished aristocrat (which too readily deteriorates into mere expedience or profligacy) is nothing more than a facile aptitude for rehearsing ceremonies and proprieties which must remain external forms,

cultivated but not assimilated to his nature. Himself the creature of an alien culture, the humanist can never be truly creative, nor, entirely subjugated to its statutes, can he divest himself of the mediocrity and the cynicism which are the corollaries of his servitude.

Thus, Stirner revolts from the idea of the effete academic, debauched by learning, as from a vicious conceit whose glamour is as meretricious as it is transparent. Confronted by Stirner's "eternal character", the humanist is seen to be a specimen of inertia, of spiritual improbity, and of the meanest, most trivial parochialism. But he is above all odious precisely because he is a specimen, wholly governed and limited by the species which his highest ambition can only be to exemplify, whereas the eternal character is "sovereign" precisely because he is unique, without category, a universe unto himself. The identity of the free man is founded on his complete logical and ethical solitude, and hence the character of the aristocrat, who is essentially a member of his class, becomes indistinguishable from that of the menial over whom he exercises his specious authority.

Chapter 4

Stirner's Critique of Realism

Stirner's essay on "The False Principle of our Education" is chiefly remarkable for its vehement hostility to the urbane classicism of Restoration Europe. Its author denounces the degenerate "Humanism" of his own period, not only because it is degenerate, but because, as a formal, traditional culture inspired by the ideals of a remote epoch, it abridges the freedom of the individual, impoverishes his self-consciousness, and frustrates his aspirations to realise himself as a person. The originality of Stirner's critique resides in its philosophical assumptions rather than in its target, for by 1842 criticism of the Prussian regime and its sterile ideology was spreading among liberals and reformers of all camps. Stirner, however, belonged to no camp. (Although he was a member of the inner circle of "die Freien" which gathered around the Bauers and their close associates, his intimacy with the latter seems to have been less of an actively political nature than it was personal, social, and, for a time, intellectual; having virtually broken with the group after 1845, he took no part whatever in the events of 1848). If he rejected the dominant Goetheo-Hegelian civilisation of the German patricians, he was equally contemptuous of the rising pretensions of the national bourgeoisie. Like Stendhal, he offered his own solution as an alternative both to the tyranny which was passing and to the philistinism which was taking its place. While, in education, he recognised the partial merit of the "realist" pedagogy, which was

conspicuously the educational philosophy of the middle-class, of commerce, and of industrialism, his final judgment was that the realists, despite their egalitarian professions and their declared antagonism to privilege, were, like the humanists, enemies of individualism, and that, in their subservience to convention and their suspicion of non-conformity, they were no better than their betters.

The "Realism" whose educational influence Stirner deploras had its philosophical origins outside Germany, in Rousseau's "Emile".¹ Admittedly, the idea of popular education, enunciated by Luther but neglected by his successors, had long been current, but apart from the experiments of Reyher in Gotha and Francke at Halle, German education remained exclusively classical until the growth of the "Realschulen" in the latter half of the Eighteenth Century. The first of these, Hecker's "Ökonomisch-mathematische Realschule", which was founded in 1747 in Berlin, responded to the demand for a new type of education to meet the exigencies of modern life by offering mechanics, architecture, drawing, and various industrial courses, in addition to the ordinary school subjects. Although the increasing wealth of the cities and the expansion of trade ensured the spread of the Realschulen and the development of realistic studies, a further two decades were to elapse before the philosophical presuppositions of realism began to be recognised. The germinal ideas derive chiefly from Rousseau. The hostility to the upper-class civilisation of the ancien regime, the indifference to the formal values of purely intellectual pursuits,

the importance attributed to the external, natural world: these characteristic ideas, which colour Rousseau's entire educational theory, came to exercise a profound influence on the development of realism in Germany. The "Philanthropinistic" movement, inspired by Basedow and supported by public men of the calibre of Campe and von Zedlitz, and employing the notions of "play" and "utility" to give direction to studies essentially modern in content, represented the earliest practical application of Rousseau's naturalism.

It is in the writings of Rousseau's two greatest apostles, Kant and Pestalozzi, however, that the controlling doctrines of later realism are most clearly anticipated, for the Kantian conception of public education governed by the ideal of a perfect community of self-determining beings and the Pestalozzian consecration of universal education, growing from its roots in personal activity and concrete experience, are the immediate progenitors of Nineteenth Century realist educational philosophy. The partial incorporation of these ideals into the German educational system of the post-Napoleonic renaissance was mainly due to the authority of Fichte, who, a fervid disciple of Kant in the domain of moral philosophy, was an absolute follower of Pestalozzi in that of education. If the Universities and the Gymnasien remained strongholds of academic humanism, the lesser place occupied by the Realschulen and elementary schools was increasingly pervaded by the naturalistic activism of Pestalozzi, whose principles and methods, officially sponsored for a time by Baron von Stein and Süvern and later widely disseminated by the rise of Training Colleges,

were essentially those underlying the bourgeois pedagogy which Stirner characterised and condemned.

Stirner's delineation of realism is meticulous and complete. He perceives that the interests of the realist, being wholly grounded in the immediate local situation of the human subject, do not suffer the alienation which, in the case of the classicist, results from his devaluation of present existence in deference to an ancient culture. While he has failed to emancipate himself from his tenancy of his own temporal civilisation, the realist has at least escaped from the oppressive incongruity of a foreign civilisation. "Hence a pedagogy came into favour, which satisfied the universal need to find one's way about in one's environment and in one's age."² This intensified awareness of and involvement in "his environment and his age", in his specific physical and social environment, accounts for the realist's conception of knowledge. Knowledge is not of forms, but of things. It is gained, not by submersion in the thoughts of classical authors, but by direct acquaintance with the objects of sense-experience. Since "real" knowledge is knowledge of life, knowledge must "penetrate life".

In Stirner's words, the realists believe that "knowledge must be lived".³ The "life" which must give content to our ideas is the life of experience, constituted by our sense-impressions, and so to "live knowledge" we must attend, not to the formal characteristics of the world, which, since they are universal, are essentially abstracted from all reference to our distinctive society, but to the data of

the world, which, being indissolubly particular, are wholly and necessarily identified with the special environment of ourselves as experients. The "nature" which is the concern of the educator is the external natural universe as it exists and is known to his society, and the elemental but developing human nature of the pupils of his generation. He does not seek knowledge of nature for its own sake: the realist prizes knowledge because it is the implement whereby he can understand, and so dominate and exploit, his natural surroundings. Realistic knowledge is the knowledge of the practical man who is preoccupied by the struggle to wrest security and wealth from his impersonal environment, which he sees as the obstacle which scientific and technical research will assist him to overcome.⁴ If he is successfully to manipulate the objective world of things in which he moves and lives, the realist must be prepared to study its structure and phenomena. This study will be "realistic education."

During the thirty years before Stirner wrote his essay, these ideas had been gaining acceptance in varying degrees at the various levels of German education. Influential men, such as Wolf and Schulze, had canvassed the notion of an "all-round" education which would make students' minds receptive to the best in both humanistic and scientific knowledge, and their efforts had been reflected, if not in the Universities, where philological studies remained supreme, at least partially in the curriculum of the Gymnasien. But while some authentically "realistic" modifications of secondary education were administratively effected (e.g. the introduction of German, mathematics, history, geography, and natural science into the examen

pro facultate docendi of the *Gymnasiallehrer*), these changes were rendered nugatory as long as exclusively linguistic disciplines continued to predominate in the Universities, entrance to which governed the aspirations of the majority of students in the *Gymnasien*; and in any case, by 1842 there was growing a vigorous official reaction against the realistic and encyclopaedic conceptions of the preceding decades. Thus the realism against which Stirner inveighs was essentially a movement whose achievements were to be sought in the less privileged strata of the educational system.

Protected in some measure by their very obscurity from the political disturbances which so harassed the Universities, the elementary schools and the non-classical secondary schools were quietly adopting and developing the realistic principles, in their curricula as well as in their methods of instruction. In the cultural crisis which he is analysing Stirner identifies only two protagonists: education is horizontally divided between the forces of aristocratic humanism, controlling the superior educational institutions, and those of bourgeois realism, steadily permeating the junior and humbler areas of education.⁵ Certainly, in lower- and middle-class education all over Germany realistic methods rapidly made headway. Many of the new generation of primary teachers were trained in the principles of Pestalozzi, so that elementary education came to be less and less verbal and increasingly practical, even to the extent of including manual skills as customary subjects of instruction. Viewing the child as "an organisa within an organism" - as an individual creature of multifarious aptitudes, whose possibilities could only be

realised in his functioning as an efficient member of productive society - realistic educators stressed equally the need for self-activity, for stimulating the spontaneous evolution of the pupil's native powers, and the need for an education which would equip the child with that knowledge of physical, biological, and social processes without which he could not effectively contribute to a society whose life was founded on the axiom that mankind must learn successfully to adapt itself to the order of nature.

Mankind must also learn, however, to employ nature. Since realism was essentially a utilitarian philosophy which urged the instrumental role of human knowledge, for it to acknowledge that there was any aspect of nature that did not come within the scope of human enterprise would have been to acknowledge failure. Only by introducing his pupil to every department of reality (by providing, in Froebel's words, "eine allseitige Lebenseignung") can the teacher ensure that the future adult will be adequately prepared to encounter and cope with the innumerable exigencies of life. Now, Stirner saw that this attempt to make education a comprehensive preparation for life was historically connected with the movement to make education comprehensive in another sense. The humanists' distrust of the new methods was well-founded. The Europe which the realists anticipated, and for which they paved the way, was Nineteenth-Century Europe, the Europe of railways, of the Zollverein, and of middle-class enfranchisement, a Europe whose trade, industry, politics, wars, and empires made up the "life" in which middle-class lawyers, scientists,

merchants, craftsmen, and administrators would decisively participate - a modern, competitive, practical life, in which the average industrious man of far-from-aristocratic pretensions could "find himself." In the new Europe, the traditional hierarchies would not go unchallenged. Stirner rightly identifies the French Revolution as the great crisis which ensured the permanence and eventual victory of the new values, for it was the Revolution which both precipitated the democratic political ideals associated with realism and promoted its seminal experiments in popular education. The Revolution had authoritatively propagated the idea of universal education, and it was to remain in currency. But if freedom and equality were the ideals of the Revolution, they were no less the ideals of realism. In the realist's view, the world is an impersonal quarry from which all men are free to hew the materials they need, unconstrained by artificial social or political restrictions, while, precisely because their environment is inhuman (and hence impartial), men enjoy a natural parity of opportunity in the business of life. An education which recognises man's natural freedom and equality must be both practical and universal.

In what ways was the educational philosophy of realism an overt response to the mounting aspirations of the German bourgeoisie? For Stirner, the moral and intellectual judgments of the realist were patently the judgments of the ambitious bourgeois who, finding his enterprise frustrated by the values of an aristocratic society,

sought in the world of physical nature an arena in which he could release his energies and give them profitable employment. Concerned as he was to wrest subsistence from his environment, he demanded an education which would equip him with those qualities of robust independence and vigorous resolution without which he could not hope to engage successfully in the arduous competition that he would have to meet. Moreover, the conviction that he possessed basic and inalienable rights as a human being reinforced in him an exuberant individualism which was utterly hostile to the old traditions of deference and humility.

Stirner realizes, however, that realistic education is not designed to produce a mere rabble of contending egoists. The realistic virtues are not only those of the successful entrepreneur; they are also the virtues of the "useful citizen", for the virtuous tradesman is honest and law-abiding as well as energetic and far-sighted. He is the "sensible" or shrewd man, who knows how to reconcile private interest and public good. He is the man whose domestic and commercial or professional life is conducted according to solemn "principles", to inculcate which is the work of education. Because the realist's position in life is founded on his ability to deal with facts, and not with abstractions or speculative fancies, the educator will serve him best by introducing him to and extending his knowledge of the natural world of objects, events, and processes, and by assisting him to organize his "positive, material" knowledge in such a way that he is enabled to exploit it to the maximum.

But since even the best-informed bourgeois cannot fully use his powers if he lacks stability of character, the educator will also strive to nourish in him the qualities of thrift, sobriety, patience, diligence, and honesty.

Thus naturalism, which began in Rousseau as a romantic protest against the artificial civilisation of a highly urban aristocracy, reached its consummation in the Nineteenth-Century idea of the prudent bourgeois, in whom the virtues of patriotism and self-interest are decently united. Stirner's abrupt rejection of the humanist tradition is matched by his implacable hostility to realism. Having repudiated the notion of a hierarchical culture governed by primordial distinctions of status and privilege, he no less conclusively severs himself from the contemporary alternative, a society founded on the belief that in commercial and industrial expansion lies the key to human progress. For Stirner, the "practical" activity of the bourgeois is not the purposeful vitality of the free man, for the bourgeois pursuit of private gain is mechanical and prosaic; it is the parochial self-seeking of the obscurantist, who identifies salvation with acquisition and equates knowledge with information about markets and merchandise. He who will appropriate and exploit the world must first understand it. He must undertake the work of systematisation, analysis, generalisation - in a word, "abstractions" - which the realist abhors but without which the world cannot be fully apprehended and controlled.

The realist's antagonism to philosophy, and to all contemplative or formal activity, is myopic, for it amounts to a refusal to experience the world which he seeks to manipulate - a refusal which is all the more perverse since the formal encompassment of the world is a necessary condition of its appropriation and assimilation. In his revolt from humanism, the realist has only replaced the artificial by the superficial. If the knowledge inculcated by realistic education is inert and banal, and lacking in the freely speculative and creative qualities of true knowledge, this is because the realist himself lacks originality and depth. Like the humanist, he is no more than a "creature". Believing himself to be free, he is enslaved by the very moral principles on the rigidity of which he prides himself so naïvely. Proclaiming his equality with all men, he is blind to the fact that such equality is trivial, for he has not yet realised that the freedom and equality which can be conferred from outside oneself are empty and false. True freedom and true equality, like all principles which characterise the sovereign "person", dwell only in the personality of the self-governing individual, who, in affirming them, is manifesting the resources of his individuality.

Chapter 5

The World of the Personalist

As the first substantial, independent expression of Stirner's thought, the essay on education has peculiar importance. While much of it is inevitably concerned with the refutation of humanism and realism, the two great public philosophies of education, the essay also furnishes a positive statement of Stirner's original philosophical ideas which is complete enough, and vivid enough, to be of immense value to anyone interested in the evolution of his mature philosophy. If the debt which he owes to the ideological climate in which he was nurtured is clear, the degree to which he has already liberated himself from its influence is clearer still. For the first time, it is possible to ascertain the outlines of a definite, coherent view of the world and of human personality. Within the compass of an essay explicitly devoted to an educational theme Stirner had not the space to work out all the implications of his position, but the position itself is conclusively established, and it is seen to be very close to that from which (albeit with still greater vigour and perspicuity) he launched himself in "Der Einzige".

The logical structure of Stirner's essay, although perhaps superficial, is not accidental. Like much of "Der Einzige", it is marked by a facile adherence to the Hegelian forms of the triadic progression of thought, whereby every truth is supposed to have three aspects or

stages, of which the first two, affirmation and negation, are partial aspects, while the third, synthesis, is a final unification of these contradictory elements. This is not a doctrine which Stirner formally embraces. Rather, this conception of truth unfolding itself dialectically is one which unconsciously colours the expression of his thought, but does not fundamentally modify its substance. His method, if such a word can be used of what is essentially a literary framework for his thoughts, consists of prefacing the statement of his own views by an examination of two historically prior, contradictory views from which he regards his own as emerging. That this synthesis is deemed to be no mere compromise is evident from his immediate castigation of Heinsius' attempted "Konkordat" between humanism and realism as pernicious and ignoble, for what is required is not an expedient settlement arrived at by compounding the two hostile doctrines, but a genuinely new and positive solution issuing spontaneously from their conflict: this solution is "personalism".

The triadic scheme, in which, by a kind of interior dynamic, the opposition of two principles is made to yield a higher unity harmonising but transcending both, is used explicitly or implicitly by Stirner in several stages of his argument. Thus, in their attitudes to philosophy, the dogmatism of the humanists is contrasted with the scepticism of the realists, both being supplanted by what may fairly be called the mysticism of the personalist. Similarly, if literary culture is opposed to concrete, realistic culture, the unity that lies beyond their difference, and gives this its meaning, is self-

culture, for the distinction between the "formal" knowledge of the one and the "material" knowledge of the other only has significance when seen in the light of the "absolute" knowledge of self-conscious will. The different social systems of which the respective educational theories are manifestations also illustrate the triadic pattern. The anarchist Stirner challenges the ideals associated with aristocracy and democracy alike, asserting that the artificial society of privileged Europe will resist the naturalistic values of commercial Europe until both are reconciled in the "personal" civilisation which will purge and supersede them. The highly integrated and stratified society of the Renaissance period will be finally replaced, not by the centrifugal competition of clashing interests established by the Industrial Revolution, but by a world in which unity and diversity are equally realised in the lives of autonomous, self-creative individuals.

Other features of Stirner's presentation exhibit the same dialectical trinity. Why is the humanists' exaltation of literary knowledge barren and untoward? For the very reason that we condemn the emaciated "practical" knowledge of the realists, namely because it is biased and incomplete, because it represents the attempt of a single phase of human nature to monopolise our entire personality. Since education must do justice to our nature as a unified, coherent whole, the apparently mutually exclusive character of humanism and realism offers us an alternative which is in fact false. Fulfilment lives neither in abstract theory nor in unreflective practice, but only in

"Wissen-Wollen", in the self-conscious will of the "sovereign character", who alone is able to grasp and exhaust the potentialities of his nature, having successfully abolished the polarity of knowledge and achievement. So, too, the libertarian and egalitarian ideals of democratic realism can deliver mankind from the subjection and inequality of humanist society only in the most trivial, external sense. Whereas the antagonism between these two sets of values takes place in the narrow, literal universe of impersonal fact, and is accordingly fragmentary and unreal, the solution of their conflict must work itself out within a different and higher universe, the universe comprising those absolute values which reside in the soul of the ultimate individual, who is free from and equal with no other man, but solely in and with himself. In such ways, then, are Stirner's ideas enveloped in the formula of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. In the role of tritagonist, subduing and surmounting an apparently irreducible dualism, he progressively discloses the opposition of two great philosophies of education and systematically articulates the details of their schism: until, with a dramatic re-orientation of the terms of this conflict, he utterly transfigures its character, so that the solution of the dilemma appears to emerge inevitably from those very presuppositions of the dilemma which the original statement of it had ignored or concealed.

While the triadic, neo-Hegelian form in which much of his essay is cast may not be essential to the development of its central notion, Stirner's adherence to this formal dialectic is undoubtedly sincere, and he is emphatic that the final distillation issuing from the

combustion of two contradictory doctrines can be no mere fusion of the two, for such a fusion would lack authentic unity and vitality: it would be a "sin against the spirit of the matter".¹ What, then, are the terms of the genuinely original philosophy of education which issues from the conflict of humanism and realism depicted by Stirner? Perhaps its most striking feature - although in the light of its author's connection with the Young Hegelian movement scarcely a surprising feature - is the extent to which Stirner still relies upon characteristically Hegelian concepts and vocabulary. At this stage of his thought, the conceptual apparatus of Hegel is still the instrument which he uncritically employs in his analysis of the individual self and its relation to human knowledge and society. His use of the traditional terminology, however, serves only to conceal the crucial re-orientation that he has effected, for the fulcrum on which his conceptual apparatus now rests, and from which he is preparing to overthrow the whole Hegelian system, is no longer the idea of an Absolute, transcending the relativity of individuals, but the very idea of the impenitent individual, self-sufficient and self-determined, which, as the nodal idea of his philosophy, invests the traditional concepts with a fundamentally altered and revolutionary meaning.²

Thus, whereas for Hegel "Spirit" signifies that one immutably homogeneous and infinite substance underlying all forms of natural and spiritual life, Stirner employs the same concept in a palpably different sense. He would and does attribute to Spirit the typically

Hegelian characteristics - Spirit is absolute unity, eternal and self-determining: but while the Spirit of Hegel is that reality underlying the entire universe, the Spirit to which Stirner addresses himself is the unique, inner reality of the individual person alone, in his essential privacy and singularity. The classical Hegelian concept of self-consciousness undergoes a similar transformation at Stirner's hands. While for Stirner, as for Hegel, self-consciousness remains the highest form of knowledge, it is for him a form of knowledge which culminates and is realised, not in some Absolute Idea, but by suffering a total metamorphosis in its passage through the occult silences of the individual self, whence it emerges as the self-conscious will of a sovereign person. In these and other ways, although continuing to operate with the familiar and, in his milieu, intelligible Hegelian categories, Stirner firmly transfers the centre of gravity of his system from knowledge to will, from the universal to the particular, from absolutism to individualism, and in doing so crosses the Rubicon which will divide him irreversibly from the army of Young Hegelians to whom his words are as yet directed.

The crux of Stirner's position is his conception of the self, of the "Ich", on which is founded his general view of knowledge and reality. In his theory of the self, as in his metaphysics, he proclaims an extreme dualism. There are two utterly disparate realms, the realm of Spirit and that of Nature, which are strictly incommensurable but between which relations nevertheless exist and function. Thus the personality of a human being, while it is rooted in Spirit,

manifests itself in concrete form in the order of Nature, and a human being, who lives, moves, suffers, and rejoices in the natural world of physical experience, yet retains in the inmost sphere of his being a spiritual centre not directly accessible to the events and processes of the external world. Since it is Spirit which is the source of my identity, that which is not of my Spirit is wholly or partially foreign to my being, while in so far as I am pure Spirit I am autonomous or sovereign, positing and "comprehending" myself. As Spirit I am eternal (i.e. outside time) and absolute, in contrast to the temporality, contingency, and relativity of external Nature. As pure identity, my Spirit is free from the heterogeneity and the ensuing contradictions of the natural world, and as infinite Spirit, I am essentially free from its limitations and constraints.

Stirner's conception of Spirit is not an easy one to apprehend, chiefly because the characteristics which he attributes to Spirit are highly formal and mainly arrived at by dint of negating the formal characteristics of the objective, natural world. It is, however, necessary and proper that his conception should be negative and formal, since in his view it is of the essence of Spirit that it should possess both these characteristics. In his own words, "only in abstraction is there freedom",³ since for Stirner abstraction, i.e. the purely formal process of analysis, classification, and generalisation, is the route by which all material knowledge is assimilated to Spirit, and the means whereby the "Ich" reduces and incorporates foreign external nature is by abolishing the concrete specificity of its elements by

a process of progressive formalisation. What, then, is the "Spirit" of an individual, in which his identity is grounded? It is clearly not his body, or any of his physical characteristics. It is not to be sought in his social nature, in his relations with others and with society. It is not to be analysed in terms of his feelings as an emotional creature, for the Spirit is pure internality, unmoved by the pleasures and miseries which affect the empirical self. It is not the same as, or indeed any part of, his cognitive faculties: we are told that knowledge, when transformed into Spirit, is "killed", as if the two forces were inherently incompatible. The Spirit of an individual is not his "will": the transfiguration of knowledge into will is not immediate and direct, but rather sustains an interregnum, during which knowledge is buried and will procreated in the fertile sepulchre of the Spirit.⁴ Nor is Spirit in any sense to be equated with self-consciousness, although the will which it engenders is self-conscious will. In fact, Stirner characterises Spirit as the very opposite of all consciousness, using at various times the words "unconscious", "unreflective", "Lethe", and "forgetfulness", and declaring that knowledge, in becoming Spirit, must divest itself of all its qualities as thought. Incorporeal, devoid of all social or emotional content, and representing the absolute negation of will and intellect - what, then, is Spirit? Apart from acknowledging it as the origin and meaning of personal identity, is there anything that can be said or known about it? We seem irresistibly driven to conclude either that it is something unique and ineffable, or that it is simply nothing.

We might even conclude that an avowed abstraction, which cannot be formulated or positively qualified, is simply Nothing, a conclusion which would be amply fortified by the language of Stirner himself. The entry of knowledge into the purity of the Spirit is described as a "death", in which knowledge "declines" or "sinks down"; elsewhere it is described as a kind of funeral pyre on which material knowledge is dissolved into ashes. The language throughout depicts the life of the Spirit as essentially and utterly located in oblivion.⁵

Is Stirner perhaps using the conception of Spirit with the same intent as many writers have conventionally used the word "soul", formally to denote the source of personal identity, without being able to characterise that source further in an intelligible or informative way? The abstract and fugitive nature of Stirner's conception might nourish this view, which, however, could not be accepted for a moment by anyone sensitive to the animating principle of his position. Stirner is concerned, not merely to furnish an analysis of human identity, but chiefly to illustrate and justify the idea of the omnipotence and uniqueness of the self-sufficient individual, and to suggest his final irresponsibility. In the conception of Spirit is implied a complete Weltanschauung, constituting a deification of individuality, since in the singularity of my Spirit, I enjoy all the principal attributes of a God: my Spirit is eternal, absolute, infinite, autonomous, and creative of all truth and beauty; so that, in myself, I am exempt from the canons of finitude and materiality, and can eternally recreate myself in

total isolation from the external world of physical nature.⁶

Stirner's conception of personal identity is certainly not offered as a purely formal conception, devoid of all moral or metaphysical significance. If it is in effect purely formal, and barren of all content, this is intentionally so, since Stirner wishes to epitomise the nothingness, the asphyxia which lies at the confluence of human personality. True freedom, which consists in the total deliverance of the self from all externality, from every vestige of the world as given in sensation, thought, and feeling, implies a self whose existence is simply oblivion, without admixture or qualification of any kind. In the words of "Der Einzige", two years later: "Finally, and in general, one must know how to 'put everything out of one's mind', if only so as to be able to go to sleep."

Nothing could be more erroneous, however, than to presume that a self which cannot be named or qualified, whose essence is so inaccessible to consciousness, and which has its being beyond the limits of all experience, must therefore be a passive nullity, bereft of any genuine role in the functioning of personality. The self is indeed impenetrable and ineffable, a nothingness; but it is emphatically a "creative nothingness".⁷ In something like the way whereby the "Unconscious" of Freud, having absorbed, digested, and effaced (from consciousness) my early experiences, may continue insensibly but decisively to govern my feelings and conduct, so the "unconscious Spirit" of Stirner's self, while remaining in itself absolutely impervious to knowledge and emotion, yet originates, directs, and

defines the intellectual and volitional life of my overt personality - by very virtue of the fact that the inner being of my unconscious Spirit is continuously nourished by the outward experiences which, assimilated by my empirical self, are wholly consumed, dissolved, and annihilated into the remotest oblivion of the Spirit. Like the "somnambulism" of a Hitler, my life, whose exterior and flagrant manifestation is that of naked, dominant will, springs from the secret and empty recesses of a self evacuated of all consciousness.

Now, if the idea of a self which is pure Spirit, devoid of all positive characteristics and yet the ground of self-identity, is a difficult idea to decipher, that of a self whose essence is nihility and yet from which there emanates, as a river from its well, the entire shifting stream of human personality and conduct, is darker still. Stirner's doctrine of the relationship between the nuclear, metaphysical self and the empirical human nature of the active subject is, if not actually a contradiction, at best a superb enigma which his own tireless aversions to the topic serve only to deepen. On the one hand, the inner Spirit of the individual self is depicted as a kind of rift or fissure in existence, an instantaneous vacuum in which all possibilities are momentarily extinguished; on the other, Stirner ascribes to this nothingness an operative rôle, indeed a supreme rôle, in the transactions whereby positive, concrete knowledge is appropriated and made "personal" to the essential Spirit of the self, in which it is dissipated and then reconstituted as self-conscious will.

But if the ultimate principle of selfhood is an "absence", a deletion of all concrete and specific being, the question arises how knowledge can, in any form, survive the violence of the passage through such a self, and in what sense, if any, the will which emerges from this "creative nothingness" can be said to be continuous with the knowledge from whose destruction it is supposed to be generated. Stirner seems to talk as if the data of knowledge assimilated by the self act as a kind of raw material from which the emergent will is somehow manufactured in the intermediate workshop of Spirit, although this raw material has been utterly annihilated as a condition of its entry into Spirit. Only in the most oblique and metaphorical language does he portray the internal dynamic by which the abstract nothingness of Spirit becomes the immediate author of the will of the concrete, free person. Perhaps, however, it is not to be expected that he should at this stage formulate every article of his theorem in unambiguous detail, since his account of selfhood occurs after all, not in the context of a treatise on metaphysical psychology, but in an essay addressed to a vivid social and political theme, in which that account serves chiefly as a necessary psychological background against which certain educational issues may be viewed in clearer perspective. Perhaps the meaning of Stirner's doctrine of selfhood is to be sought in the moral, political, and educational consequences which proceed from it. This does not exempt him from the obligation to elucidate his doctrine on some more appropriate occasion - a task which he undertook two years later in "Der Einzige".

It would be wrong to regard Stirner as aiming in this essay on education to set out and integrate all the features of a philosophical system, and then to be dismayed because he has not worked out the implications of every principle of his system. Rather, it is more fruitful to regard him as struggling to express an insight, an intuitive personal vision of a possible human character, the vision of an autonomous and self-sufficient individual who is the source of his own value, which he confers upon himself, and whose momentary personality is ceaselessly fluctuating and reconstituting itself, because it is infallibly rooted in the original oblivion of his own ultimate nature. If, in delivering himself of his insight, he finds it necessary to render some account of the world in which the free individual lives and moves, and of his knowledge of that world, the philosophy of nature and of human knowledge which emerge from this account must be understood to be of mainly auxiliary significance. Thus, while it is possible to reconstruct the most general features of the environment which furnishes the material of the individual's experience, Stirner's allusions to this environment tend to be jejune and peripheral. Clearly, however, the world is conceived to be not merely our natural, physical surroundings, but also, for Stirner's purposes, the moral and social environment in which the individual finds himself and the intellectual or cultural milieu with which he has to come to terms. Stirner's references to the environment are couched in a recognisably materialistic idiom.

The natural world (including the cultural and social world) is a positive, existing fact, external to and different from the personal nature of the human subject, whose inner spirituality is utterly incongruent with the spatio-temporal universe in which it is mysteriously incarnated. Because the given "stuff" of the world is an absolute, egregious objectivity, it appears to the subject as a refractory "foreign" element from the tutelage of which he must learn to disengage himself, in order effectively to coerce and manipulate it. For the salient feature of our environment is that it can be exploited and controlled. "The sole educational value of all given material is that children can learn to initiate something with it, to use it." ⁸

The process by which the material data of the external world are directed and appropriated is the process of cognition. For Stirner, cognition is a supremely formal activity, in which we reduce the given facts of positivistic experience to a system of abstract concepts, in this way transpassing the banality of material reality to arrive at its essential meaning. Only by abstracting from the particular data can we reach universal truths, and only by progressive generalisation can we transcend vulgar experience and induce it to divulge its authentic design. The process of abstraction plays a crucial part in the dialectic of knowledge, which, so long as it remains merely knowledge, is necessarily both formal and universal: formal, in so far as it is concerned with representation and conceptualisation, and universal, in the sense that it is validly concerned with all the data of experience as well as in the sense that the concepts which are its goal must become increasingly universal as they become increasingly abstract.

Far from being a flight from reality, abstraction is a pilgrimage into a more profound reality. Generalising from the particular data, the knowing subject, by a continuous and mounting process of derivation, finally attains the ultimate abstraction when he knows, no longer any particular or universal truth, but simply that he knows: the knowing subject ultimately achieves pure self-consciousness by the process of abstraction, having freed himself from all knowledge except self-knowledge. When, at its deepest level, self-knowledge becomes knowledge of the self as Spirit, it is metamorphosed into "unconscious knowledge", that state of germinal oblivion in which nothing can exist other than the bare identity of the singular self, and it is in this instant that knowledge, wholly severed from its original relationship with external reality, ceases to be an alien object which the self merely possesses, for it has now been incorporated into the very substance of my nature and is henceforth an integral constituent of my unitary personality. It is in this instant that knowledge ceases to be "material", having reduced and eclipsed every external datum by abstraction; ceases to be "formal", having penetrated the ultimate phase of abstract generality; and becomes conclusively "absolute", since only that total instinctive knowledge which is knowledge of the inner Spirit of self can be the truly "personal" knowledge of the free man. Such knowledge, however, is "knowledge" in a most extraordinary sense. It is "moral knowledge", expressing itself distinctively in the acts of a will which is illuminated and governed by its own consciousness of the inscrutable deeps in which

it is born. "Knowledge", no longer primarily cognitive, has become that self-consciousness which can alone impart urgency and stridency to my deliberate conduct.

Such, then, is the individual's cosmic situation, and such is his knowledge of it. The ontological and epistemological premises of Stirner's position are, however, of secondary importance; he is chiefly agitated by the moral and social conclusions which he draws from these, and of which these are the indispensable rational foundation. The climax to which his argument leads, and by which he is throughout obsessed, is his revelation of an entirely new human character, the demands of whose unique personality constitute a mandate for the total transformation of our ethical ideas, for Stirner's whole essay is in fact designed as the preamble to a revolution in the system of received morality. The governing conception of his moral philosophy is that of the ultimate irresponsibility of the free individual. Having emancipated himself from all external determination, the individual enjoys absolute moral autonomy, unregulated by any laws, even by the laws of his own being, since his being is in a state of perpetual fermentation, constantly and momentarily dissolving and regenerating itself in accordance with the unfathomable fluctuations of the Spirit.⁹ Stirner's position is one of extreme indeterminism. Not only is the individual free from the material causation of the positive, external world, but he is able to annihilate the very objectivity of his physical environment and incorporate it irrevocably into the substance of his personal existence. For this

reason, the ethics of personalism cannot be classified by the simple, orthodox moral categories. Because there is nothing, either within or without, that can serve to give regular motivation to his conduct, the personalist will pursue no fixed ends. His end will be neither pleasure, nor virtue, nor knowledge, nor power, although it may be all of these things. The specific goals which he freely adopts and relinquishes will remain for him fugacious and provisional, completely dependent on the contingent circumstance of his arbitrary and instantaneous choice.

While the individual is impervious to all moral determination, perhaps even because of this, his conduct will be marked by strength of will and self-control. In the absence of stable, permanent objectives, his choice of particular goals is all the more deliberate, and he will pursue these all the more resolutely, both in his consciousness that they represent his personal, unprescribed enterprises and in his recognition of them as immediate, definite, and concrete objects of pursuit.¹⁰ The will of the personalist is heterogeneous and opportunist, but it is not mutinous. It remains fully and continuously subject to the decrees of his "sovereign character". The personalist is free to be a "creator", because his will is subordinate neither to the authority of others nor to principles of his own. Indeed, if he were not literally an unprincipled opportunist,¹¹ he could not be truly in command of himself. Thus, the ethics of personalism are inherently egoistic. Stirner's "personalist" will be an egoist, not in the sense that he will

consistently and ruthlessly pursue his own selfish material interests in the manner of a Hobbesian individual or the "economic man" of the classical economists (although of course he may choose to practise this as one form of self-manifestation), but in the sense that he will be prepared to enlist every object and exploit any experience as a means of attesting his self-conscious individuality.¹² His very being is to be conscious of himself as the inalienable centre and end of his own self-sufficient activity, and to create, by the unaccountable exertions of his self-will, the universe in which he can determine and express his unconditional individuality. Therein lies the explanation of Stirner's contempt for knowledge that is "will-less" and of his parallel insistence that the free will must be self-conscious, for only that will which is infused by the instinctive knowledge of its own self-possession can adopt and accomplish its masterful purposes with the characteristic self-confidence of the omnipotent person.

To the extent that the personalist strives to realise his diverse potentialities and achieve complete self-expression in a multiplicity of ways, his activity might seem to resemble that advocated by certain kinds of later idealist, such as T.H. Green, who holds that the true good of every man is to realise his being as a member of a society of self-conscious persons. This partial resemblance is, however, quite specious. While a society composed of "persons" in Stirner's sense is certainly possible and while he would regard participation in such a society as one among other media

of personal self-expression, his specific choice of social intercourse as a field in which to realise his potentialities as a person will always be provisional and contingent. Since he will never recognise that society has any absolute claims upon his identity and since the purposes to which he cares to address himself are determined only by his private, transient, and immediate acts of will, the personalist will be essentially a-social or (since he is superior to the ends for which men enter human society, as to all fixed or pre-determined ends) supra-social. Furthermore, the personalist would deny the possibility of a "true good", far less a "common good", as the very notion of "good" implies a standard transcending and surpassing his own single existence. This the personalist, who is author of his own morality, will not acknowledge. Objective values are for him totally meaningless. Holding himself, like Nietzsche's Superman, "beyond good and evil", he may well be unjust by objective standards, for these are merely the standards of other people, whether as individuals or society, and as such they are wholly irrelevant to his own will. The conceptions of "virtue" and "vice" will be similarly unintelligible to the personalist. His overt behaviour may indeed exemplify the qualities to which an external observer would assign the names, "love", "courage", "pride", or "avarice", but this would imply a consistency of intention as well as a deference to ideals which are equally foreign to his essential abandonment.

Clearly, the personalist as Stirner conceives him must live in a state of extreme spiritual isolation. Creating his own moral order from moment to moment by fiat of his self-conscious will, denying the validity of all values other than those whose conditional efficacy he himself constitutes by his contingent choice, and repudiating all external claims upon his identity, his life will necessarily be one of estrangement, of ultimate alienation from every human and social relationship. Because he can withdraw instantaneously into the impenetrable core of his being, into that realm of Spirit where he is detached from the flow of events and aloof from the clash of personalities, he will be superior to mundane emotional vicissitudes and in himself will know neither optimism nor pessimism, but only the fecund narcosis of Spirit from which issues his serene egoism. But if the deepest condition of the personalist is one of utter disaffection, how can Stirner envisage a "society" of free persons at all? How can the ultimate insularity of the personalist be reconciled with the vision of a society of free and equal persons, spontaneously meeting the demands of a new kind of civilisation? Stirner explicitly maintains that only the personalist, the original agent of a revolutionary culture, can be the good citizen. How can a personalist culture be possible?

"If 'each is perfect in himself', then your community, your social life, will also be perfect."¹³ "We are not yet everything, when we act as members of society."¹⁴ These two statements, from the opening and from the closing lines of Stirner's essay, illuminate

the two aspects of his attitude to social life. On the one hand he asserts not only that a personalist "society" is in some sense possible but even that it will infinitely surpass all existing forms of society; while on the other he declares that salvation is finally to be sought in the independent spirit of the exclusive individual. The two conceptions are compatible, indeed correlative, because only men who are "eternal characters" are capable of constituting the perfect society. This may be a society very unlike the promiscuous human mass that forms the stuff of which other societies are composed. It will be as different from these as great and solitary ships passing one another on the ocean are different from the myriad shoals who scuttle aimlessly beneath their keels. It will be a society of men who, neither recognising any claims upon their own individuality nor making any claims upon the individuality of others, are for this very reason capable of communing freely and serenely with their peers. Since it will be a society defined, not by its special social purposes, but solely by the characters of the men who compose it, it will be unlike any other society, and will be in fact a race of heroes, a society of mortal gods. It will surpass both humanist society, integrated as this is by the principle of hierarchy, and realist society, which is diversified by the competition of its fragmentary atomic units, because it alone can realise that integrity in diversity which is the characteristic of a "personal" civilisation. In his "Freimuth", the personalist will transcend equally the "Uebermuth"

of the realist and the "Demuth" of the humanist. Acknowledging no external authority, he will yet be a better "citizen" than either of these, for his conduct will be the expression of the inner probity of his creative spirit. Since he can recognise and respond to this spirit when it is manifested in others; since manifestation of the creative spirit, and not mere adherence to conventional forms or mere ability to practise useful skills, is the criterion of true culture; and since the spiritual self-manifestation of one person cannot jeopardise or depreciate that of any other person; only by personalists can a society be constituted in which true freedom and true equality are eternally realised.¹⁵

Stirner's vision of a continent peopled by a dynasty of indomitable individuals should not be understood as merely a piece of empty rhetoric, an extravagantly imaginative picture needing to be translated into a less magniloquent language, when his unique adumbration of an imminent and prodigious cultural re-birth would be seen to be simply recommendations really only affecting the attitudes to life of a few exceptional men and women, namely the sympathetic readers of his article. The notion that philosophy and education, by revolutionising the characters of men, can utterly transform civilisation, re-founding its moral, social, political, and economic relations on an entirely new basis, is a notion very typically found in anarchist literature of the Nineteenth Century, influenced as this still was by the optimistic rationalism of the Enlightenment. It is found in an early anarchist

like Godwin; half a century later Stirner could believe in the possibility of a catastrophic change in human nature which would usher in a new era of history; it is this belief in the apocalyptic role of philosophy, formally stated in Hegelianism and perversely supplying the intellectual impetus to a series of European revolutions until 1917, that imparts urgency to the historic function Stirner assigns to education. Through education, which will destroy the servile and the material in the hearts of men, there will come into being a generation of vital, self-centred individuals, who will be truly "persons" in their own right, and the creation of whom is the sole meaning and end of education. The end of education is neither social, nor cultural, nor economic, but literally personal, in that the significance of education to an individual is always and only its efficacy in enabling him to know and assert his unique personality, in which the purpose of education is absolutely realised.

Stirner says nothing directly of the content or subject-matter of such an education, and makes only the most general observations about the methods his educator will employ in practising his momentous enterprise. Since his concern is to exhibit the authentic "principle" of sound education, he does not consent to admit us to his thoughts on such matters as the subjects and organisation of the curriculum, school administration, educational equipment, or the techniques of instruction. From his conception of the metaphysical, moral, and social context of education, it is, however, possible to envisage the likely features

distinctive of personal education. "Therefore let there be no 'concordat between school and life', but let the school be life, and there, as outside it, let personal self-manifestation be the goal. Let the universal education of the school be education for freedom, not for submissiveness: to be free, that is truly to live."¹⁶ Since the pupil is alive and capable of immediately exercising his free individuality, the school must be more than a preparation for life or a model of life: the teacher must recognise that the school is the life of the pupil, as he lives it momentarily and completely, and he must base his teaching on this irresistible fact. The teacher who has realised his self-conscious personality can minister to the self-development of his pupils in virtually any circumstances, for these are always merely the circumstances in which and against which the child learns to find himself. Although the choice of appropriate subjects of instruction can inform a curriculum relevant to the adult needs of the educand, and while a rich and stimulating physical environment will certainly not hinder the child's quest for self-identity, the work of the educator, who is striving to originate persons free from slavery to habitual interests as well as from coercion or seduction by their environment, is essentially independent of such external, instrumental factors.

Education is above all education of and by persons, to which the non-personal elements of the curriculum and school materials may contribute only in an auxiliary role. While, then, the pupil-teacher relationship is for Stirner the climax and fulfilment of education,

he nevertheless indicates how this relationship can be supported by the choice of favourable subjects of study. In this respect personalist education will be distinguished by its absolute catholicity. Every sphere of human experience should be represented in an education from which nothing capable of serving the living needs of the pupil must be excluded, since the aim is to give the pupil what Froebel called an "allseitige Lebenseignung" by refining and strengthening his character as a finished whole. Such an education will not be exclusively literary, exclusively practical, or exclusively speculative, nor will any one form of discipline predominate in what must become a universal culture, but every kind of experience will unite to ratify the release of the child's powers. Thus the education of the personalist might comprise practical activities, involving the physical exercise of his motor skills; factual investigation of the many branches of empirical science; the development of his aesthetic interests, in the visual arts and music as well as in literature; and finally the speculative knowledge epitomised by philosophy, but developed by other formal studies such as mathematics and logic. An education incorporating such constituent data would give the child an orientation which would be truly universal, enabling him to create his own attitude to the whole of reality and not merely to a pre-determined department of it.

The danger is that this universal education might degenerate into something impossibly heterogeneous, its fragmentary components disconnected by their very diversity. To arrest this danger, the

diversity of the child's experience needs to be continually confronted by the unimpaired unity of his self-consciousness, retaining its inner integrity and identity throughout the educational process, in which the complex wealth of objective experience serves as the foil against which the child projects and so comes to acknowledge the distinctness of his own substantial personality. To be sure, the child is in education introduced to the manifold life of the external world and he learns discriminatively to interpret the natural objects of his experience. This is, however, only the first stage of the learning process, which is not completed until the child has literally subjected the objects of knowledge to his personal will by deliberate abstraction. In personalist education, the child learns to compare and distinguish, to detect relationships, to systematise, to classify, to identify similarities and establish correspondences, to make deductions, to symbolise, to co-ordinate, to generalise, in short to undertake all the formal work of abstracting from given material and so to change it that it absolutely reflects the pattern imposed by its dominant manipulator, who has freed it from the recalcitrant influence of its external origins. The educational ideal that Stirner is propounding thus justifies his claim that it transcends the dualism of humanists and realists by reconciling their vital elements, for he proposes to deliver the catholicity of realistic knowledge from its subservience to material reality by investing it with the formal values embodied in humanistic instruction. To realise this ideal, however, requires teachers who surpass the realists in methods and

techniques, who excel the humanists in the universality of their knowledge, and who are able to practise a revolutionary pedagogy by virtue of the ascendancy of their self-conscious will. A personal education, in fact, requires teachers who are themselves personalists.¹⁷

In the last analysis, then, the universe of education is constituted by persons, all of whom, teachers and pupils alike, are the agents in the educational process, which ultimately requires no other ingredients. Since education is to be universal, excluding no child on either social or intellectual grounds, the teacher, who ought himself to have fathomed and realised the resources of his nature, must be able to face a class of children miscellaneous in temperament, ability, and background, but all nourishing an individuality which it is the teacher's task to explore, to cultivate, and to enfranchise. At its best, the commerce between teacher and pupil will be the equal intercourse of free natures, a relationship in which each responds to the challenge offered by the personality of the other; such a relationship affords abundant possibilities of self-development to both its members, and is limited only by the proper deference shown by each to the other's inner privacy, which must always remain finally inviolable.¹⁸ This is the sure guarantee of true discipline. No institutional framework or code, far less any outward system of sanctions, can propagate that harmony of flourishing personal relationships which is the meaning of "discipline". Discipline is simply the tacit respect felt by the pupil for the sanctity of the teacher's own individuality, a respect which he knows the teacher to reciprocate, and which only a teacher who himself

rejoices in the independence and fecundity of his spirit can hope to earn and augment. It is this communion between essentially incommensurable beings that is the heart of true education, for it is the only possible kind of mediation by means of which the child can come, not to adopt this or that pattern of conduct, but simply "to be at home with himself".¹⁹ To achieve parity with oneself by consciously embracing one's own cause as a sufficient and infallible object of action: education can have no other end than this. "Free education" neither sets out to prepare the child to undertake any of the tasks or occupy any of the stations of this world, nor does it determine him to be any appointed kind of human being, other than to be wholly and purely himself, without fear and beyond reproach. In expurgating and transcending the insular formalism of the humanists and the gross materialism of the realists, by eclipsing their passive knowledge of insensate things and transmuting it into the self-conscious will of a living person, the personalist seeks through education to accomplish the work of a God: to preside at the self-creation of an aristocracy of sovereigns, each of whom represents in himself what is ultimately the only intrinsic value in the universe, the value of existence as an indomitable and incomparable person.²⁰

Chapter 6

The Validation of the Personalist's World-Outlook

In his introduction to "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum",¹ Dr. Anselm Ruest claims that Stirner's essay on education, "because it necessarily gives direct consideration to the empirical development of persons or individual selves, contains the most fruitful hints for the application of this metaphysic (i.e. the metaphysic of personal identity and knowledge) to human life." He continues: "To the merely ostensible (because metaphysical) 'stages' of Man - Self - Unique One, there correspond the three kinds of education: Humanism - Realism - Personalism; in the place of 'the ineffable one', there enters - what, in the empirical field, is indeed attainable - 'the free person' - which, as yet, we none of us are..."

In these remarks, Ruest appears to take for granted something which is by no means self-evident: the empirical validation and practical importance of Stirner's theory of the self. If Stirner is mainly concerned to advocate certain fundamental changes in educational practice which, in his opinion, would bring into being persons on an entirely new scale and would so bring about a revolution in morality; and if he chooses to ground his advocacy of the new "person" in a theory of personal identity according to which the central characteristics of the self are its total vacuity and its alienation from all consciousness; then he must be prepared to defend his theory

against the charge that it is a perfectly gratuitous and indemonstrable hypothesis, by showing either that it is independently acceptable as a meaningful and illuminating account of selfhood, or that it is the most satisfactory metaphysical basis for his moral and educational proposals and that these can, in principle, be validly based only on a metaphysical doctrine of the self.

The "empirical application" of which Ruest talks seems somewhat unusual. Presumably he means that, if Stirner's doctrine of human selfhood and its educational implications are accepted and practised, there will arise, in some problematic future, an actual generation of "free persons" who will be the living proof of the validity of this doctrine. Examination of these living specimens would then testify to the success or failure of the educational methods which formed them. In fact, however, this would not confirm any particular theory of selfhood, unless it could in addition be demonstrated that such a theory constituted the indispensable metaphysical grounds of the educational principles in question; this theoretical demonstration need not, however, be postponed until "empirical application" occurs, but should be undertaken as a necessary preliminary to formulating these educational principles. Moreover, even if personalist education were to succeed in originating "free persons" in Stirner's sense (and this sense would have to be much more exactly specified, if the claim that these new beings embody the personalist ideal is

to be examined according to determinate criteria), this would only show that the educational ideal he is advocating can, under certain circumstances, be realised; it would not prove the superiority of this ideal to all other ideals, unless these other ideals could be further shown to be self-contradictory or (by some empirical procedure of inconceivable complexity) to be unrealisable. One other, more hazardous, possibility remains. If all other educational ideals could be shown to rest on metaphysical views of selfhood which are self-contradictory or which are inconsistent with some crucial feature of our experience, then Stirner's doctrine of the self (provided that it is not thus inconsistent or self-contradictory, and that it is the necessary ground of a realisable educational ideal) would emerge as inherently superior.

Now, in his essay, Stirner attempts none of these demonstrations, perhaps because he felt that, in the relatively small compass of an article on educational philosophy, he could not do justice to a formal validation of the metaphysical doctrine of selfhood of which he nevertheless wanted to give an account. Instead, he contrasted humanism, realism, and personalism as social and educational ideals all of which could be realised in actual society, and suggested the "moral" superiority of the character generated by the personalist ideal to those formed by the ideals of humanism and realism, as these had been historically practised. Manifestly unable to pretend that the humanist and realist ideals were unrealisable, he could not demonstrate,

but could only dogmatically predict, the realisability of the personalist ideal; although obliged to recognise that the ideals of humanism and realism were at least internally consistent, he could do no more than consistently depict a radically different personality; and finally, without attempting to discuss the metaphysical foundations of humanist and realist psychology, he contented himself with the barest outline of a theory of personal identity, omitting to show why this particular theory was specially necessary or, indeed, why any such theory should be necessary at all. By declaring that the humanist character was "empty" or "servile", and that the realist character was "vulgar" or "acquisitive", he could only hope to suggest their "moral" inferiority to the character of the personalist, and could not even aspire to prove this, in the absence of an explicit and objective criterion of moral worth. Since such moral animadversions certainly do nothing to show that Stirner's ideal of the "free person" is validly grounded in a cogent theory of selfhood, the merits of the moral ideal and the necessity of the metaphysical theory clearly stand in urgent need of the closest scrutiny.

Several questions clamour to be answered. Why, in a polemical article on education, did Stirner feel disposed to set out a doctrine of the nature of the self and its relationship to the world which, in its extravagant metaphysical assertions, baffles literal understanding and challenges the most generous credulity? If, by his metaphysical doctrines, he was seeking to vindicate his vision of the "free person" as an ideal to be realised through education, then by what process did he originally arrive at this particular ideal of personality and in

what sense is it confirmed or supported by these particular metaphysical doctrines? Is the ideal of the "free person" consistent with the moral, social, and educational principles with which it is associated, and, if it is intrinsically possible as an ideal, how are we to assess its permanent value and its special relevance to the human situation? Nowhere does Stirner even show himself to be aware that his failure to consider such questions creates serious lacunae in the moral and educational theory he is propounding. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to allay the scruples engendered by his silence on these topics. On the basis of what he does say about education, society, and the human character, it is possible to reconstruct the kind of answer which it would have been open to him to give to critics who claimed that his metaphysical doctrine of selfhood was redundant or that his moral and educational ideals were barren, and to reconstruct such an answer might well be worth undertaking.

According to Stirner, the identity of a human being, who lives and acts in the natural world of physical events, is rooted in an essential self (the "Ich") which is infinite, immaterial, and empty of all consciousness, and which yet operates decisively on his empirical life and actions: this it does by formally assimilating the content of his conscious knowledge into its own inner nothingness, "annihilating" it, and re-creating it in the form of will - the "self-conscious will" of a protean and promiscuous, but dynamic,

personality. Why does Stirner attribute these specific characteristics to the essential self, and why does he ascribe to it this specific role in determining the individual's overt personality? The answer can only be found by a detailed examination of the ideal character of the "free person" whose instincts and strategies are supposed to be grounded in the self's metaphysical essence. In the metaphysical properties of Stirner's self are grounded the personal qualities of the "sovereign individual", of whom he is trying to articulate his intuitive perception and in the empirical possibility of whom he implicitly believes; so that to translate these metaphysical properties of selfhood into the language of moral qualities would be faithfully to depict the character of the "sovereign individual".

As a radical individualist, Stirner is concerned to express the "free person's" supreme independence, his detachment from society and from his natural environment, which is the detachment of a man to whom the inducements and exigencies of the world alike mean nothing. Hence he assigns to the self, as the source of the "free person's" identity, all the formal characteristics - unity, pure internality, omnipotence, eternity, infinity - which distinguish a being who constitutes his own universe and from whom all other being is necessarily excluded. Now, it is immediately obvious that the existence of a person who is in himself omnipotent and infinite entails that that person exists uniquely. Not only do these properties entail a subject from whom all other being is excluded; they make the very notion of any other

being, existing independently of that subject, patently contradictory, and they therefore entail either that other selves are merely "projections" or "aspects" of the unique subject, or that there are no other selves. Since neither of these conclusions would be acceptable to Stirner, who envisages a race, an aristocracy, of "free persons", one must acknowledge that he has failed to work out a metaphysic which is in every respect consistent with the personal ideal he is seeking to establish. At least, in this case, it is not enough to say, in Stirner's defence, that he is after all primarily interested in expounding a personal ideal, and that the consistency or inconsistency of his metaphysical adventures is of secondary importance. The contradiction in his metaphysic in this case corresponds to a fundamental contradiction running right through his thought. Both in this essay and in "Der Einzige", he wants simultaneously to assert two irreconcilable propositions: in the first place that to realize one's individuality is to realize oneself to be unique, and in the second that the pre-eminent form of the individual's self-manifestation is his self-manifestation before his peers. In the former work at least, the germ of this antinomy can be identified in Stirner's asymmetrical conception of selfhood.²

Having assigned to the self these extremely formal properties which signify the absoluteness and uniqueness of its existence, Stirner goes on to suggest that the central metaphysical characteristic of selfhood is its "nothingness", its utter negativity, void

of all consciousness and destructive of all objective being; yet this nothingness is the womb of individuality, in which experience and knowledge have perished in order to make possible the miracle of a personal identity wholly free from prior determination. Now, if one regards Stirner purely as making an assertion about a metaphysical entity, the self, then certainly this assertion seems to be deeply obscure if not completely unintelligible. Even on the assumption that such assertions are in principle possible and informative, this particular assertion gravely appears to make claims about the nature of selfhood which are inherently contradictory, requiring a self which is on the one hand a vacuous nullity and on the other an unceasing factory of life and power, and thus, here also, the question of the internal consistency of Stirner's metaphysic of personal identity represents a task which clearly demands detailed investigation.

Here, however, if one recognises that Stirner's theory of the self has general importance primarily because it forms the metaphysical basis of his original moral and educational ideas, then a more pressing task is to identify those special features of his theory in which are grounded the specific moral qualities of the "free person" whom he is sponsoring as an ideal. Certainly, Stirner might have developed a doctrine of the self which was more systematic and less puzzling. But would any other doctrine, however formally coherent and free from occult allusions, serve to establish precisely those features of the ideal personality which Stirner's doctrine attempts to establish and clarify? By locating human identity in a self which is purged and

destitute of positive properties, he is announcing the essential irresponsibility of the personalist, whose conduct will be aimless, arbitrary, and capricious, because his character lacks any fixed or stable principles to the ultimate authority of which he could submit. By causing the enterprise and momentum of the personalist to emerge from the nullity of such a self, he is proclaiming that the personalist is always an opportunist, flexible, resilient, and never at a loss, whose ephemeral activities and interests can in a moment be discarded or adapted, because they are completely free from any form of internal control. To acknowledge this is not to explain how Stirner comes to attest the character of the personalist as an ideal, far less to show how his metaphysics of selfhood contributes to the validation of this ideal: it is merely to suggest that certain special features of his metaphysics are designed to correspond, in some way that has yet to be justified, with certain definite moral qualities in the ideal character of the personalist, and to claim that some of the peculiarities of Stirner's metaphysical beliefs are at least partially accounted for by the peculiar qualities which he wants to attribute to his ideal personality.

A striking example of this is Stirner's metaphysics of knowledge and of will. In the essay on education, as in all his writings, he is relentlessly anti-intellectual. His "free person" will appreciate the value of factual information, which he will use to further his own private advantages, but he will be free from that attitude of veneration for truth and revulsion from falsehood which is the distinguishing mark

of the intellectual. Immune to persuasion by general ideas, which to him are "idées fixes" or "superstitions", he knows that "Finally, and in general, one must know how to 'put everything out of one's mind,' if only so as to be able to go to sleep."³ Such ideas he may appropriate or adapt, if he can convert them to his own use, irrespective of their truth or falsehood: alternatively, ideas for which he has no use, whatever their wisdom or fascination, he will instantly "dismiss from his head". Yet the free man is not a blind egoist, but a self-conscious egoist, for his will is not merely the predatory impulse of the mechanical self-seeker, but a will whose instinct to power and self-enjoyment is informed by the free man's awareness of those aptitudes in himself and those features of his physical and social environment which can be brought to minister to his personal self-manifestation and fulfilment. It is this constant acute consciousness of himself and of his surroundings in so far as they are relevant to his purposes which makes the sudden resolution of the personalist so vehement and so formidable. Obsessed by such a vision of the character of the personalist, Stirner sought a theory of human psychology which would state this vision in metaphysical terms, and so he comes to expound his characteristic doctrine of the self which abstracts from the data of experience, ingests and "annihilates" this abstract knowledge, and, having thus assimilated it to its own nothingness, re-creates it in the form of a will controlled and assured by its inherent self-consciousness.

Thus, in the case of his doctrines of knowledge and of will, as

in his nihilistic account of personal identity and his completely formal characterisation of selfhood, the contours of Stirner's metaphysical theories accurately reflect the profile of that ideal human character which it is his paramount concern to depict. The questions remain: why does Stirner seek to establish this particular personal ideal, and what is the relationship between his personal ideal and the metaphysical doctrines with which it is associated?

* * *

Since in his essay on education, Stirner did not occupy himself with the epistemological status of his ethical views, the consideration of their status will not be a consideration of the methods he consciously followed in arriving at them, although it may well serve to suggest the logical pattern which in fact underlies the derivation of his ethical views from their possible origins. Now, if these views, and the metaphysical doctrines on which they are held to be dependent, were utterly gratuitous constructions of their author's profuse imagination, based on no assignable evidence and fulfilling no explanatory role, then it would have to be recognised that they were wholly destitute of objective validity. They might possess some aesthetic or clinical interest, but as statements about objective reality they would be wholly discredited. If, on the other hand, they could be shown to clarify or express some significant features of experience in a uniquely luminous way, then not only would Stirner's metaphysical doctrines be given real justification, but also (provided that the features of experience were sufficiently significant and the forms in which they were expressed were genuinely illuminating) the

case for adopting his characteristic ethical standpoint would be correspondingly strengthened.

A metaphysical doctrine may be constructed in order to explain some special feature of experience, which the metaphysician regards as peculiarly indicative of the truth about the nature of things, and in terms of which he seeks to develop "a perspective, an outlook on the world".⁴ While these features of experience may be of various kinds, one such kind is exemplified by the intuitive perception which occurs even to the most unreflective person when he is struck by the overtones or subtle effects wrought by a situation, which he finds difficulty in reducing to the particular ingredients of his experience or to the ways in which he experiences the situation. He simply knows that this situation conveys an inexplicable sense of awe, or ecstasy, or melancholy, impressed upon his awareness as the objective character of the situation, although he cannot identify or adequately describe it. If these effects insinuate themselves pervasively into his experience over a period of time, and if he happens to be a metaphysician, he may come to treat them as fundamental insights into the nature of reality, and to incorporate them into a system of general statements about reality, and finally to claim them as the metaphysical grounds for his moral and political beliefs. What, if any, are the recondite facts of human experience which a metaphysical theory such as Stirner's might be designed obliquely but systematically to communicate? Was Stirner the bearer of some startling and elusive intuition which was

sufficiently authentic and momentous to be the foundation of a comprehensive view of reality?

In the first place, Stirner may have been overcome by the feeling that the external world, both as a place in which he found himself and as an object with which he was confronted, was irreducibly alien, or brute, and that its being was essentially different in kind from and incongruent with his own. Such a feeling is "not a 'feeling' in the 'natural' sense of the word", although it "has an undeniable analogy with these states of mind: they serve as an indication to it, and its nature may be elucidated by them".⁵ A feeling of this kind is qualitatively different from merely sensuous or merely emotional feelings. It is a consciousness of an element in experience which is overwhelmingly and objectively present, entirely dissimilar to the particular sensuous materials of concrete experience and demanding to be acknowledged in terms which do not distort its peculiar meaning. This sense of the individual existing as a stranger in a world which is foreign, perhaps hostile, certainly indifferent to him, tends to be accompanied by a conviction of the individual's ultimate isolation in the world, of the impenetrable privacy within which his identity is defined and crystallised. In a moment of sudden insight, or as a result of the circumstances and impressions of his daily life, there is borne in upon him, instantaneously or ceaselessly, the knowledge that he is totally alone in a world devoid of independent meaning or purpose. This knowledge may be highly definite or deeply ambiguous. The subject may be acutely conscious of his own solitude,

or of the solitude inseparable from the condition of every man, or he may feel that the self-realisation possible only to the strongest or most sensitive individuals cannot be achieved unless they deliberately accept the burden of solitude which this entails. But whatever the exact form in which this feeling occurs, if its occurrence is sufficiently intense or sustained, it will clamour for formal expression within the structure of a body of organised knowledge.

Even on the assumption that Stirner's metaphysical ideas had their origins in some such basic intuition of the inevitable loneliness of the individual, this does not explain why, instead of directly stating this intuition as an irreducible datum of his personal experience of the human predicament, he chose to translate it into the language of metaphysical psychology and present it in the form of a philosophical doctrine of the nature of the self and its relationship to the world of external nature. It might seem that, given the authenticity of an individual's original intuitions, to express these in an extremely technical language of a higher order of generality would be to do something ingeniously superfluous, unless this language were more directly intelligible than the language in which they might have received primitive expression. In certain decisive ways, however, the metaphysical language in which Stirner's account is couched is more directly intelligible than any less formal statement could hope to be. Admittedly, Stirner (who was engaged, not in setting out his fundamental philosophical beliefs, but in giving philosophical reasons

for his social and educational beliefs) failed to expound his metaphysical views in anything resembling a fastidious and consistent terminology; admittedly, they are presented in the most haphazard and fragmentary manner; nevertheless, in the desultory intimations which his essay does afford there can be discerned the outlines of a definite Weltanschauung which, if it were clearly and precisely formulated, would indeed be both coherent and comprehensive, and it is by virtue of these very qualities - coherence and comprehensiveness - that the idiom of metaphysics is most suited to communicate the basic intuitions which are its impulse.

The cost at which this Weltanschauung is constructed may be very great. In order to achieve the degree of generality necessary if the whole of reality is to be encapsulated within a single formula or set of formulae, many of the particular, material features of the empirical world may have to be methodically ignored or discounted. Since these basic structural relations and qualitative distinctions which the metaphysician is concerned to exhibit are necessarily completely formal, his work will be one of progressive abstraction and systematic conceptualisation, so that the original, familiar data of common experience will become diminishingly recognisable as they are symbolised and coordinated into a complex interpretative pattern. Thus concepts such as "will-knowledge" and "self-consciousness of Spirit" may function harmoniously within a unified metaphysical economy, but they lack the obvious pertinence of terms which are more literally descriptive of concrete experience.

There are, however, several devices, more or less satisfactory, to which the metaphysician may have recourse in his attempts to present his metaphysical ideas vividly and convincingly. Like Socrates, he may express his metaphysical beliefs through the example of his daily life and intellectual habits; like Sartre he may illustrate them in imaginative works of art; like Nietzsche, he may identify them with a spectacular myth; like Plato, he may avail himself of a powerful simile or metaphor in which he can figuratively impart his metaphysical insights; like Augustine, he may communicate them in terms of a picturesque analogy; or like Stirner, he may rely on a number of deliberately symbolic images designed to amplify as well as to interpret the metaphysical utterances which they accompany. When Stirner speaks of knowledge "dying", that in death it may flower again as will⁶ and "remaining a mere flief and appurtenance until it vanishes into the invisible core"⁷ of the self, or of the "eternal characters"⁸ stability "consisting in the unceasing flow of their hourly self-sacrifice",⁸ he is attempting to clarify the nature of certain abstract notions by imaginatively attributing material characteristics to them.⁹

While it would have been quite possible for Stirner both to engage in figurative pictorial elucidation of his central concepts and at the same time to relate these concepts explicitly in a rigorously constructed system, he undoubtedly made no effort to integrate his metaphysical ideas in a formal theoretical structure. Nevertheless, those advantages of incorporating a set of original intuitive

convictions in a metaphysical theory - the advantages of thereby establishing the special significance of certain features of experience, of extending the relevance of these features so that they form the basis for a comprehensive world-outlook in which different aspects of the human situation are related, and of unifying numerous diverse elements and provinces of experience - these advantages Stirner equally undoubtedly secures. At this stage of his thought he has not yet worked out in detail the dimensions of the metaphysical and moral universe which he has entered, but he has accurately diagnosed the conditions on which entry is possible and he has succinctly conveyed the character of his universe by his use of apposite and compelling symbolic imagery. On the basis of certain initial convictions about the nature of reality, he has delimited the foundations on which he can later build a metaphysical theory of reality, to which, in this essay, he must content himself with figurative allusions. If, however, these initial convictions of Stirner represent his original impulse to form a general theory of reality, clearly their credentials require to be examined with the utmost circumspection.

Whatever else Stirner's surmised initial convictions about the essential privacy of the self and its incommensurability with the alien natural world may be, they are plainly not directly translatable into the language of the descriptive psychologist or physical scientist. In communicating these basic convictions, he does not give us any new factual information about human nature

or about the material world, yet we are unquestionably supposed to regard these intuitive assertions about the self as both meaningful and true. Perhaps they are designed to express only the most general attributes of the self and its relations to the external world in cognition and volition, or perhaps they merely enunciate the logical conditions on which statements of personal identity, of cognition and volition, are possible. Perhaps, indeed, any formulation of Stirner's original intuitions is bound to be tautological, since whatever these convey is in principle irreducible to sensible knowledge of particular facts. They resemble logical axioms, like the "law of identity", in that their true role is a prescriptive one, declaring that certain formal conventions shall be observed in the systematic construction of the theory which is based upon them.¹⁰

So construed, they might be stated in some such form as, "I am myself and not some other person" or "I am co-terminous with my own being and all other being is extrinsic to me." Tautologies of this kind, apart from their methodological functions, might well be practically important, not for what they literally state, but for what they seem to state or for what they imply.¹¹ Tautologies like "boys will be boys" and "Business is business" owe their significance, not to their literal content, but to the very fact of their utterance, which is intended to affect the attitudes of their hearers in specific ways, and similarly, although Stirner's initial convictions about existence might only be stable

tautologically, they remain highly significant, for the fact of their utterance, and their utility as the logical foundations of a general theory of reality, ensure that they will tend to promote those attitudes to conduct, society, and education, which are characteristic of the world-outlook of their author.

The fundamental problem, however, has not been solved, although its complexion has altered. Even if Stirner's metaphysical ideas were grounded in his original insights into the nature of reality, these insights are not in any sense objective evidence of the ontological constitution which he delineates, and if another philosopher chose to reject them in favour of his own special insights, how could Stirner possibly seek to convince him of his error? Stated in these terms, the problem is apparently insoluble. To solve it, we should require a criterion of the objective validity of metaphysical insights; but, since these necessarily claim to be themselves ultimately valid apprehensions of metaphysical truth, a criterion of this kind is in principle inconceivable. There would be even less purpose in scrutinising the common experiences of human life in the hope of finding evidence to confirm or refute the basic notions on which Stirner's ideas are founded, for it is in light of these very notions that human experience is supposed to be fathomed and appraised.

Indeed, in view of the evident impossibility of adjudicating between competing insights into metaphysical reality, we are

irresistibly driven to conclude that the whole idea of validating a metaphysical theory is a mistaken one, resting on a misconception of the nature of the philosopher's initial convictions about the universe. No doubt those experiences, of the unique significance of which the philosopher is convinced, do actually occur as events in his consciousness of the situation which evokes them; no doubt they are irreducible to any of the particular sensuous elements of the situation; and no doubt they carry with them the certitude that they are fundamental insights into the objective character of the situation. Yet, if there is no possible way of demonstrating the validity of such insights, whatever they record clearly cannot be the objective character of the situation experienced in the sense in which we ordinarily use "objective", and in fact it may well be that the concepts of "objectivity" and "validity" are quite inapplicable to the intuitions of the metaphysician.

When Stirner alludes to the heterogeneity of the self and the physical world, he is not offering a description of a state of affairs which could be meaningfully challenged by any other description purporting to give an account of the same state of affairs. There is no conceivable test whereby his metaphysical assertions could be shown to be either "correct" or "incorrect", because they are not even intended to contribute to our knowledge of any state of affairs. To a given state of affairs I can respond in a variety of ways; I can respond intellectually by characterising the state of affairs. Stirner's metaphysical assertions represent their author's total

intellectual response to the totality of states of affairs. Confronted in consciousness by the fact of his own personality and by the actuality of his social and physical environment, he responded overtly in a multiplicity of ways, which collectively constitute his biography, and it is a matter of biographical fact that one of the ways in which he responded intellectually to his situation was by characterising that situation in the metaphysical language of his essay on education.¹²

There can be no question of demonstrating the validity or adequacy of Stirner's metaphysical utterances to someone who denies them, since to make such a denial is merely to make a different response to a world which is in any case never exactly the same world in every respect as that to which Stirner was responding. If, in a perceptual situation, someone refuses to describe as "yellow" a certain object which I perceive to be yellow, I can, by altering his position or the position of the object, by changing the conditions under which he perceives the object, by instructing him in the linguistic conventions to which I adhere, or by adopting some other appropriate means, persuade him to reconsider his description, but I cannot demonstrate to him that the object is yellow; similarly, in a moral situation, if someone refuses to acknowledge his duty to keep a promise or to tell the truth, I can coerce him into making this acknowledgement, or invite him to reconstruct the situation imaginatively in the hope that this will lead him to review its nature, or educate him in the values on which my own

judgment of the situation is founded, but what I cannot do is to demonstrate to him that the situation makes moral demands of a certain kind upon him. Thus, the most that Stirner could do, in defending his intuitive response to the world as he saw it, would be to express his response with all the vehemence and opulence of which he was in fact capable, to illustrate its relevance to human conduct and to the predicament of the individual, and to exhibit both the world-outlook from which it is derived and the personal and social consequences which it entails. Although, within the confines of a single essay, he could not hope to fulfil a programme so ambitious as this, he did at least succeed in manifesting the value and necessity of the task which lay before him.

Chapter 7

The Origins of Stirner's Ideas

Stirner's essay on education is chiefly interesting because it is so plainly the first sustained endeavour of an extremely individualistic thinker to express his early, partial insights into an egoistic universe of which he is not yet ready to formulate and impart his comprehensive and specific vision. It is manifestly an approximation, a stage in the development of his thought, and one at which he has already assembled many of its ultimate constituent elements, although he has not yet divested them of irrelevant accompaniments or allocated to them the parts which they are eventually to occupy in his completed system. Certainly, some of Stirner's leading conceptions are far from being strikingly original, and, while his originality may have lain in bringing these several conceptions together to form a characteristic and explicit philosophical position, it would not be hard to discover similar conceptions in the separate writings of earlier philosophers.

Thus, Stirner's view that we should seek, not "barren" knowledge, but knowledge with which we can operate to enlarge our power over nature, could be traced in modern times back to Bacon; in his nihilistic account of the self, and more notably in his belief that the function of reason is to inform and subserve the operations of the will, there are faint but audible echoes of Hume; the conviction that all education is basically an education of the will goes back at least

to Sparta; the doctrine that self-determination is the highest state of the individual, and his only serenity, contains distinguishable elements of Stoicism; his effusive individualism might be interpreted as a sanguine rarefaction of Hobbes; while his egoism, in the educational essay as yet imperfectly crystallised, has a lineage extending back through Spinoza to Callicles and Thrasymachus. But it would be idle to reconstruct a philosophical genealogy, however plausible, for Stirner's ideas, since in the first place the substantial contrast between his whole outlook and the general philosophical positions of previous thinkers or schools of thought is in every case much more radical than any supposed resemblances in particular points, and in the second place there is virtually no evidence to show that Stirner was immediately influenced by any identifiable thinker other than those of his own generation or indeed that he at all availed himself of what must have been his fairly extensive knowledge of the history of philosophy.

Nevertheless, to the extent that he was educated, lived and wrote in Germany during a definite period of her intellectual history, Stirner's development can be understood to have taken place within a definite intellectual tradition, or confluence of traditions, determining the cultural structure to which his own philosophy was a response. The impact of the Enlightenment and the rise of a self-conscious middle class were among the factors which had precipitated the new humanism in Germany, and the idealism of the classical

tradition was soon fortified by the almost mystical nationalism produced by the shock of the Napoleonic struggle. The tradition was formed and added to by men like C.A. Wolf and Fichte, but the classical blend of idealism and nationalism is seen at its purest in such a figure as von Humboldt. Educated at a typical Gymnasium and at the University of Berlin, Stirner, despite his rejection of other major components of the humanist tradition, could hardly have escaped the influence of von Humboldt's conception of education as culminating in free men whose lives are true works of art because they are capable of spontaneously releasing their powers of developing their own character and individuality from within.

Immeasurably more decisive as a formative force, however, must certainly have been the challenging climate of German Romanticism, in which Stirner was nourished and drew breath. He grew up in Bayreuth, the home of the author of "Levana", and although it is impossible to say how much he knew of Jean Paul or of his writings, there is more than one point of comparison between the sharp irony of Richter and the audacious pungency even of Stirner's early essays. To seek the father of Stirner's "free person" in Richter's sovereign "Ich", which mocked all limits, would be profitless, however, for the cult of individuality was a general feature of the Romantic movement. It is found in Heine, and in the Schlegels, the great theoreticians of Romanticism, but the extent to which Stirner was familiar with the poetry and criticism of particular Romantic writers must remain

entirely beyond discovery.¹ The most that can be said is that the characteristic features of the Romantics, their nervous extravagance, their sense of paradox, and their agitated love of the bizarre, are all to be found flourishing prolifically in this early essay.

While the degree to which Stirner's attitudes and thinking were affected by the departing generation of Humanists and Romantics can only be the subject of speculation, there can be scarcely any doubt that he experienced the impression of another, more explicitly educational tradition. This was the tradition of naturalism in education, which entered Germany from France under the patronage of Kant. Its distinctive elements are all to be found in the writings of Rousseau, where the revolt from contemporary society, the rejection of convention and organised religion, and the retreat from reason, all typical expressions of the Romantic spirit, exist side by side with the less drastic and more influential doctrines of the importance of the concrete world of natural objects and of the active role of the subject in the learning process. Rousseau's belief that the end of education is to cultivate the pupil's full and unfettered individuality by the development of all his original natural powers was reinterpreted by Kant in terms of the training of free men who will obey the moral law of their own free will, having been brought by education to a clear consciousness of their personal autonomy and responsibility. The ideas of Rousseau and Kant, constructively mobilised and enriched, were methodologically embodied and given practical currency as a

result of the work and example of Pestalozzi. When Stirner was a student and a teacher, the principles of Pestalozzi, especially the stress on stimulating the pupil's independent capacities for self-development and encouraging their spontaneous exercise, were already being realized in German primary schools and "Realschulen", and he could hardly have failed to experience the revolutionary changes wrought by the new methods.

If the most that can be confidently said is that Stirner must have encountered the naturalist philosophy as it expressed itself in changing educational practice, his direct acquaintance with certain other important schools of thought is a matter of much greater certitude.² In the Philosophical Faculty at Berlin he was introduced to the doctrines of Hegelianism in all their purity,³ for among his professors was none other than Hegel himself, under whom he studied the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of mind, and the history of philosophy. During his first years in Berlin, from 1826 to 1828, he also attended Schleiermacher's lectures on ethics, and, at this time as well as during his later period as a student in Berlin, from 1832 to 1835,⁴ he was obliged to consider Hegelianism in some of its later forms, as it was expounded by such members of the orthodox Hegelian Right as Marheineke, Neander, Michelet, and Trendelenburg.⁵ The language and system of concepts in which his philosophical education began were, therefore, Hegelian, and Hegelian they were largely to remain.

Furthermore, Stirner's emergence as an independent thinker and as a critic of the philosophical orthodoxy took place during the years when, as one of "die Freien", he was mixing constantly with men who, like his teachers, were concerned to adapt and refine the intellectual apparatus of Hegelianism, but who, unlike them, sought to employ a reconstructed Hegelianism in their radical criticism of existing culture and institutions. From 1841, he was conspicuously associated with prominent members of the Hegelian Left, and although the course of his development led him progressively to discard the very basis of their critical humanism, it was literally in the midst of the "Young Hegelians" that his fundamental ideas germinated and were defined. Bruno and Edgar Bauer, the founders of the philosophy of "sovereign criticism", were among his closest acquaintances; he was on intimate terms with extreme liberal intellectuals like Ludwig Buhl and Arnold Rutenberg; he knew such prominent radical journalists as Gutzkow and Gustav Julius; he was aware of the offensive being waged against supernaturalism, from such diverse quarters, by Strauss and Feuerbach, although he had probably not met either personally; of contemporary Socialists, he had met Engels and Ruge, and was familiar with the writings of Weitling and Hess.⁶ His philosophy of education was conceived amid a ferment of contending ideas which were being daily examined and dissected throughout the disputations, militant circle in which he moved. He was finally to sever himself from the moral and social ideals of every species of Young Hegelian.

What he never managed to liberate himself from was the conceptual framework, the linguistic structure, within which every controversy was formulated and in terms of which it therefore had to be resolved.

The metaphysical furniture of the educational essay is patently Hegelian in manufacture and design. The characteristic Hegelian distinctions are exploited in a terminology and with the aid of concepts which clearly embody, or are at least derived from, the basic logical and epistemological assumptions of Hegelianism. The instruments Stirner employs to analyse the nature of personal identity and the place of the self in the world are the conventional instruments of his period; it is the intention with which he employs them that has significantly altered and that accounts for the heretically different conclusions at which he arrives. The irony is that his repudiation in substance of every article of the Hegelian world-outlook is expressed in a philosophical language, relying on ontological formulae, which is essentially the historic language of Hegel.

Stirner's description of personalism as emerging dialectically from the reciprocal antagonism and internal contradictions of humanism and realism exemplifies, perhaps unconsciously, a classically Hegelian schematisation. Hegel's doctrines that self-consciousness is the highest kind of knowledge and that will is a mode of thought, thought translating itself into existence by setting before itself a system of objects, provide Stirner with the equipment to construct his notion of the sovereign individual whose self-fulfilment is wholly explicit

because it results from the operations of a will informed by the consciousness of its own designs - "das Wissen-Wollen". But the most conclusive evidence of the influence of Hegelian modalities in the educational essay is afforded by Stirner's observations on the nature of knowledge and the relationship of the knowing self to the external world. For Hegel, the process by which intelligence, in universalising itself, frees itself from all merely particular associations, is the formal process of abstraction;⁷ the function of reason is initially the negative, destructive function of "annihilating" the empirical world, and the act of abstraction leads into the "Night" or "Nothingness" of the Absolute;⁸ the very self-assertion of a principle which is self-determining must be a self-denial, a kind of "dying to live";⁹ while the individual, in consuming the objects of his environment, "annihilates" them,¹⁰ and consciousness, though primarily regarded as the subject of knowledge, is not simply opposed to the object, but necessarily includes it in itself in an unconscious unity.¹¹ These ancestral traits are plainly discernible in the pose and bearing of Stirner's sovereign character, who achieves freedom in self-assertion by consciously projecting himself against his environment and reducing it by abstraction to his own essential nullity.

There are other Hegelian conceptions which play a somewhat less central part in the educational essay. Hegel's analysis of lordship and bondage as a relation between essentially unequal individuals, the one a "master" and the other a "servant";¹² his distinction between

"positive" freedom, which is the moral self-determination of autonomous individuals, and the "negative" freedom which the French Revolution sought to realise but which only succeeds in altering the external form of the objective world;¹³ and his identification of "lifeless" with "not self-moved";¹⁴ such ideas re-appear in Stirner's essay as the commonplaces in terms of which he can make his innovations intelligible to his readers. For, despite his superficial acquiescence in the categories and metaphysical nomenclature of Hegel, Stirner - consistently with his later assertion that the egoist should be prepared coolly to appropriate and cynically to exploit ideas, which, although intrinsically alien or indifferent to him, may serve as vehicles for his expediency¹⁵ - has in fact commandeered Hegelianism for his own, spectacularly dissimilar purposes. He has in effect arrested the Hegelian dialectic at one of its stages, the stage of unbridled individualism, and while drawing generously on the Hegelian analysis of the conscious self and its relationship to objects, has managed to harness this to the dynamism of his distinctive personal vision. Thus it comes about that, on a Hegelian canvas and with Hegelian pigments, he has portrayed a figure who, in his self-centred pursuit of his exclusive interests and in his intoxicated relish of instability, represents everything for which the Hegelians felt abhorrence and dismay.

Stirner's essay on education, then, is far from being a unique and unaccountable phenomenon, created ex nihilo by its insular and rootless author. It contains the deposits of several philosophical

traditions. Humanism, romanticism, and educational naturalism all contributed in some degree to form Stirner's intellectual posture, for they had detonated those features of human experience to which he could respond and the intellectual atmosphere of his day was still thick with the undissolved precipitate of their doctrines. The monolithic system of Hegel, reconstructed and consolidated by the Young Hegelians who were his closest associates, imposed conceptual limits on the general structure and expression of his thought, but within the Hegelian forms Stirner was able to find himself and to assert his seditious originality. His two great contemporaries, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, who were also in revolt against the metaphysical and moral assumptions of Hegelianism but who were more successful in liberating themselves from the Hegelian formulae and logic of discourse, were, however, almost certainly wholly unknown to him. Indeed it is impossible to designate the particular respects in which any particular philosopher (with the possible exception of Hegel) could be definitely declared to have directly influenced the characteristic ideas of the educational essay, although the accumulated, diffuse influences which united or contended to form the spirit of the age must surely have insinuated themselves, deviously but irresistibly, into Stirner's thinking.¹⁶ One thing is quite certain. Whatever points of comparison may exist between Stirner and his predecessors or contemporaries, in this essay he is groping to articulate a vision of the world and the free person's place in it which is entirely and peculiarly his own, since, in its essentials,

in its reckless celebration of individual self-assertion as the supreme value vindicating all else, it is a vision profoundly repugnant to each one of those philosophers to whom he might seem most indebted. The configuration of ideas in which his creative impulse embodied itself could be assembled from the intellectual resources which lay around him; the creative impulse was his alone.

Chapter 8Stirner's Earlier Educational Writing

In March, 1834, Johann Kaspar Schmidt (the future Max Stirner), having completed his studies at the University of Berlin, presented himself as a candidate to teach classics, German, history, philosophy, and religion in the upper forms of the Gymnasium and "the remaining subjects" in the lower forms. As part of his examination he was obliged to prepare two quite substantial pieces of written work, which, after some delay, he submitted in November, 1834. The second of these was his essay, "On School Rules".¹ In this, his earliest known writing, Stirner develops his account of school rules in terms of the child's relationship to his fellows, to his teacher, to society, and to knowledge, and the essay is therefore of fundamental relevance to an understanding of his whole philosophy of education. Written just as he was finishing his own formal education, several years before he came to conceive of himself as an original thinker in his own right, it testifies strikingly to the philosophical assumptions in which he was nurtured and which united to form the matrix of ideas in which his originality was to germinate. His originality was to consist largely in liberating himself from these assumptions. But in this youthful essay, side by side with the metaphysical and moral litter he was to discard, unidentified and as yet unexploited, some at least of the intellectual instruments of his liberation are arrayed.

Stirner begins the essay by explaining that, since all laws or rules express the content of a "concept" that we have made of our "object", school rules must express the content of the concept of the pupil.² In work and play the child seeks to express his nature,³ but this nature, as human nature, is fundamentally common to himself and others,⁴ so that education represents the individual self-expression of a basic humanity.⁵ Beginning life in a state of natural, unmediated sensuality and insularity, the child, as his self-consciousness develops, comes to terms with his fellows in a relationship which Stirner describes as that of selves, each attesting and delivering up his nature to the other.⁶ Eventually, recognising the inevitable limitations of his relationship with other children, the pupil seeks a mediator who can transcend these limitations and is led to discover "the wealth of a hitherto unsuspected world" in the mature nature of an adult, who thereby becomes his teacher.⁷ His development is not complete, however, until he realises that Knowledge, originally revealed and imparted to him by his teacher, is not an exclusive possession of the teacher but exists independently as an object to be independently sought, and that only in attaining Truth, which is the content of Knowledge, will he truly attain Freedom.⁸

Since during the school years, the object of the pupil is his teacher, the necessary rules of the school can be deduced from the concept of the teacher, of which they are the expression. The essence of the teacher is that he is for the pupil. From this

follow equally the prohibition against disobedience and the command of obedience.⁹ Since the teacher is a feeling, knowing, and willing being, the pupil's education must be religious, scholarly, and moral, embodying and inculcating Faith, Knowledge, and Morality as the ends for which the school exists. From these general purposes follow the particular rules which the pupil is bound to observe at all times and in the widest sense, as someone who is being educated by the school in every way. These include rules governing the development of his religious faith; rules regulating his scholastic work, such as those requiring diligence, attentiveness, and good order; and rules regulating his conduct towards his teachers and his fellow-pupils, and in the wider society outside the school, in the family, in civil society, and in the State.¹⁰ School rules can, however, only be enforced against the pupil in so far as he is a free agent, for the family also has a tutelary role, if a limited one, and family unity and school rules must be equally preserved. The task of ensuring that the pupil is not prevented by family interference from experiencing education as a necessary stage of life is the task of the State.¹¹ Stirner claims only to have delineated the basic features of the rules governing the education and conduct of the pupil. The rules governing the conduct of the teacher are the obverse of those for the pupil, while those governing the administration of the school as an institution are essentially founded in the rules which have been expounded.¹²

This examination essay at least establishes, beyond all doubt, the nature of the philosophical tradition to which Stirner was apprenticed. Written in Berlin at a time when the doctrines of Hegel were already being sapped and refertilised from vigorous new sources, the structure of the essay still exhibits the ascendancy of a naïve, undiluted Hegelianism in Stirner's thinking. His reliance on the notion of a "concept", the "expressed content" of which represents the "laws" for the "object" of that concept, is classically Hegelian. The paramountcy of Hegel is evident in his conception of Freedom as the "expressed content" of Knowledge; in his distinction between "Understanding" and "Reason"; in his triadic analyses of society into the family, civil society, and the State, and of human activity into faith, knowledge, and conduct; and in his conception of the teacher as the object which the pupil "seeks to absorb into his consciousness, to unite himself with."¹³ His account of the development of the child's consciousness through stages, each of which suffers from inadequacies partially remedied in the next stage; his belief that this development is made possible by a progressive reconciliation of opposites, in the way that true education results from the synthesis of "external development" and "internal development";¹⁴ his diagnosis of the impotence of unregulated immediacy, which needs the government of a mediator to administer its motive vitality: in all these respects Stirner declares his debt to Hegel and demonstrates the extent to which, as yet, the frontiers of his thinking are fixed by the categories of Hegelianism.

According to Engert, "(This early writing) is not only the point of departure of (Stirner's) educational observations, as he later expressed them in his significant essay, 'The False Principle of our Education, or Humanism and Realism' (1842), and in scattered references in his chief work. It is the foundation stone of his whole future thought."¹⁵ That this judgment is a demonstrable exaggeration is immediately evident from the numerous and fundamental points of incongruence of the examination essay with his later thinking on education and philosophy. The very notion of "rules", of limitations on the child's spontaneous self-expression, or indeed of predictable regularities of any kind, is foreign to the spirit of his later educational theory. The mature Stirner would have refused to recognise the categories of "obedience" and "disobedience" as they are employed in the examination essay, and would have recoiled in abhorrence from the idea of formulating and enforcing rules concerning the pupil's dress, enjoining the pupil to show due respect to his teachers, or forbidding him to join "secret and demagogic societies". And, far from regarding "moral education.....as the destruction of all self-will",¹⁶ he later considered the development of self-conscious will to be the highest task of education. This is in complete contrast with the essay "On School Rules", where, on the assumption that absolute Truth and absolute Knowledge are to be sought for their own sakes, the end of education is held to be the cultivation of pure Reason in the child.

Moreover, the institutional framework of education has a markedly greater importance in the early writing, where the responsibilities of the school are carefully distinguished from those of the family and subordinated to those of the State, than in the essay of 1842, where Stirner is content to isolate the essential features of the educational process without committing himself to a definite account of the social context and political control of that process, which he almost certainly considered to be largely irrelevant.¹⁷ The idea that education, in its "inner" aspect, is a development of the "pure, universal humanity" which is constitutive of the child's personality, in so far as this conforms to archetypal human nature, is another idea which would have been profoundly repugnant to the later Stirner, who held that any attempt to conceive of the individual in generic terms was necessarily futile and absurd.

In fact, the essay "On School Rules" is throughout governed by a conception of the nature of the self and its relation to other selves which is essentially irreconcilable with that governing the later essay on education. In the former work, the child is above all a potentially religious, rational, and moral being whose inner probity, whose faith, intelligence, and will await the efficacious husbandry of the educator. With other children, he can not only "come to an understanding": he can "mediate" with them and even "enter into" their natures as they can enter into his. In the teacher he recognises a moral as well as a spiritual and intellectual superior, but one who is sensitive and responsive to his growing needs and who

for that reason induces the child all the more readily to acknowledge and defer to him as a "higher being". From the exuberant delinquency of the later essay, its contempt for - or rather complete indifference to - all religious, intellectual, and moral values, and its insistence on each person's ultimate singularity and impenetrable privacy, surely nothing could be further removed. Kaspar Schmidt's essay "On School Rules" is strewn with utterances which must have rung odiously in the ears of Max Stirner. Its focal idea, by which the whole essay is irrigated, is the idea of the plastic, docile, and essentially reverent moral consciousness of the child, and this, above all, is the idea which Stirner was finally so boisterously to impugn.

Thus Engert's verdict that "this first essay of Stirner...dares... to break with all belief in authority"¹⁸ is almost entirely without foundation. In such statements as, "The teacher is the object which the pupil seeks to take up into his consciousness, to understand and to unite himself with", Engert claims to identify the essentials of Stirner's later doctrine of the egoist who seeks to exploit, to utilise, other people for his purposes; all that such statements establish, however, is a kind of terminological analogy between his early thinking, on which the influence of Hegelian concepts was quite fundamental, and his mature ideas, on the expression of which they continued to exert a merely residual influence. It is true that there is a kind of fracture in the essay, that the first part is notably more acute and imaginative than the latter part, which reads alarmingly like a code of educational

statutes designed to regulate every moment of the child's school life. The evident disharmony between the two halves of the essay caused Engert to claim that in the second half Stirner was engaging in "proprietary thinking",¹⁹ putting ideas to his own purposes (in this case, passing an examination), and that the closing pages of the essay reek with the "delicious irony" possible only to a man who has freed himself from subservience to his own ideas wherever these happen to conflict with his material self-interest. It may well be true that Stirner's uncharacteristic advocacy of an educational pandect really demonstrates "the early superiority of his spirit".²⁰ The most that can definitely be said, however, is that, if there were independent evidence for accepting such an interpretation, this interpretation of the essay's conclusions would not be inconsistent with Stirner's known attitude to intellectual conclusions in general.

To regard the essay "On School Rules" as a revolutionary contribution to educational theory is, then, greatly to overestimate its originality. Only to a reader already intoxicated by Stirner's later writings on education could such a view possibly occur. To such a reader, however, certain passages in the essay, meagre and inconclusive in themselves, might assume enhanced significance when understood in the light of Stirner's mature teachings. The conception of education, at least in one of its phases, as "Herausbilden", as the "outward development" of what "lies hidden" in the child,²¹ as a result of which his latent potentialities are actualised and

fulfilled, is one conception that is pregnant with the seed of his future ideas. The child's development, moreover, is a self-development, a process whereby, in discovering the immanent possibilities of his nature, he comes to assert and "manifest himself" to his schoolfellows and the world. At first, the child "leads a life of complete individuality".²² From this condition he emerges into a state of enlarged consciousness, recognising himself as a self over against other selves, and his "feeling of his own existence and life" deepens into an awareness of his selfhood and an "animation of self-consciousness".²³

It might seem, therefore, that the essay affirms at least two classical axioms of Stirner's thought, and this is literally true if these are considered only in themselves. His affirmation of them is seen to be strictly limited and conditional, however, when they are considered as elements in his total position as expounded in the essay: for his affirmation of self-development and self-manifestation, or "Herausbilden", as the cardinal values of education is more than redressed by his parallel elucidation of the notion of "Hineinbilden", restricting the compass of the pupil's "outward development" to the development of that "common humanity" which is the inheritance of every child;²⁴ while he expiates the candour of his account of the child's "life of individuality" and subsequent recognition of his own selfhood by insisting that these merely represent stages in the child's progress towards an ultimate acknowledgement of Faith, Knowledge, and Morality as the supreme values claiming his ultimate fidelity.²⁵

Stirner's student essay "On School Rules" deserves to be examined and appraised in its own right. It offer a systematic justification of the school regime that is far from negligible. But to attempt to find in it signs that at the age of twenty-seven Stirner's ideas on education and morality were already fully formed is to commit a major mistake. As a very young man, his vision did not extend beyond the horizons of the Hegelianism in which he was nurtured, and, despite its spasmodic genuflections to individualism, the essay is best regarded as representing the philosophical standpoint from which he started and which he was wholly to repudiate. Its subject is, after all, one that could not be expected to interest the total nihilist that he was to become. For Johann Kaspar Schmidt, the question of discipline was of burning importance and clamoured to be clarified in light of the child's obligations to society and society's claims on the child. For Max Stirner, however, the claims of society were entirely without force and, by the same token, the very notion of "discipline" had ceased to have any meaning whatsoever.

Chapter 9

From Personalism to Egoism:

"The False Principle of our Education"

and

"Der Einzige und sein Eigentum"

Both as an expression of radical discontent with current educational practice and as an ambitious attempt to ground educational principles in an original metaphysic of the self and of the world which it inhabits, Stirner's essay on "The False Principle of our Education" is of considerable intrinsic significance. Viewed against the context of his mature philosophical ideas, however, the essay is interesting as the first general statement of his philosophical position and thus as the earliest of his writings in which it would be appropriate to seek the pedigree of his characteristic ideas in "Der Einzige". Numerous commentators have claimed to perceive in the educational essay, not only the seeds, but the first blossoms, of the philosophy which was to flower so luxuriantly in the later work. For Mackay, "How completely he (Stirner) is already himself!"¹ According to Basch, the essay "is like a fragment of the great work at which he was thenceforward to labour",² and "the reader will rediscover in it, when we reach 'Der Einzige und sein Eigentum', the controlling ideas. Stirner's distinctive conception - individualism, absolute personalism - stands already revealed in all its intransigence. Only, whereas, in 'Der Einzige', he is speaking of the adult, here he is exclusively concerned with the child and with the education he should

receive."³ And for Henri Arvon, after writing this essay, "the road which henceforth leads him to the notion of 'the unique one' is direct and immediate".⁴ One thing is certain. Despite the vehemence and integrity which it undoubtedly possesses in its own right, the message of the educational essay is greatly illuminated and made considerably more coherent when it is understood in the light of Stirner's finished system of ideas. For this reason, and because it, like the work which overshadows it, bears the unmistakable imprint of the personality of their common author, any complete appraisal of the essay must consider its fragmentary, tentative insights in relation to the definitive, articulated world-outlook of "Der Einzige".

* * *

In "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum" Stirner states his attitude to life and to society completely and conclusively. While it would be impossible to isolate any proposition as the cardinal tenet of his system (or indeed to regard his work as a symmetrically designed structure at all),⁵ there is at least one proposition in "Der Einzige" in the light of which every other proposition is to be understood: "Nothing is more to me than myself!"⁶ Stirner's finished philosophy is the philosophy of conscious egoism. Maintaining that a man "has not a vocation; but he has powers, which express themselves where they are, because their being consists only in their expression",⁷ he rejects both the relevance of moral exhortation and the objectivity of truth. "You are more than truth, which is nothing at all before you".⁸

Ideas are mere "ghosts", and to be swayed by the ideas of God, humanity, or right, is to be swayed by something outside oneself: to recognise anything as "sacred" is to be "possessed" by it. Since each of us is "unique", "self-possession" must be our sole aim, so that "what I do, I do for my own sake".⁹ "Henceforth the question is not how one can acquire life, but how one can expend it, enjoy it; not how one is to produce in oneself the true ego, but how one is to dissolve oneself, to live oneself out."¹⁰

When we realise that our only relationship to the world and to each other is "that of utility, of useableness, of use",¹¹ we shall also see that the question is not how I can maximise my freedom, for I am only free "from what I am rid of",¹² but how I can increase my "property", since "I am owner of what I have in my power."¹³ "To what property am I entitled? To any to which I - empower myself."¹⁴ Because "right crumbles into nothingness when it is swallowed up by force",¹⁵ and because the state, like the law, exists for me only in so far as I count it "sacred", I should recognise that the state, like everything else, seeks only its own selfish interests in indifference or hostility to my interests, and, recognising this, I should consciously dissolve my deference to its authority and my respect for its laws. Existing only by devaluating and exploiting individuals, the state must be abolished and replaced by a form of association which, being "my own creation, my creature",¹⁶ will "not be sacred, not a spiritual power above my spirit",¹⁷ but will merely be the personal

instrument of each of its individual members, to which each will adhere only so long as it continues to serve his egoistic interests. The purposes of this "union of egoists" will be as contingent and fluctuating as the composition and forms of the union itself. The union of egoists is the archetype of the new social order which will arise when the law, the state, property, and all existing institutions are overthrown by "the insurrection", in which indeed the unions will be the leading insurgents. Until that time, the typical insurgent activity open to the egoistic individual is the activity of the criminal.

Such is Stirner's general position in his only comprehensive and categorical statement of it. In "Der Einzige" are to be found his definitive views on the self and its relations with the external order of nature, his theories of will and of knowledge, and his attitudes to conduct and to society, the detailed consideration of which unquestionably affords many significant points of comparison with his earlier position adopted in the essay on education. Those features of the essay which anticipated his later ideas are certainly very striking. Thus, Stirner's original conception of Spirit as absolute and infinite, positing itself eternally in total abstraction from the concrete world of sensuous particulars, is in these respects identical with his account of Spirit in "Der Einzige", where he acknowledges Spirit as "Being without relations and without the world",¹⁸ and declares that "only now, after all worldly care has left him, does he become all in all to himself, and exists now for his own sake, that is, exists as Spirit

for the sake of Spirit".¹⁹ But in the latter work, although Stirner, to be sure, continues to regard Spirit as inhabiting a world of its own,²⁰ he adds that Spirit necessarily populates this world with its own creatures, which are ideas.²¹ The world of Spirit is the intellectual world, the world of general ideas, especially of the moral and political ideas which aspire to regulate our conduct. In the educational essay, however, Spirit is described as an ontological vacuum, a kind of chamber on entering which ideas and knowledge are utterly extinguished, for knowledge "is, so to speak, changed into the impulse or instinct of Spirit, into an unconscious knowledge".²²

In fact, it sometimes seems as if, in the two writings, he is using the word "Spirit" to refer to two formally similar but metaphysically quite different modes of being, of each of which some account is given in both works: in the earlier writing, it designates the inscrutable ark of personal identity, and in the later, it represents the whole zone of being occupied by abstract thoughts and impersonal ideals. Although he recognises in "Der Einzige" that thoughts and ideals are ultimately only the products of the minds of individuals, which individuals can appropriate or dissipate at will,²³ he also describes the tendency of thoughts to usurp the primacy and to posit themselves as universal truths superior to the particular interests of individuals. Since the belief that it is the concrete human individual who is primary and who should manipulate ideas at his will is central to his views in the educational essay also, it would appear that, in essentials, Stirner's position is not significantly different from that expressed in "Der

Einziges". In both works, he locates personal identity in an impenetrable and destructive self whose ability to engorge and negate everything external exempts it from the sway of feelings and principles. The differences between the two statements of his views are mainly formal. Taking over a neo-Hegelian terminology, he originally applied the term "Spirit", with its suggestions of an independent and infinite mode of being, to the internal world of the individual self in all its privacy and unity: three years later, he more aptly reserved the same term to designate a wholly disparate ontological realm, namely the realm of abstract ideals and general principles. He is charting the same universe: only the cartography is different.

In the essay on education, Stirner gives pre-eminence to the notion of the "free person" whose supreme activity is to manifest his absolute individuality against those impersonal forces of nature and of society which threaten to submerge it.²⁴ Now there can be no doubt that, in his chief features, the "free person" is the prototype, greatly simplified but confidently portrayed, of the figure who dominates "Der Einzige", the figure of "the unique one". In 1842, Stirner obscurely presaged a possible society of "free persons": to assist the self-development of these was the highest justification of the educational process. By 1844, he had perceived that the internal logic of individualism moved remorselessly to the recognition of each person as a unique and all-embracing world in his

own rights: "In the last resort, what can be more exclusive than the exclusive, single person himself!"²⁵ He had identified and condemned the tendency of men "to divide themselves into two persons, an eternal and a temporal, and always to care only for the one or for the other",²⁶ and had rejected the conception of "Man" as the "highest essence", the presence of which in individual men is supposed to constitute their only claim to significance and worth.

By 1844, Stirner had worked out in detail the relationship of the unique individual to ideas, those "phantoms" or "wheels in the head" which will either dominate or be dominated by him, and to truth, which "expects and receives everything from you and yet only exists through you; for it only exists - in your head."²⁷ My relationship to thoughts, as to everything else, should be that of proprietor to his property, that of a proprietor for whom all objects exist only as instruments of his gratification or as material for his consumption: "Intercourse is the enjoyment of the world, and belongs to my - self-enjoyment."²⁸ He had amplified and given more vivid formulation to his nihilistic conception of the self as "unutterable" because constantly "self-dissolving", and to his related view that to "use" or "enjoy" an object is "to annihilate it, to take it back into oneself, to consume it":²⁹ "I annihilate the world, as I annihilate myself; I dissolve it....Yes, I utilise the world and men."³⁰ He had given colourful expression to the idea of "the self-dissolving, the transitory ego", the enemy of stability or fixed purpose, whose "enjoyment of life consists in using life up";³¹ "Wretched stability! As if I in my

will, I the creator, should be hindered in my flow and dissolution."³² He had explicitly formulated his view that the practical activity of the egoist must be conscious and deliberate, in contrast with the unconscious egoism of the average man, whose patriotic or religious fervour is indeed always a reflection of his search for his own well-being, in which, however, he is impassably hindered by his inability or reluctance to seek his own interests purely and declaredly for his own sake: "But what I do unconsciously I half do."³³ In all these ways Stirner's account of "the unique one" extended and enriched his conception of the "free person" by developing this conception to its logical limits, articulating in great detail its metaphysical and epistemological implications, and enormously elaborating it with a wealth of dramatic illustration.

But if this nihilistic conception of an absolutely unique, unfathomable self, whose "impulse to self-dissolution" manifests itself in its capricious and nakedly pragmatic relationship to the world and to the truth, is in its essentials common to the position from which Stirner started in 1842 and that at which he finished three years later, it would be mistaken to assume that there are therefore no visible differences between the "free person" and "the unique one". Some of the features of "the unique one", for example his characteristic promiscuity and instability, are not predicated in exactly the same form of the "free person"; others, such as "the unique one's" autocratic manipulation of truth, are implied rather than stated in the earlier conception; still others, like "the unique one's" solitary

occupancy of a universe which is totally exclusive to himself, represent a genuinely new departure, although along lines which are already clearly indicated in the extreme individualism of the "free person"; and it may even be true that in some respects "the unique one" is the "free person" so richly caparisoned as to be almost unrecognisable. Yet these differences are essentially only differences in the embellishment of a character whose identity has already been established. In at least three quite definite respects, however, there are serious and fundamental differences between this character as portrayed in the essay on education and as portrayed in "Der Einzige" - not, indeed, serious enough to render the two portraits incompatible, but sufficiently fundamental to remind us that the "free person" is only an embryo whose growth into the mature character of "the unique one" was necessarily accompanied by marked structural changes.

Attention has already been drawn to the transposition whereby Spirit, in which Stirner originally grounded the individuality of the "free person", was in "Der Einzige" wholly excommunicated from the nature of "the unique one", whose self-assertion was held to be intrinsically inconsistent with deference to the general principles which compose the world of Spirit. While this may be regarded as in large part a re-organisation of a basically similar Weltanschauung in accordance with a changed nomenclature, this re-organisation did bring about a major change of substance in Stirner's view of the nature of the self. According to the essay on education, "Spirit alone is eternal, and comprehends itself",³⁴ and since the identity of the

"free person" is rooted in Spirit, the "free person" is above all an "eternal character". But according to "Der Einzige", "the unique one", whose identity is grounded in his own nothingness, is "transforming himself every instant";³⁵ his is the free personality, whose freedom consists in being continually delivered up to the limitless possibilities of each new moment, re-creating himself in and by his constant flux and self-dissolution. Admittedly, in the earlier work he asserts that the "eternal characters" are eternal "because they are creating themselves every moment";³⁶ but he immediately qualifies this by saying that their finite, ephemeral actions proceed from "the unfading and unchanging freshness and creativity of their eternal Spirit".³⁷ While the overt activity of both the "free person" and "the unique one" is characteristically promiscuous, contingent, and unstable, in the case of the former only Stirner sought to derive this activity from a changelessly pure inner source. By the time he came to write "Der Einzige" he was no longer interested to do this, for, in whatever sense the "eternity" ascribed to the Spirit of the "free person" is to be understood, there is certainly no attribute of "the unique one" which remotely corresponds to it. In this respect he revised his conception of selfhood.

He also revised his account of the relationship between the self and the external world. In the educational essay, Stirner tenders a formula, a metaphysical blueprint, according to which knowledge is appropriated and digested by the inner mechanism of the self, from

whose operations it emerges as self-conscious will or "das Wissen-Wollen". Now, while the genesis of the conscious egoism of "the unique one" is described in broadly analogous terms,³⁸ in the essay the process whereby the concrete data of knowledge are "annihilated" and assimilated into the unity of the self is represented as a process of abstraction, a highly formal process of progressive generalisation and conceptualisation from the original constituent materials. This way of representing the self's relationship to the objective data of cognition is conspicuously absent from "Der Einzige", where it is replaced by a conception, the absence of which from the educational essay is equally conspicuous. This is Stirner's conception of "property". For "the unique one", cognition is only one form of his general relationship to the contents of the external world, which is the relation of an "owner" to his "property". Something becomes my property when I am in a position to "use" it and choose to use it; in "using" it, I not only withdraw it from the use of others, but destroy it by "consuming" it. Some things, such as my own feelings and opinions, I can "appropriate" in this sense by my mere act of will. Others, such as physical objects and the emotions or attitudes of other people, I can appropriate only by taking overt action. Since I can have "property" in knowledge, as well as in things and persons, this conception does the work which the conception of cognitive abstraction was engaged to do in the educational essay, and does it in a way which supports and intensifies those other features of "the unique one" which Stirner is concerned to accentuate. In "Der Einzige", therefore,

Stirner was led to revise his original account of the self's relationship to the objects of knowledge and to re-state it in terms of that general metaphysical relationship to the universe which he made the focus of his whole philosophy - the relationship in which "the unique one" is called upon to play the part of "the owner".

Thus the "free person" was transformed into "the unique one" only after surgery of a quite drastic kind, which involved a complete reconstruction of the notion of "Spirit" and a revolutionary extension of Stirner's conception of the relationship between the self and the external world. It also involved the abandonment of the idea of "das Wissen-Wollen". In the educational essay Stirner declares that "Will is not the originally true thing, we cannot circumvent Will-Knowledge in order to arrive immediately at Will, but Knowledge fulfills itself as Will, when it de-sensualises itself, and, as Spirit, 'building its own body', creates itself".³⁹ He adds that "neither any longer can Knowledge be the ultimate goal of education, but rather Will born out of Knowledge."⁴⁰ For Stirner the activity of the "free man" seems, then, to be the characteristic expression, not of naked will, but of a will which is continuously suffused by the knowledge, the perceptions and ideas, which he has acquired and which he has succeeded in completely integrating into his personality - so completely that this knowledge has become his "personal" knowledge and his voluntary actions are now the more effective because illuminated by the consciousness which controls them and to which they give executive reality.

In "Der Einzige", however, Stirner not only abandons this way of formulating the characteristic activity of the self but denies the very meaningfulness of any such formulation. All that can be said is that my actions are manifestations of me: they cannot be reduced to the chemical synthesis of "Will-Knowledge" or of any other identifiable elements, for they are simply manifestations of me, and I am "the unnameable".⁴¹ Since I am a "nothingness", I can plausibly be said to "destroy" knowledge, and in "Der Einzige" Stirner depicts the egoist as "owning" and "using" knowledge. But this knowledge, far from being taken up and assimilated integrally into my very identity, remains on the contrary something external to me, my chattel: ".... if I attain to property in thought, they (i.e. my thoughts) stand as my creatures".⁴² Indeed the only detectable traces of "Das Wissen-Wollen" to be found in "Der Einzige" are in Stirner's repeated assertions that the egoism of "the unique one" is distinctively a conscious egoism, because "what I do unconsciously, I half do."⁴³ This, however, is not a general doctrine of the nature of egoistic consciousness: it is a specific doctrine of the nature of the original egoistic choice, which must be deliberate and not blind, free and not adventitious.

* * *

In the three years separating the essay on education from "Der Einzige", therefore, Stirner came to amend his analysis of selfhood in several definite respects, although the figure of the "free person"

continued to be clearly discernible beneath the trappings of "the unique one". There is a comparable resemblance, and a comparable difference, between the personalist morality episodically depicted in the early work and the morality of the egoist, illustrated with such a superabundance of epigram and metaphor in the latter. The essay conveys a flamboyant image of the personalist, his character, and the conduct which is open to him. His highest value will be his personal independence and freedom from every kind of control or restraint: reserving his most biting contempt for "submissive servants' souls",⁴⁴ Stirner declares that, "if the idea of freedom is awakened in men, the free will ceaselessly free themselves".⁴⁵ The most striking trait of the personalist will be his self-assurance, his urbane acceptance of the world and confidence in exploiting it: "Thus familiarity with present things and their conditions was most keenly sought and a pedagogy won acceptance, which had to be of universal application, because it satisfied the universal need to find oneself in the world and in one's age".⁴⁶

The personalist's self-confidence is rooted in two of his other outstanding attributes. Continuously adapting himself to the demands of the moment, he retains his "freshness and creativity"⁴⁷ throughout "the succession of his temporal appearances".⁴⁸ And the will with which he accomplishes his self-ordained purposes is a will strengthened by the self-consciousness by which it is imbued, a will availing itself of that "knowledge which....accompanies me always and everywhere,

so that my free mobile self....can traverse the world with a rejuvenated spirit."⁴⁹ Equipped with these qualities, the personalist will live a life of exultant self-realisation and audacious self-assertion, "feeling, knowing, and asserting himself, in self-reliance, self-consciousness, and freedom":⁵⁰ "Truth consists in nothing else than self-manifestation".⁵¹

Some of these qualities of the personalist were directly grafted into the moral character and outlook of the egoist. The egoist, too, leads a moment-by-moment existence of constant self-adaptation: "Only the self-dissolving ego, the never-being ego, the - finite ego is really I....the transitory ego".⁵² The egoist, too, moves easily through the world of which he is master, because "the world belongs to me."⁵³ And the egoist, too, will override everything "which prejudices my self-development, self-assertion, self-creation",⁵⁴ because "the more we feel ourselves, the smaller appears that which before seemed invincible."⁵⁵ Still other features of personalist morality Stirner greatly magnified and accentuated, and, after extending them to their extreme limits, incorporated them into his picture of the egoist. Whereas, for example, the behaviour of the personalist is said to be characterised by "self-confidence", the mood in which the egoist thinks and acts can only be described as one of self-sufficient arrogance: "Turn to yourselves rather than to your gods or idols",⁵⁶ says Stirner, for whom the egoist, like God, will "behave 'just as it pleases him'".⁵⁷ The personal independence which is the cardinal value of the personalist is

similarly transformed, and emerges as "uniqueness", the quality by which the egoist identifies himself: "Every higher being over me, be it God or man, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness...I am owner of my power, and am so, when I know myself as unique."⁵⁸

The moral character of the personalist, and his typical world-outlook, unmistakably imply that certain other aspects of egoistic morality, although not explicitly formulated by Stirner in terms of the personalist, would at least be aspects of the moral universe which he inhabits. Basch says that in the essay on education "the individualism of Stirner does not yet seem to be identified in his thought with egoism."⁵⁹ This is literally quite true. But if by "egoism" is meant the moral condition in which the subject places the release of his own feelings and the exercise of his own will above every other possible consideration (and this is roughly the condition of the egoist in "Der Einzige"), then it must be acknowledged that the essay is strewn with utterances depicting the personalist as moving towards just this condition. There are references to "truth consisting in nothing but self-manifestation",⁶⁰ to "self-assertion" as "the highest activity",⁶¹ to "the person" who "should come to unfold himself"⁶² - indeed the judgment that "knowledge is worth more than to be used to chase practical purposes"⁶³ and that "the highest practice is when a free man engages in self-manifestation"⁶⁴ might have been lifted from "Der Einzige". Nowhere, however, is there a reference to any obligation of the personalist towards others or towards society.

It is also true that, in the educational essay, Stirner does not in so many words declare that contempt for "duty" and the claims of moral obligation which was to be the distinguishing mark of the egoist. But, here again, the language and tone of the whole essay leave no doubt that the personalist is committed to an ultimate rejection of all morality, if "morality" is to be understood as the recognition as objectively binding of at least some established rules of conduct. The personalist will not be one of those "people, brought forth by principles, who behave and think according to maxims",⁶⁵ who are "True to their convictions";⁶⁶ he will openly despise "downright, healthy characters, unshakeable men, true hearts",⁶⁷ "useful citizens";⁶⁸ he will seek and accomplish "the most complete abstraction or release from all authority".⁶⁹ In fact, he will not only ignore the accepted canons or received morality; he will violently resist any attempt, on whatever grounds it is based, to systematise or conventionalise his behaviour.

The figure of the personalist, then, is plainly recognisable as a first sketch on which the finished portrait of the egoist was to be based. Some of his features were to be considerably emphasised; others, vaguely sketched, were only to become clearly visible against the richer background in which the figure of the egoist is set; but many were to re-appear unchanged in the completed picture. Nevertheless, in the vastly greater compass of "Der Einzige", Stirner found it possible to proclaim and elaborate several distinct, original moral doctrines of which it would be vain to seek traces in the essay on education. The whole problem of personal intimacy, for example, which

Stirner was to solve in terms of his egoistic system by declaring that "my love is not a commandment, but, like each of my feelings, my property",⁷⁰ is already a problem for the personalist, on whose deeper relation with others, however, Stirner is strangely silent. Nor has he anything to say about a belief which was to exercise him greatly in "Der Einzige", the misguided belief in "vocation", according to which a man should strive to achieve perfection or salvation by cultivating truth and virtue in himself: "But one owes it neither to oneself to make anything out of oneself, nor to others to make anything out of them."⁷¹ The doctrine that "I must start from myself", not "seek myself",⁷² is at the very heart of the egoist's rejection of "vocation" and his absolute acceptance of himself, with all his peculiarities and limitations, as the justification and end of his consciously self-centred activity, and it is surely remarkable that in the essay on education, where the path leading from personalism to egoism is otherwise so clearly marked out, this first premise of egoism should not be identified and expressed.⁷³

The differences between the morality of the personalist and that of the egoist, however, are not attributable only to the fact that in "Der Einzige" Stirner was able to work out in detail the attitude of the egoist in moral situations of which the personalist had not even conceived. The difference between the two pictures is not only in respect of completeness. In at least one major respect the difference is absolutely fundamental. This is the devaluation of the personalist's idea of freedom and its supersession by the egoistic notion of "ownership".

Certainly, the freedom of the personalist is not merely "independence of authorities", but the "self-determination....of a man who is free in himself";⁷⁴ the freedoms of thought and of conscience which are conferred from outside are an inferior superficiality compared with "the true and inner freedom of the will, moral freedom."⁷⁵ Certainly, his self-assertion and self-determination are very like the egoist's self-possession or "ownness", his refusal to allow himself to be possessed or overborne by human beings and institutions or by abstract ideals and obligations. But, just as the conception of "property" is absent from the earlier account of the metaphysical relationship between the self and the natural world, so the concept of "ownership", as a means of expressing the characteristic issue of the egoist's practical activity in the natural world, is nowhere to be found in the educational essay, where its place as the final definition of the personalist's complex purposes is taken by the idea of freedom.

For the egoist, "freedom is empty of substance,"⁷⁶ because "to be free of something merely means: to be done with or rid of it",⁷⁷ and although "one can indeed get rid of much, one can never be rid of everything."⁷⁸ On the other hand, "I am my own at all times and in all circumstances",⁷⁹ so long as "I keep myself and my own interest before my eyes."⁸⁰ Since "I am owner of what I have in my power,"⁸¹ the supreme activity of the egoist is, not to strive hopelessly to realise an empty freedom, but to enlarge indefinitely his ownership by indefinitely extending his power over people and things. The

difference between the personalist and the egoist is at this point surely irreconcilable, for it represents a difference between two rival criteria by which the activities of the individual, his designs and accomplishments in the world, are ultimately to be judged. They are not incompatible, but the egoist declares the criterion of freedom to be generally irrelevant, and so he would be bound to say that, in the last analysis, the activity of the personalist is vitiated by a basic misdirection.

* * *

Living and writing during the ideological ferment of the 1840s, and participating daily in the heated political discussions among "die Freien", Stirner was always acutely conscious of the immediate social and political relevance of his ideas. Both in the essay on education⁸² and in "Der Einzige"⁸³ he commented pertinently on the interdependence of morals and politics and on the crucial political significance of education. In both works,^{84, 85} he condemns the barren and nugatory reforms of mere ameliorators, and demands a moral revolution which will originate a new society on an entirely different basis. In both works,^{86, 87} the target of his most withering contempt is the man whose mechanical purposes are determined by the society of which he is a mere member, the good bourgeois, who can believe that he enjoys a specious "liberty" only because he is incapable of recognising the innumerable agencies by which he is bound and his

individuality is strangled. In both,^{88, 89} he protests urgently against the forces which tend to submerge the individual in the group, in a class, or in society.

Whereas, however, much of "Der Einzige" is devoted to a clarification of the nature of egoistic intercourse and to a detailed elucidation of the concept of "the association of egoists", what Stirner has to say about personalist society in the earlier writing is mainly negative and consists largely of cryptic utterances which tend to be impenetrably oracular. He is implacably opposed to the aristocratic system of pre-Revolution Europe and to the capitalist society of Nineteenth Century Europe. He believes that the release of self-conscious will in self-sufficient individuals will usher in a new era, a civilisation of personalists each attesting his superb originality in a free community of creative equals, who are equals purely because each one is a sovereign to himself. But his pronouncements are far too exiguous and occult to serve as the principles of a coherent philosophy of society. They prompt too many questions which the educational essay does not attempt to answer. What kind of relations can possibly exist between individuals whose individuality is absolute and exclusive? How can such individuals possibly engage in intercourse of any kind, and in what possible sense could they be said to form a community?

In "Der Einzige", Stirner's unequivocal answer is that we should "aspire, not to community but to one-sidedness."⁹⁰ "Let us seek in others only means and organs, which we use as our property".⁹¹ This

follows naturally from Stirner's definition of "intercourse" as "enjoyment of the world".⁹² It is not true that, as Schultze says,⁹³ the upshot of Stirner's ideas in "Der Einzige" would be "a war of all against all", for Stirner explicitly denies that the ultimate preoccupations of self-conscious egoists can ever collide in the way that the concrete interests of ordinary people frequently collide with each other or with the State: "The...opposition of unique one against unique one is at bottom beyond what is called opposition, but without having sunk back into 'unity' and unison."⁹⁴ This denial appears paradoxical in the light of what Stirner has to say about the difference between egoistic intercourse and ordinary human intercourse imposed by the customs of society and the laws of the State, in a passage where he asserts that "it is a different thing whether I rebound from an ego or from a people."⁹⁵ In this passage he speaks of himself ("the unique one") as standing "man against man", "the opponent of my opponent", and "struggling against a bodily enemy" - in contrast with the "ghostly" enemy of the State. The language of such passages would seem to imply that the notion of an "egoistic community" is indeed a glaring contradiction and that any kind of egoistic intercourse would be bound to result in "a war of all against all".

The solution to the paradox is to be found in that section of "Der Einzige" where Stirner criticises the classical liberal conception of "free competition", and where, to the question, "But do persons really compete?", he replies, "No, again only things!"⁹⁶

Competition, like comparison, is only possible between entities sharing a common metaphysical and moral status: states do not "compete" with wolf-packs, any more than wolves "compete" with fires or storms. Since I am unique, and since to "compete" with other human beings would be to fall into the contradiction of attributing to them the metaphysical and moral status of a person (that is, the same status as myself), there can be no question of my competing with others, who in my eyes are never "persons", but only objects which I may or may not choose and seek to appropriate and enjoy. Thus Stirner envisages, not "a war of all against all", but a multiplicity of moral universes, the "unique ones", each self-contained and absolutely discrete as a moral universe, but each in relation - the relation of "ownership" - to a common physical universe, the natural world which as a material being every "unique one" inhabits. While the material interests of the egoist, as he strives to realise them by overt actions in the natural world, will certainly clash with the actions of other individuals considered as natural events, the sanctity of his essential independence is continuously preserved by his self-conscious refusal to recognise any other person as a commensurate moral agent, the existence of whom would infringe his own uniqueness.

It was along such lines, then, that Stirner came eventually to answer the question which, in the essay on education, he was on the brink of formulating - the question of how there can possibly be any kind of relations at all between autonomous individuals whose self-

sufficiency is imperviously absolute. If his answer involves him in the spectacular contradiction of asserting the existence of a multiplicity of persons each of whom is for himself "the unique one" - a contradiction which, by its very failure to state the issue explicitly, the educational essay formally escapes - this reflects the fundamental contradiction in his conception of individuality which he never diagnosed and never resolved. Because he was not prepared to accept the literal consequences of the notion of "the unique one"; because he was not prepared to take the plunge into ethical solipsism; because he regarded intercourse with others as one of the most exquisite forms of the individual's enjoyment of the world; and because such intercourse is in fact not possible unless these others to that extent share the metaphysical and moral characteristics of personality; he preferred to rob his conception of "uniqueness" of all its symmetry and jeopardise its very meaning by extending its application to a plurality of individuals.

Although the vulnerability of Stirner's position is disguised in the educational essay by the ostentatiously obscure language in which his abstruse allusions to the future personalist society are couched, the acuteness of his dilemma is mercilessly exposed in "Der Einzige" when he comes to depict the specific form which egoistic intercourse will take, in the "Verein" or "association of egoists". Anxiously determined to illustrate all the respects in which the egoist, who is inhibited or disfranchised by "society", is enabled to realise his purposes more effectively in the

"association" without submitting to the continence and abnegation imposed by a system of institutions, Stirner claims that this will be possible because the egoist's distinctive participation in the "association" will be neither institutionalised nor systematic. The contingent, pragmatic character of the "association" will be the archetype of all the egoist's relations with others, for in a sense Stirner's description of the "association" is really a description of the various expressions of the egoist's relationship with certain special elements in his environment - those other human beings whom he identifies as practising their own form of self-conscious egoism.

"Society" represents itself as something "sacred", transcending the destinies of any of its individual members;⁹⁷ it is concerned, not with the needs of its members as individuals, but only to form them in the image which it prescribes,⁹⁸ and to exploit their capacities;⁹⁹ it is always and everywhere the declared enemy of egoism.¹⁰⁰ The "association" on the other hand is an arbitrary creation of the individual, who can at any moment dissolve it simply by revoking his adherence to it,¹⁰¹ since it is never more than his act of association - this is the meaning of "association";¹⁰² in no sense can "association" inform or re-orientate the essential characters of the individuals who associate, for "neither I nor you are utterable, we are ineffable";¹⁰³ it is an instrument¹⁰⁴ of which I will avail myself only so long as I can derive profit or delight from its use,¹⁰⁵ and I will never forget that its value is determined

solely by the additional power or more engrossing diversion which it affords to me and by which alone its efficacy is to be judged; in the "association", and only in it, can I enjoy the advantages of collaborating with others without ceasing to be an egoist intent purely on my own aggrandisement.¹⁰⁶

The problem, then, with which Stirner is concerned in "Der Einzige" is partly that to which Rousseau addressed himself in the "Social contract", "to find a form of association...., in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before."¹⁰⁷ He is not only concerned to free himself from the deference and subordination entailed by membership of "society". He is also concerned to discover a form of association with others which will assure certain definite objects for himself, without in any way committing him to make reciprocal assurances to those others with whom he is associating. In the first place, Stirner's "association" is supposed to afford him the pleasures of intercourse with his associates, and in the second place it is supposed to place their combined power at his disposal. Since, however, his associates are, like himself, declared and self-conscious egoists who, like himself, will use the association only until it no longer suits their purposes, when they will "disloyally and faithlessly give it up";¹⁰⁸ and since, if they, like himself, commit themselves to nothing, he himself is clearly able to count on nothing; it would seem that the advantages of associating with other egoists, although perhaps genuine while they lasted, would be so intolerably ephemeral and undependable as to render the practical

results of egoistic association utterly negligible; an egoist who wanted to profit from the combined power of others would be much better to remain in conventional society, and, by calculation and deceit, systematically to exploit its innocent members, rather than to expose himself to the attentions of men who are explicitly his equals in deliberate self-seeking.

Thus there can only be one cogent reason for "the unique one's" choice of other self-conscious egoists as his preferred associates. Plainly he must derive an incomparable satisfaction from associating with other beings who have also assumed the status of "unique one" and from contemplating the cool egoism of their natures. And if he is really to enjoy this irreplaceable kind of satisfaction, he must recognise these other beings, at least in the respects which are essential to his enjoyment of association with them, as existing on the same terms as himself. But in acknowledging this, he has already acknowledged that his governing conception, of himself as literally "the unique one", has broken down in its fundamental feature. Unwilling to deny himself the one form of enjoyment which is subversive of his status as "the unique one"; unwilling to renounce absolutely the comfort of intimacy with others and to sustain the austerities of the solitude which must be borne if he is finally to make himself the exclusive centre of his own implacable exertions; he has conceded the reality of others possessing an identity which corresponds to his in the essential respects, and

so he has destroyed the very basis on which his uncompromising egoism was vindicated and possible.

* * *

In "Der Einzige", then, Stirner pressed the "free person", in his reincarnation as "the unique one", to define the nature of his personal relationships in detail and without reserve. In the educational essay, he had portrayed the "free person" in all his naivete and pristine audacity, but he had neglected to explain how such a portrait could form part of a moral landscape peopled entirely with characters whose buoyancy consisted in delivering themselves of their identity in sanguine disregard of everything and everyone else. That he would be unable to give such an explanation without adulterating his conception of the "free person" is evident from "Der Einzige", where his attempt to satisfy "the unique one's" appetite for communication and intercourse with other beings tended irresistibly to vitiate the integrity of his original conception of "the unique one" himself. This inability is concealed in the educational essay, however. In the early writing, Stirner does not disclose how the race of "free persons", in whom his personalist education will culminate, will enter into relationships with one another, or what forms these relationships will take. His views on this subject are only to be derived from his later statements in "Der Einzige".

Quite the reverse is true of his views on the process of education itself. While these are his central and explicit concern in his earlier work, in "Der Einzige" they are only of marginal relevance and are only to be ascertained from his peripheral allusions and illustrative references to the topic. It might indeed be surmised that, in a work like "Der Einzige", dedicated to the individual's repudiation of all social ties as hindrances to his self-seeking, any references to education would be hostile or contemptuous, and certainly many passages in it testify to Stirner's later suspicion of the educational process. At least one major section of the book is of interest to the educationist, however. This is the very first section, entitled "A Human Life", in which Stirner traces the development of human self-consciousness from infancy to manhood. The three stages of development follow a classical dialectical progression. The child at first inhabits a formidable world of material objects, of which he remains in awe until he manages to penetrate "behind things"¹⁰⁹ and outgrow his respect for them. Having overcome his material environment by virtue of his mental powers or "spirit", as an adolescent he inhabits a spiritual world, the world of ideas, which for a time successfully claims his zealous devotion. It is only when he becomes an adult that he learns "to deal with the world according to his interest, not according to his ideals",¹¹⁰ and to substitute self-conscious egoism for the unreflective realism and immature idealism of his childhood and youth.

It is doubtful whether Stirner intended this to be a literal account of mental growth. As a piece of descriptive psychology, it could scarcely be held to furnish much guidance to the practical educator, and it is chiefly of interest to the educationist as a typical example of a "recapitulation" theory, i.e., of the kind of theory which asserts that the development of each individual recapitulates the evolution of his species. Stirner's "human life" exhibits in microcosm the stages through which, according to "Der Einzige", mankind must pass before it can realise the egoistic form of self-consciousness. The Ancients, who lived under the tyranny of the world of natural objects, were freed from this subjection by their philosophers, only to fall, as Christians, under the spiritual domination of abstract ideals. Of these the abstractions of modern philosophy are the ultimate manifestation, the final predicament of Spirit before it is superseded and transcended by the egoistic consciousness.¹¹¹ Despite striking differences, this historical dialectic - Realism, Idealism, Egoism, - obviously echoes in many ways the historical dialectic of Humanism, Realism, Personalism, which Stirner had sketched in the educational essay. In the essay, however, he made no attempt to relate his historical theory to any kind of schematic account of the child's progress towards self-realisation, and in his later work, where he does this, his purpose is to throw light, not on the process of education, but on the nature of the egoistic consciousness towards which he sees mankind as moving.

There are several other passages in "Der Einzige" that suggest ways in which Stirner might have developed his theory of education. Towards the end of the section on "The Possessed", for example, he makes an important distinction between thoughts and feelings which are merely "aroused" in us by the presence of some object and those that are deliberately "imparted" to us as the proper thoughts and feelings to have in the presence of the object.¹¹² My self-possession is consistent with being "aroused" by some idea or event, so long as I do not allow myself to be dominated by the feeling "aroused" in me, and so long as I am able to rid myself of the feeling at will. By definition, however, I cannot rid myself of "feelings" that have been "imparted" to me, for to say that they have been "imparted" is to say that I have been specifically conditioned to have these particular feelings under the specific circumstances which have been designated to elicit them. Stirner is here making a distinction which he might have used to fix the limits of the activity of the educator, for clearly the Stirnerite educator will not seek to condition his pupils to experience pre-established feelings. His role will be limited to furnishing them with the richest and most accessible physical, social, and intellectual environment, and to administering this environment in the ways that will best enable them to respond to it on their own terms and in their own right.

While it provides a basis for intelligent speculation, the essay on education affords no definite clues as to the probable content of the curriculum of personalist education, and speculation is not made easier by the fact that Stirner habitually describes the eventual life of the mature personalist in the highly metaphorical language of his special moral ontology rather than in terms of his specific concrete activities. In this respect "Der Einzige", in disclosing and analysing the nature of the egoist's peculiar satisfactions, offers more practical guidance to the educator. Stirner's choice of examples in "Der Einzige" to illustrate the characteristic activities of the egoist is surely significant. As examples of the "works of a unique one" he refers to "musical compositions" and "artistic designs".¹¹³ Now, although a work of art may be enjoyed in many ways, only the creator can have the irreplaceable enjoyment of creating it. Because this enjoyment cannot be transferred, because it is inseparable from the activity of the creator himself, Stirner regards artistic creation as the paradigm of egoistic activity, although other activities, from the highest offices of state to the most commonplace jobs of work, can be made vehicles of my egoism if I only choose to bring to them all the force of my distinctive interests and unique capacities.¹¹⁴ Given this analysis of egoistic activity, the task of the educator would seem to lie in teaching his pupils to identify and enjoy the possibilities of a given situation by consciously exploiting those

features of the situation which can be made to minister to their creative self-expression.

What is true of the educational essay, however, is also true of those sections of "Der Einzige" which have relevance to the occupation of the teacher and the teaching situation. They are conspicuously lacking in concrete statements and positive suggestions. Stirner is throughout more concerned to delimit those areas of human personality and conduct on which it is prohibited for the educator or anyone else to encroach, than to show how they can be fertilised and enriched from without by the beneficent influences of a sympathetic associate. The teacher is shown the ultimate futility of intellectual inquiry, since ideas are devoid of intrinsic significance: if they threaten his self-possession, the individual will be quick to discard them and return to the sanctity of his pristine oblivion.¹¹⁵ The teacher is adjured to resign his claims to absolute authority over the pupil, and he is shown the legitimacy of the latter's resistance to his jurisdiction: "Truly it is not a failing in you that you stiffen yourself against me..."¹¹⁶ Indeed, applied to the teaching situation, Stirner's central doctrine in "Der Einzige", that "every higher being over me, be it God or be it man, weakens my feeling of uniqueness",¹¹⁷ leads straight to what would be, quite literally, a state of anarchy in the classroom.

The dissolution of classroom government is not completed so thoroughly in the educational essay, where Stirner, foreseeing that the pupil's authentic self-will may degenerate into inopportune

provocation or wanton malice, optimistically declares that the resourceful self-possession of a mature teacher will always be more than a match for the effrontery of the most arrogant child.¹¹⁸ While denying that the personalist teacher, who relies solely on his own qualities of poise and dynamism, will ever require nakedly to assert his formal authority, Stirner implicitly admits that there are at least some forms of conduct which he does not expect the teacher to tolerate from his pupils. The positive role of the teacher may be vanishingly tenuous, but education is at least possible.

In "Der Einzige", however, the whole structure of the egoistic universe would seem to make the activity of education not only impossible, but undesirable and unjustifiable. Its author's observations on the relations between "unique ones" are almost entirely negative. Any attempt to mould the character of "the unique one" or to influence the course of his development, to "make something out of him", is seen as a humiliating affront to his individuality. "One owes it neither to oneself to make anything out of oneself, nor to others to make anything out of them."¹¹⁹ No-one can minister to my development, because nothing can be a substitute for my unique spontaneity. "I do not develop Man, nor as Man, but, as I, I develop - myself."¹²⁰ In 1842, inspired by his vision of the "free person", Stirner could regard the incubation of such persons as the highest task of education. But by 1844, having minutely explored the possibilities and limitations of his

vision and redefined it in the character of "the unique one", he had come to see, and virtually to say, that a character who is the author as well as the director of his own identity is already beyond the reach of education.

* * *

According to Storrer, "Everything Stirner has done refers uniquely to 'the unique one' himself",¹²¹ and certainly the invisible presence of "the unique one" moves silently but unerringly through the pages of the educational essay. The universe of the personalist is for him familiar territory; although it differs in many features from his own universe of "Der Einzige", many landmarks are common to both. The points at which Stirner's position in the essay converges with his later world-outlook are numerous indeed. In both writings, Stirner's ideas are formally presented as a classical dialectical progression; in both, personal identity is rooted in an impenetrable, vacuous self, which negates and consumes the world in the act of exploiting and enjoying it; the moment-to-moment existence of the leading character is marked by promiscuity and instability; the physical, social, and intellectual environment is meaningful to him only to the extent that he can put it to his own arbitrary uses; he declares himself unmoved by the claims of general truths and objective values; he dissents at once from the authority and from the benevolence of the group and of society; and he identifies the most radical individualism with unabashed self-manifestation at the expense of anyone or anything.

Nevertheless, despite the many important respects in which the essay genuinely anticipated the philosophy of "Der Einzige", the comment of Ruest remains the most apt: "This work.....represents indeed the blossoming of his style - but not of his thoughts."¹²² In the two years before 1844, Stirner's thoughts, although moving in a direction already established, were to undergo a profound evolution. Certain of his concepts, already plainly identifiable in the educational essay, he considerably deepened and enriched, developing them to their logical limits. Thus, he lavishly elaborated his conception of the essential independence of the personalist, until it was transformed into his vision of the absolute uniqueness of the egoist. Others, such as his rejection of conventional morality and his advocacy of deliberate self-seeking, were only to crystallise and become explicit in "Der Einzige", although they are not only consistent with but even clearly entailed by his central ideas in the essay. Still others, such as his conception of "Spirit", he fundamentally revised in order to accommodate them in his reconstructed system. And throughout the whole of his later work, he was much more consciously concerned to challenge the ideals of contemporary intellectual and political contestants, notably the liberal humanists, socialists, and critical philosophers belonging to "die Freien", whom he specifies and engages more directly than his somewhat obscure adversaries in the educational essay.

With his judgment that, in the essay on education, Stirner's "appeal for the autonomy of the individual rings out almost more warily and invitingly, than later, when his words seem to be in the all-embracing grip of a rigid logic",¹²³ Mackay has perhaps discovered the fundamental difference between it and "Der Einzige". The exuberance and vehemence with which Stirner proclaimed his early insights more than equal the acknowledged opulence of his mature pronouncements; but his later views are the more intelligible in detail, not only because they are abundantly illustrated and their relevance to practical situations thoroughly investigated, but chiefly because they are presented as a complete and coherent moral system whose constituent doctrines derive heightened significance from their intimate logical interdependence.

In reconstructing and unifying his world-outlook, he was brought to eliminate such conceptions as "will-knowledge", which figured prominently in the essay, and to reformulate others in more illuminating or consistent ways: thus his doctrine of the self's relationship to the world, originally conceived in terms of the subject's cognitive abstraction from the data of experience, was entirely restated in the language of "appropriation", and the notion of "freedom" was replaced by his doctrine of "ownership". He found himself under the necessity of giving an account of certain ethical concepts, such as "vocation", which presented problems not even apprehended in the essay, and his attempted solutions of these problems, notably in the case of his

account of the egoist's intercourse with others, sometimes fall far short of complete success. To one problem, however, "Der Einzige" conspicuously omits to give direct and comprehensive treatment. This is the central problem of the essay of 1842, the problem of education, which, as by 1844 Stirner had come to realise, is bound to be a concern of little moment for an egoist who is wholly uninterested in the regeneration either of himself or others.

Chapter 10Stirner's Educational Philosophy:An Evaluation.

In what ways, if any, can Stirner's essay on "The False Principle of our Education" be regarded as historically noteworthy? The immediate interest that it excited among his contemporaries is not known, but its celebrity must almost certainly have been confined to the more turbulent intellectuals of the Hegelian left. If it has continued to be of interest, this is chiefly because, within the framework of his educational theme, Stirner was incidentally conducting a preliminary exploration of certain metaphysical and moral issues which were to become his fundamental concern in "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum". Yet, at least in its intention, the essay was not primarily an exercise in metaphysics or an attempt to establish a moral thesis. Stirner's avowed purpose was to conduct a mordant impeachment of prevailing conceptions of education and, in discrediting them, to point the way to a new conception of education, redefined in the interests of the individual. It is, therefore, as a contribution to the philosophy of education that his essay should initially be judged and its historical significance appraised.

What place, then, can Stirner be said to occupy in the history of educational philosophy? Do his utterances shed light on problems which it has been the traditional business of philosophers of education

to apprehend and elucidate? And what influence did his educational essay exert on the subsequent development of the philosophy of education? To the last question it must be answered that, as far as can be ascertained, his essay on education has not exerted the slightest direct influence on any subsequent thinker or writer on education. Entombed in the archives of a vanished journal until 1898, it has since been known only to the more pertinacious of the readers of Stirner from Mackay's edition of Stirner's minor writings and from one or two other obscure editions.¹ If Stirner's ideas have been known to some recent writers on education, they have been the ideas of "Der Einzige", by which work alone he has exerted such historic influence as may be attributed to him.² If his place as an educational thinker is to depend on the specific fertility of the only writing in which he publicly addressed himself to an educational theme, his importance must be agreed to be wholly negligible.

The historic sterility of his educational essay can only partly be ascribed to the extravagance of its views and the licence with which Stirner expressed them. More seriously, the essay could be criticised as failing to set out a "philosophy of education" at all, if a philosophy of education must be both coherent and comprehensive. Stirner's interest is feverishly engaged by a few distinctive themes: these represent only a fraction of the traditional concerns of educational philosophers, although they are perhaps among the most fundamental of these concerns. On many topics that have seemed of central importance

to educational philosophers he has nothing to say. On others, his observations are mystifyingly oblique or jejune to the point of absurdity.

Thus, Stirner has nothing to say about the organisation of education or about the social and administrative framework within which it is to be provided; this is connected with his total silence concerning the practical steps by which "personalist education" is to be brought about. He says nothing about the special features of the teaching situation, which distinguish it from the other situations in which human beings find themselves, or about the special characteristics of the teacher and the pupil in so far as they are "teacher" and "pupil" in a relationship which can be distinguished from the other relationships between human beings. And he says nothing about the properties of the physical environment - school, classroom, equipment - within and against which personalist education will be conducted.

Stirner might retort that personalist education cannot be "organised" or systematically "brought about", since it essentially and only concerns the relations between individuals and can be achieved only by the example and persuasion of individuals; that the special features of the educational process cannot be distinguished, since true education is indistinguishable from life if it is fully lived; and that, for the same reason, the "educational" environment cannot be distinguished from the normal environment of efficacious human activity. Such an answer, however, would be quite insufficient. In so far as the relationships between human beings are deliberately "educational", they must be

arranged within some social framework, however informal, which will be to that extent planned or at least consciously assumed; while the very fact that Stirner has chosen to write an essay about education is an implicit token that in at least some respects, from at least some standpoint, as one mode of human activity among others the activity of education can be distinctly considered and interpreted.

Stirner's frugal utterances on practical educational issues tend to be impenetrably opaque or almost wholly negative. What will the personalist teacher seek to impart to his pupils, and what is it important that they should learn? What are the realms of experience that are specially meaningful for the personalist educator? In more pedestrian terms, around what subjects of study or practical activities would a personalist curriculum be built? Apart from castigating the deformities of the exclusively literary, classical, and biblical education of the humanists, and declaring that true education must be truly "comprehensive",³ Stirner offers scant guidance to the educator. We might surmise that highly formal studies, such as philosophy and mathematics, would occupy a central place in his curriculum, since such disciplines promote the ability to "abstract" from, and so to subdue, the concrete data of experience;⁴ and that the elements in his multifarious and fluid curriculum would be raffied to the extent that they diversely realized phases of the child's life that would be relevant to his maturer interests.⁵ We could, however, at most surmise even this, inconclusive as it is. Stirner's essay at most affords a basis for speculation on what a personalist curriculum might comprise,

but it is disconcertingly far from proposing material innovations that might enable an educator to design such a curriculum.

The same is true of Stirner's allusions to issues of teaching method. From what he says about the crucial significance of "abstraction", of systematic representation and interpretation, we can conjecture that the personalist teacher will exert himself to identify universals, to articulate distinctions, and to cultivate in his pupils the formal powers of conceptualisation and generalisation; and from what he says about teacher-pupil relationships,⁶ we can assume that discipline in the personalist classroom will be of the freest kind, depending, not on any form of physical or institutional sanctions, but purely on the reconciliation of the personalities of the teacher and his pupils. But if nothing more informative than this can be extracted from the educational essay in the way of positive recommendations concerning teaching methods and conditions, then it must be admitted that the essay's practical value to the working teacher is meagre in the extreme. The writings of a Herbart, a Froebel, or a Dewey, have been rich in suggestive ideas profoundly affecting educational practice, and it is possible to conduct a school, or to teach a class, according to methods recognisably derived from the educational principles of one of these thinkers. By what indications, however, could one identify a school that was being conducted on "personalist" principles or a teacher who was trying to implement his personalist ideals in his classroom practice? Would the pupils of a personalist school themselves select their subjects

of study and pursue these privately and individually, with the minimum of guidance and supervision? Would the personalist teacher teach his class Socratically, giving free play to the self-expression of his pupils in a constant dialogue between himself and them and among the pupils themselves? Or, perhaps, would the personalist teacher refuse to work within the limitations of class or school, but insist on devoting himself to the education of a single pupil, whose exclusive tutor he would be throughout childhood and adolescence? Until these and a hundred such questions are definitely and circumstantially answered, it must be impossible to form any clear picture of what personalist education would distinctively mean in practice.

To the charge that, in neglecting to give an adequate account of the instruments and methods by means of which personalist education would be put into practice, he has failed to make personalism intelligible as a philosophy of education, Stirner might rejoin that he has rather sought to make personalism intelligible by giving an account of certain issues in educational philosophy which, although of restricted pertinence, are nevertheless quite fundamental. He might claim that he has elucidated the essential nature of the individual human person; that he has diagnosed the character of the world within which the individual person has to identify himself and against which he has to declare himself; and that he has disclosed the ways in which human beings can realise and project their distinctive personalities by learning to dominate their situation in the world and convert it to their own purposes. He might further

claim that, in exhibiting the structure of personal existence, he has revealed the highest purposes that education can set itself, and that he has in this measure shown how the efficacy of any educational practice is to be evaluated.

Now, even if one were prepared to admit that, in the educational essay, Stirner had notably illuminated the character and conditions of personal existence (although, indeed, his utterances are often too exiguous to shed more than the feeblest light), one might still have the gravest reservations about the significance of the essay considered as a contribution to educational philosophy. To investigate the ambiguity of the human predicament is unquestionably a very important undertaking, and perhaps it necessarily precedes any serious and competent analysis of the nature of education. But it does not itself constitute such an analysis, and to pretend that it does is to confuse moral ontology with the philosophy of education. From a philosopher of education we have a right to expect an exposition, not only of the forms of human experience in general and the kinds of relationship which exist among individuals and between individuals and their environment in general, but also of those special forms of experience and those characteristic relationships which we call educational, and which are distinctively educational precisely because they modify, enrich, and redeem the given conditions of our natural life. (To assert that "true education is life" is beside the point, since - if it is to be understood literally - such an assertion entails that no account of education as a distinctive mode of human

activity is necessary or possible.) Stirner certainly attempts to demonstrate - though fragmentarily and abstractly - the conditions of human knowledge and the terms on which individual self-realisation can be achieved, but of the special forms of activity and of consciousness that comprise the educational situation he offers only the most desultory and querulous account. His essay, therefore, may properly be regarded as an experiment in moral and metaphysical cartography. What it conspicuously fails to do is to delineate a coherent and comprehensive philosophy of education.

* * *

Stirner's essay on education, then, made no discoverable contribution to the development of educational theory and can scarcely be held to represent more than - at the very most - a prolegomenon to a philosophy of education. On the few issues of explicitly educational relevance that he declares himself, one could, if one chose, designate the respects in which Stirner's ideas correspond to those of earlier, or foreshadow those of later educational thinkers. Thus, the conviction of, for example, a Rousseau or a Froebel, that education is essentially concerned to allow the original nature of the child to achieve spontaneously its full integrity by a process of natural growth, seems to be one of Stirner's root assumptions also. Stirner's declaration that his "final aim is moral education"⁷ strikingly echoes the statement of his senior contemporary, Herbart, that "the whole task of education may be summed up in the concept of morality";⁸ while in

its extreme individualism, its concern to reduce the decisive intervention of the teacher to a minimum, Stirner's version of "moral education" resembles in germ the naturalistic theories of moral training of thinkers like Rousseau and Spencer. His description of the "free person's" distinctive forms of knowledge is startlingly similar to Newman's description of the characteristics of the "mature mind".⁹ And in his doctrine that the relationship of a human being to his environment is superlatively the practical relationship of an agent to the subject-matter which he can transform by his activity into an instrument of his specific purposes, he could be regarded as anticipating the pragmatism of educationists such as Dewey. To press such historical comparisons, however, would be pointless, since they are quite fortuitous. The inescapable fact is that, within the major tradition of Western educational thought, the historic efficacy of Stirner's essay has been completely insignificant and, despite the glamour and panache with which he decks them, the ideas expressed in it have remained wholly impotent.

To ransack the educational essay for fancied affinities with some of the dominant ideas in the Western educational tradition would indeed be an empty academic exercise. It might be less blatantly academic, however, to consider the essay in its more immediate context, as a contribution to the post-Hegelian educational controversy (even though it probably had a negligible influence on the direction of that controversy), since to do so might lend meaning and authenticity to the forms in which Stirner chose to cast his ideas. By the 1830s

Hegelianism had become virtually the official philosophy of the Prussian state, and the conception of education which Hegel had expounded within the terms of his system had achieved corresponding prestige.¹⁰ In his educational writings, Hegel had exhibited the incongruence of the private life of the individual and the public world of social life, that "system of universals" in which the individual has value only in so far as he attempts himself freely to the system. The office of education is, by mediating between individual insularity and the open fellowship of the community, to bring men to participate more abundantly in the common life, and in doing this it must induce individuals to extricate themselves systematically from their refractory individuality. In learning to appropriate what is other than himself, the pupil must learn to become for this purpose estranged from himself, since to be educated is to be able to comprehend "the other" in its otherness. Thence the humanistic studies derive their unique educative power, for the pupil who pursues the three "alien" studies of classical civilisation, ancient languages, and grammatical construction, will thereby be enabled to accomplish in his own nature the self-alienation without which no subjugation or encompassment of the world is possible.

It was against this conception of education that, in the 1840s, many of the Young Hegelians were waging their several offensives. Thus Ruge, in a number of articles,¹¹ bitterly attacked the abstract, academic forms in which idealistic education in practice resulted.

Petty-bourgeois culture, whether classical or romantic, is in practice satiated and frivolous because it fails to concern itself with the great historical objectives, concern for which could alone prevent its literature and philosophy from becoming blasé and its education from deteriorating into an empty "over-education" for its own sake. A revolution in consciousness is needed if art, religion, and knowledge are truly to be set to work in the world and if the caste divisions of learned and ignorant, educated and uneducated, are to be finally abolished. To destroy "blasé-education", Ruge advocated the total conversion of art and knowledge into popular forms of consciousness, wholly harnessed to the concrete issues of political action, and the immediate transformation of religious and military organisations into a comprehensive system of socially vital education.

Ruge was among the more radical of the Young Hegelians who applied their searching criticism to the prevailing assumptions of educational theory, but an even more notable critic was Bruno Bauer himself, Stirner's close friend and intellectual associate, who rejected both the aristocratic orthodoxy of educational idealism and the optimistic dogmas of its socialist opponents.¹² To his sarcastic assertion that the "socialisation" of education sought by Ruge as an abrupt and wholesale measure had already been taking place as a result of the piecemeal and casual operations of that very petty-bourgeois class who were the object of Ruge's contempt, Bauer added that education which had been "brought to life" in this sense transpired to be no longer "education" in any sense. It was undoubtedly true that the rarefied atmosphere

of the universities tended to asphyxiate all historical initiative; on the other hand the radicals, who claimed to possess this initiative, tended to be comically ignorant of the intellectual history which might have given their social projects the orientation they so plainly lacked. Moreover, Bauer alleged, the radicals' demands for a truly universal education were doomed to frustration, for the state, while paying lip-service to the principles of individual selflessness and social unity, would never allow these principles to be imported seriously into the actual conduct of political life.

Stirner's essay, therefore, was a polemical contribution, made at a fairly early stage of the controversy, to a prolonged debate which ranged widely over such issues as the nature of the learning relationship, the content of authentic study, and the social functions of education. When he declared that we learn by "abstracting" continuously from the materials of our environment, that we realise ourselves by converting passive knowledge into self-conscious will, and that true education seeks to facilitate the emergence of creative persons who are themselves sovereign because they refuse to acknowledge social authority of any kind, he was not speaking in a void. He intended his essay to be understood against the background of the ideological struggle in which he was one of the protagonists and to influence the course of that struggle in favour of the most emancipated individualism. He was attempting to show that the terms of the debate, as it was being conducted, served only to deepen and obscure the dilemma from which he was concerned to reclaim the self-determining individual. The extent to which the essay in fact succeeded in redirecting contemporary

educational controversy is highly problematic, but there is no doubt - whatever may have been its actual influence - that it represented one of the most spectacular attempts to recast the issues essentially at stake.

Such historic relevance as Stirner's essay on education possesses in its own right is, then, limited to the context of a particular intellectual conflict waged at a particular stage in the development of German social thought after the disintegration of Hegelianism. The historic influence exercised indirectly by the essay, as a foetus secreting many of the genetic characteristics eventually to find mature embodiment in "Der Einzige", is perhaps greater, but certainly even more difficult to assess. In the two years following its publication Stirner advanced irresistibly along the path of nihilistic egoism, stopping only when he had reached its final extremity. Already in the educational essay, where he sees the individual, no longer as some kind of ethical fragment, but as an existential totality, he had been exploring the approaches to egoism and had located the direction in which he was thenceforward to move. In his next major writing, on "Art and Religion",¹³ he continued to work with the traditional concepts of the Young Hegelians - enriched, however, by the recent criticisms of Feuerbach, which he employed to dismantle the last remaining claims of religion to be a definitive re-appropriation of self-consciousness by itself. By the ~~same~~ time he came to write the article entitled "Some Provisional Views concerning the State Founded on Love",¹⁴ he had gone far

towards situating his ultimate philosophical moorage: he still balks before the term "egoism", but the "autonomy" of which he prefers to give an account, as that state of myself in which (instead of being passively absorbed by the objects I move towards in desire) I actively draw into my own being the objects which my self-determining interest alone creates, is virtually a prototype of the condition of the egoist as he was to be depicted in "Der Einzige". With the last of his substantial early writings, a review of Eugene Sue's "Mysteries of Paris",¹⁵ he sought to show how the categories of conventional morality, or indeed fixed principles of any kind, inevitably sap and mutilate that indefeasible autonomy of the individual which is the living source of his identity, and with this essay he brought himself to the very brink of the total egoism into which his immediate course lay to plunge.

Thus, between April, 1842 and November, 1844, Stirner traversed a direct and unerring route from the vigorous individualism of his essay on education to the systematic egoism of "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum". The importance of the educational essay was that it signified his decisive embarkation on this route and pointed infallibly to his destination. In so far, then, as "Der Einzige" exercised any influence on the subsequent evolution of moral and social thinking in general, and in so far as its influence might have extended to educational theory in particular, the essay might be held to have contributed in a remote and devious way to the development of educational thought.

The magnitude of Stirner's general influence is itself dubious. He is widely regarded as one of the patriarchs of modern anarchism. If this is true, his paternity remained unacknowledged for more than forty years after the publication of "Der Einzige", since the book was almost entirely neglected until the last decade of the Century.¹⁶ In this Century, however, anarchists have become increasingly interested in Stirner's ideas, and in view of their characteristic concern with educational questions, it might be conjectured that his influence would be discernible in anarchist writings on education. Now, the works of such thinkers as Russell, Neill, and Read are full of pleas for an education freed from fear and threats of coercion, an education which will lubricate and preserve the irreplaceable individuality of each child and in which the child's regulation of his own conduct will be a vital factor in the development of his character. Do these and similar conceptions perhaps bear witness after all to the belated irruption of Stirner's libertarian individualism into educational thinking?

The answer is fairly definite. Among the leading exponents of a free education, only Read refers explicitly to the philosophy of Stirner, which he condemns as "fanatical" and "extreme";¹⁷ Neill has denied having any knowledge of Stirner's ideas whatsoever.¹⁸ In fact, there is absolutely no evidence to show that his work has formatively affected the thinking of any "progressive" educationist in any respect. No doubt, simply by virtue of having been absorbed into the intellectual momentum of the age, "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum" has affected the

growth of libertarian educational theory in some way, although plainly a highly digressive and oblique way. Compared, however, with other pervasive influences which have imprinted themselves on recent education, compared, say, with the intellectual stimulus of psycho-analytic theory or of modern anthropology, or with the prolific example of experimentalists like Montessori, even the diffused influence of Stirner's book must inescapably be judged to have been microscopic.

As well as an ancestral figure of anarchism, Stirner has also recently been claimed as one of the founders of the existentialist tradition in philosophy.¹⁹ Any estimate of the extent to which the general world-outlook of "Der Einzige" might have permeated the educational thinking of existentialists, however, must be equally inconclusive. Although Kierkegaard and Stirner were almost exact contemporaries, neither of them was known to the other. Among the other precursors of modern existentialism, it is fairly certain that Nietzsche was at least acquainted with the central ideas of "Der Einzige", but the fact remains that nowhere in his writings does he even mention the name of Stirner and it is quite impossible to demonstrate that he was under any debt to him, far less to establish the character of such a debt. Among contemporary existential writers, the only one to acknowledge the relevance of Stirner's form of ontological solipsism has been Martin Buber, who has done so, however, in an essay chiefly devoted to emphasising the differences between Stirner's "unique one" and "the single one" of Kierkegaard.²⁰

The affinities between the governing conceptions of "Der Einzige" and the characteristic features of later existential and "personalist" educational thought are certainly remarkable: Nietzsche's ideal of education as "Führung", as the means of exalting the all-sufficient genius above the servile "herd"; the conviction of writers like Buber,²¹ that education must spring from "the living tact of the natural and spiritual man", whose commitment is a "personal" and "solitary" one; the assertion, by personalist educators such as Jeffreys,²² that it is through education that a human being comes to recognise and attest his nature as an autonomous person; these and similar conceptions memorably echo Stirner's effusive individualism, his portrayal of the spontaneity and indivisibility of "the unique one" as agent, and the exhilaration with which he celebrates the free self-assertion and self-appropriation of the egoist. These resemblances are very notable. Nevertheless, the fundamental repugnance between Stirner's brutal nihilism and the compassionate responsibility of existentialist educationists is considerably more notable, and it would be perverse to overlook their final incompatibility. And at all events, it would seem that their partial convergence, which is incontestable, needs to be explained in terms of individual psychology or of possible parallels in cultural situation, rather than by reference to Stirner's intellectual influence, for the measure and direction of his influence must remain wholly inscrutable.

Thus, while the actual historic efficacy of the essay on education can only ever be a matter for precarious conjecture, even the most

credulous estimate could hardly ascribe to it more than the most oblique and amorphous significance for the subsequent development of educational thought. In its own right, the essay does not seem to have attracted the attention of a single reputable philosopher of education. Even indirectly, through the vastly more disseminated agency of "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum", which may be presumed to secrete at least some of the reconstructed assumptions of the educational essay, it cannot dependably be credited with having inspired any assignable innovations in educational theory or practice. As a contribution to one of the domestic controversies of the Young Hegelians it may have been intrinsically cogent, but there is no evidence to show that its radical implications were understood or heeded by either his intellectual associates or his declared adversaries. In "Der Einzige", Stirner was to depict his condition as that of a man whose distinctive mode of self-expression consists in addressing only himself, that of a man who, in principle, soliloquises for the sake of soliloquising; it would seem that this, in effect, was what he had already been doing in his essay on "The False Principle of our Education", for if in intention the essay was addressed to the critical consciousness of his generation, in practice it seems to have been virtually ignored no less by his contemporaries than by future generations of educationists and philosophers.

* * *

The ultimate objective value of Stirner's essay would appear to be extremely questionable. Historically, it has been to all intents and purposes completely sterile, inasmuch as not the slightest revision of the aims or assumptions of education, not the slightest modification of educational practice, can be reliably attributed to its influence, direct or indirect. Indeed - whatever its intrinsic merits as a contribution to moral psychology or to the metaphysics of personalism - denying as it does the possibility of characterising the educational process as a separate and distinctive mode of human activity, it seems scarcely to qualify as a contribution to the philosophy of education at all. Ineffectual as a tract, abortive as educational philosophy, the essay would appear to have answered none of the purposes for which it was written.

This need not furnish cause for dismay or even surprise. If the essay had to be judged only on its merits as a tract or as a thesis in educational theory, it would plainly have to be adjudged a total failure. For the student of Stirner, however, this is not the only, nor by any means the most important, test of the essay's interest or success. In fact, the reasons for its failure as educational philosophy may be the very reasons which invest it with the most acute significance for someone concerned with the development of Stirner's considered and inclusive philosophical position. The essay must primarily be evaluated in the context of his comprehensive philosophical system and as a preview, an experimental fragment, of his system, which it tentatively but creatively anticipates. If

Stirner the moralist is ultimately important because he stands as one of the most candid and articulate philosophical exponents of nihilistic egoism, it is for precisely the same reason that Stirner the educationist is doomed to frustration and eventual impotence. The essay on education is notable because it intimates the emergence of a systematic, self-conscious nihilist, but precisely because its author is constitutionally and instinctively a nihilist it collapses as an essay on education.

Stirner's nihilism did not, of course, find consummate expression until he came to write "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum". In "Der Einzige", the conditions of nihilism, already partially and hesitantly indicated in the educational essay and progressively defined in his subsequent writings, were stated fully and unequivocally. While Stirner set out to depict the world of the nihilist in prolific and convincing detail, it is perceptible that his entire world-outlook revolves on a small number of basic assumptions which, taken together, form the indispensable foundation for his system. The nihilist inhabits an indifferent world, a metaphysical desert in which all personal meaning or moral character is extinct. In the very act of testifying to his own essential nullity, he yet constitutes himself as the unique, comprehensive, and self-determining moral creator and creature, whose contingent, factitious universe is co-extensive with the interests which he gratuitously embraces or relinquishes and with his power effectively to realize and administer these interests. Alone in a derelict and meaningless universe and faced with the choice

of creating his own moral universe, the universe which he chooses to create, or to re-create, transpires to be none other than the original absurd, intractable universe, unchanged except that he now establishes himself in it as its ethically unique incubent. The human furniture of his universe, like the other forms of raw material with which it is stocked, has worth only in so far as it can be adapted to serve his arbitrary and fluctuating purposes: the nihilist is necessarily an egoist.

It has obviously been the extremities to which he carries his individualism and the inflexibility with which he depicts man's estrangement from the world that have led some critics to align Stirner with the anarchists on one hand, or with the existentialists on the other. Just as obviously, however, nothing could be further from the humanitarian spirit of anarchism or from the dreadful responsibility with which the existentialist chooses commitment than are the rapacious egoism of the nihilist and his complacent refusal to abrogate his self-possession in favour of any cause, and it is not to be wondered that Stirner's ideas have in practice exercised so little influence on the social thinking of anarchists and existentialists. For the nihilist - Stirner's "unique one", to whom other human beings are merely "objects" or at most potential "instruments" of his self-interest - the affairs of mankind, their personal and social relations and the problems to which these give rise, are in the last analysis utterly insignificant.²³ The constitution of their society, the principles regulating their public and private intercourse, their conception of

knowledge and canons of truth: all these are matters in which the nihilist can have only a detached, academic interest, or no interest at all.

The same is essentially true of education. Concerning the organisational framework of education, the practical measures by which personalist education is to be brought about or the kind of environment in which it can most felicitously be practised, concerning the composition of the curriculum or methods of classroom teaching, in fact concerning any of the explicitly educational topics which have typically preoccupied philosophers of education Stirner has nothing to say, because on these topics there is essentially nothing that he is interested in saying. The total egoist, his interests essentially begin and end with himself.²⁴ Education, his own education, is for him a thing of the past, with which he is finished and done, and his interest in it is therefore over.²⁵ The mature egoist accepts himself just as he is, since to strive to improve himself would be to surrender his self-possession, to become "possessed" by the ideal of the improved self that he was striving to create: he "starts from himself", he does not "seek himself".²⁶ In "Der Einzige", Stirner reserves some of his most virulent abuse for the conception of "vocation", the belief that a man is "called" to realise in himself a "higher essence" of one kind or another,²⁷ and his references to education²⁸ are invariably either truculent or derisive because he perceives that the very possibility of education depends on the belief in vocation. "But one owes it neither to oneself to make anything out of oneself, nor to others to make anything out of them".²⁹

Rejecting the very conception of education, the nihilistic egoist will deny every one of the assumptions which educationists characteristically and perhaps necessarily make, and he will disown each and all of the objects which philosophers have claimed it is the proper business of education to accomplish. Whatever it may be that education presupposes - the intrinsic worth of human association, the moral parity of all men, the sanctity of truth - these assumptions the nihilist can and will dispute. Whatever the purposes that education strives to achieve - whether individual self-realisation or social growth, human happiness or the advance of knowledge - to these purposes the nihilist remains ultimately indifferent. Of course, the constitution of society and the quality of its citizens may concern the nihilist indirectly, to the extent that public affairs may affect the course of his own life and the management of his private interests; and he may therefore desire to see education contributing in the most effective possible ways to form the kind of society in which his personal enterprises will securely flourish. He might even set himself to construct a "philosophy of education" which took as its basic assumption the ethical paramountcy of its author, to realise whose interests represented the sole and comprehensive purpose of education. To describe such a system of ideas as a "philosophy of education" might or might not be outrageously paradoxical: what is quite certain is that it would in no wise resemble the kind of project that Stirner conceived himself to be undertaking in his essay of 1842.

In his essay, Stirner certainly believed himself to be exploring the character and conditions of an education that would be truly universal as well as personally dynamic. In transforming education, he would be revolutionising society. If Stirner's explorations achieved no concrete result, if his plans for social revolution were stillborn, and if his conception of education defied translation into practice, this was because the philosophical equipment with which he was working was completely unfitted for these particular tasks. He had made a false start. He was trying to account for the significance of education, using concepts which were inherently the concepts of the nihilist, and on assumptions which were instinctively the assumptions of nihilism. He did not make these assumptions explicit, or give precise form to these concepts, until he wrote "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum", and in writing the educational essay he was as yet unconscious of the depth to which, temperamentally and intellectually, his roots were already planted in nihilism. Nevertheless, his nihilism is there for all to see. It is abundantly evident in the success with which the essay briefly but vividly illuminates certain engrossing moral and metaphysical themes. It is, however, even more conspicuous in the essay's utter failure as an attempt to clarify the nature and purpose of education.

There are, then, powerful reasons for Stirner's inability, in the last analysis, to form a coherent and comprehensive philosophy of education. But if, as educational philosophy, his essay must be adjudged completely bankrupt, how can it possibly continue to make

any legitimate claim on our attention? As one of the most critical points in his philosophical development, marking his irreversible decision to embrace uncompromising individualism as his personal solution, and secreting as it does numerous elements which were to be diversely precipitated in his final egoistic system, the essay is of course rich in interest for the archaeologist of Stirner's ideas. But in its own right, as a document professing to be of intrinsic importance, what claim does it have on our attention and how are we to understand it?

Perhaps, in fact, the essay is best understood as literally a document, as a piece of writing which Stirner began and finished in 1842, which was subsequently printed, and which has since been edited and republished several times. It happened to be a piece of writing, and it happened to treat of education. Essentially, however, its significance is that it furnishes documentary evidence of the person who was its author, of his state of mind, his preferences and obsessions, his personal attitudes, and his modes of response to the society and the world in which he found himself. In addition, it represents in itself a particular example of one such mode of response,³⁰ using philosophical concepts as its vehicle and the language of educational theory as its medium. In so far as it is a purely personal response, Stirner might hold, the essay cannot be judged according to the formal criteria of logical rigour or demonstrative cogency, since to apply such criteria would be essentially inappropriate - although in so far as it aspired to convince others of its relevance and

validity as a mode of response, it would, among other tests, require to meet the tests of coherence and comprehensiveness.

Undoubtedly, Stirner finally held the belief that, in philosophizing, he was engaging in a purely personal form of self-expression which required no other justification than that it ventilated his own fortuitous impulses and presumptions, and he pointedly denied that influencing or instructing others formed any part of his philosophical activity.³¹ We may, indeed, be unwilling to concede that self-testimony is equivalent to philosophy, or to grant that writing an essay which is only justified as an arbitrary act of unregulated self-expression can justifiably be described as engaging in philosophical activity, even if the essay in question is couched in philosophical language and is occupied with issues which have been the traditional concern of philosophers. Whether we accept the essay's claim to be a philosophical work depends on whether we admit the claim of Stirner's form of self-revelation to be philosophy. Whether we accept the essay's claim to our lasting attention will ultimately depend on whether we are interested in the man who is revealing himself in it.

NOTESNotes to Chapter 1.

1. The little that is known about Stirner's life and his largely anonymous minor writings is mainly to be learned from John Henry Mackay's definitive biography, "Max Stirner: sein Leben und sein Werk" (3rd edition, 1914). Additional sources of information include "Max Stirner: Leben - Weltanschauung - Vermächtnis", by Anselm Ruest (1906), and "Aux Sources de l'existentialisme: Max Stirner", by Henri Arvon (1954).

Notes to Chapter 2.

1. "Das Unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung, oder der Humanismus und Realismus", in "Max Stirner's kleinere Schriften und seine Entgegnungen auf die Kritik seines Werkes: 'Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum'. Aus den Jahren 1842-1847" (ed. by J.H. Mackay, 1st ed., 1898), p.10.

2. "Das Unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung", p.9.

3. U.P.,p.10. 4. U.P.,p.11. 5. U.P.,p.12. 6. U.P.,pp.12-13.

7. U.P.,p.13. 8. U.P.,p.13. 9. U.P.,p.14. 10. U.P.,p.14.

11. U.P.,p.15. 12. U.P.,p.14. 13. U.P.,pp.14-15. 14. U.P.,p.16.

15. U.P.,p.18. 16. U.P.,p.19. 17. U.P.,p.19. 18. U.P.,p.20.

19. U.P.,p.20. 20. U.P.,p.21. 21. U.P.,p.21. 22. U.P.,p.22.

23. U.P.,p.23. 24. U.P.,pp.23-24. 25. U.P.,p.24. 26. U.P.,pp.24-25.

27. U.P.,p.25. 28. U.P.,p.26. 29. U.P.,pp.26-27. 30. U.P.,pp.27-28.

31. U.P.,p.29. 32. U.P.,p.30.

Notes to Chapter 3.

1. For authoritative accounts of the historical and ideological background, the content, and the methods of humanistic education,

see Friedrich Paulsen's "German Education Past and Present" (Eng. trans. 1908), esp. Book III, Chap. 3, and Book IV, Chaps. 1 and 2, and his "Geschichte des Gelehrten Unterrichts" (3rd ed., 1921), esp. Books IV and V and Book VI, Chaps. 1 and 2; see also "Pädagogischer Humanismus" (1955), by Ernst Hoffmann. Mackay's biography of Stirner, esp. Chaps. 1 and 2, throws much light on the nature of the classical education that Stirner knew.

2. Sövern was one of the State-councillors assisting von Humboldt when the latter became head of the Prussian educational administration in 1809. The "Lehrplan" which he drew up for the Gynnasien was never published, but it at least clearly illustrates the kind of lead that the authorities were attempting to give and the kind of curriculum that would be officially favoured in the post-Napoleonic era.

3. I.e. the average number of hours per week granted to "realistic" studies in any one year would be 11 hours.

4. See Matthew Arnold: "Higher Schools and Universities in Germany" (1868), esp. Chap. 4.

5. "Das Unwahre Prinzip", p.12. 6. U.P.,p.12.

7. Leslie Stephen: "The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, Bart." (1895), pp.80-81. Quoted on the first page of "Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical", by Herbert Spencer.

8. Herbert Spencer: "Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical" (1919 ed.). p.20.

9. See Arnold, loc cit.

10. U.P.,p.16. 11. U.P.,p.9.

Notes to Chapter 4.

1. The history, ideas, and practice of educational realism are delineated by Paulsen in the works mentioned in Chapter 3, note 1.
2. "Das Unwahre Prinzip", p.14. 3. U.P., p.13.
4. In the idea of nature as an obstacle imperatively to be overcome, the influence of Fichte is obvious.
5. He might have identified the new King as a third protagonist in his own right. Although his sympathies were basically classical, Frederick William IV, at once critical of the latent neo-paganism of the humanists and hostile to the dangerous modernism of the realists, was bent on reviving the conservative power of dogmatic religion. Stirner, however, was writing before the distinctive ideas of the royal personality had been clearly asserted, and it would be unreasonable to expect him to have differentiated between the decorum of the monarch and the worldly sophistication of the educated classes.

Notes to Chapter 5.

1. "Das Unwahre Prinzip, p.10.
2. In what measure Stirner is aware of the discrepancy between the original usage of Hegelian terms and his own profane appropriation of them it is impossible to say. Certainly, in "Der Einzige", he was fully conscious of the deficiencies of current philosophical language. "I have had to struggle with a language that has been ruined by philosophers, abused by believers in the state, in religion, and in other faiths, and that has been made susceptible of boundless conceptual confusion.....The poor language has no word for me"

("Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum", Reclam 1892, p.215).

3. U.P.,p.21.

4. The most emphatic statement of the distinction between "Will" and "Spirit" occurs on page 20 of the educational essay. "Will is not the originally true thing, we cannot circumvent Will-Knowledge in order to arrive immediately at Will, but Knowledge fulfills itself as Will when it de-sensualizes itself, and, as Spirit 'building its own body', creates itself."

5. One might expect to find inconsistencies in an occasional essay, and this expectation would be fulfilled in the case of Stirner's usage of "Geist". Although the usage indicated above is the critical one for his philosophy, he also speaks loosely of the "Geist der Sache" and of "unsere Zeit" as having a "Geist". On page 12 he speaks of "creating the content of truth from our own reason" - a phrase, perhaps rhetorical, which is wholly at odds with the idea of Spirit as essentially unconscious and a-rational. (The reference on p.20 to him who sinks all his cares in the Lethe of pure feeling only apparently contradicts Stirner's conception of Spirit as anaesthesia, however, for the phrase plainly occurs in the context of a simile.) On pp.25-6, where he briefly furnishes one of the most illuminating expositions of his doctrine, Stirner falls into extreme terminological confusion: while he again characteristically refers to knowledge "vanishing" into the "invisible" core of the self and re-emerging as will, in this instance he seems to identify will with "transcendental and incomprehensible Spirit"; he goes on to allude to "self-consciousness

of Spirit" in a sense in which he can only mean self-conscious will, for in the very next line he refers to knowledge becoming unconscious when it is submerged in the "instinct of Spirit". Despite such inconsistencies, which may be ascribed alternatively to haste of composition (bearing in mind the circumstances of publication) or to the fact that the author is still only seeking to establish his philosophical moorings, the basic features of Stirner's position are definite enough.

6. The analogy between "Spirit" (or the source of personal identity) and God has been noticed by Anselm Ruest in his introduction to "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum" (1924), p.14. "What Stirner has constantly as the object before his eyes in 'the unique one' is in the last analysis nothing other than - God", says Ruest, who goes on to develop this observation with reference to "Der Einzige".

7. This is the phrase used by Stirner in "Der Einzige". Cf. D.E., p.6.

8. U.P., p.16. The reference to education does not limit the validity of this generalisation, but draws attention to a special application (i.e. to children) of this central truth about our environment. For Stirner, education is life, and that the world can be made to serve our purposes is a fact of life which can be profitably learned in childhood.

9. Cf. U.P., p.25, where Stirner declares that, if we are to become perfect, we must "start and shudder in the blissful passion of unceasing rejuvenation and rebirth."

10. Cf. U.P.,p.25, for reference to "the eternal characters, whose firmness consists in the ceaseless flow of their hourly self-sacrifice".
11. Cf. U.P.,p.25, where Stirner refers mordantly to those men "who are true to their convictions; their convictions....stiffen like corpses."
12. Cf. U.P.,p.23. "Not until man stakes his honour on feeling, knowing, and asserting himself, in self-reliance, self-consciousness, and freedom, will he strive to banish from himself the ignorance that makes the alien, unmastered object a limit and restraint on his self-knowledge."
13. U.P.,p.9. 14. U.P.,p.28.
15. Cf. U.P.,p.29. "Only in this education, which is universal because in it the lowest coincides with the highest, do we encounter the true equality of all, the equality of free persons: only freedom is equality."
16. U.P.,p.27.
17. Cf. U.P.,p.29. "I prefer to say that henceforth we need a personal education (not the inculcation of a disposition). If you want to call those who follow this principle some kind of '-ists', as far as I am concerned you can call them personalists."
18. Cf. U.P.,p.27. "For I too, every bit as much as the child, am a free person."
19. U.P.,p.28.
20. It may be wondered why a completely self-centred educator should, after all, be concerned about the emancipation of others and should be moved to minister to the self-development of his pupils. The answer

- that in the last resort the affairs of others are not of the slightest concern to the egoist, and that he therefore cannot sincerely interest himself in education except as an arena for his arbitrary self-manifestation - is fully discussed in Chapter 10 of the present thesis, where it is contended that, for these reasons, Stirner's attempt to construct a coherent philosophy of education inevitably breaks down.

Notes to Chapter 6.

1. Anselm Ruest; Introduction to "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum" (1924), p.20.
2. See Chapter 9 of the present thesis for a discussion of Stirner's attempt to depict, in "Der Einzige", the character of a society in which every member would have regard only to his own self-interest; this was to be the "association of egoists".
3. "Der Einzige" (Reclam, 1892), p.391.
4. D.M. Emmet, "The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking" (1945), p.197.
5. Rudolf Otto, "The Idea of the Holy" (Eng.trans.,Palicoan,1959) p.23.
6. "Das Unwahre Prinzip, p.19. 7. U.P.,p.25. 8. U.P.,p.25.
9. This is quite different from the procedure of the myth, the analogy, the simile, and the metaphor, which, within the terms they figuratively adopt, are generally internally consistent and meaningful. In a metaphor a philosopher might be said to die (and his death might metaphorically represent the negation of knowledge), whereas in Stirner's image it is knowledge which is said to "die". (Of course, Stirner frequently also employs metaphors and analogies, although his

use of them tends to be less striking than his use of the symbolic image.)

10. In "L'Individualisme Anarchiste: Max Stirner" (1904), Victor Basch attempts to classify Stirner as an "individualist anarchist". He then claims that the logical and metaphysical foundations of individualist anarchism are to be discovered in Leibniz's "principle of individuation" and in his "monadism", and that Leibniz's doctrine of the "pre-established harmony" is its ethical foundation. Quite apart from the complete lack of evidence that Stirner was in the least familiar with the philosophy of Leibniz, it is surely basically misleading to describe him as an "individualist anarchist" in the sense in which Basch appears to understand the phrase. Stirner's metaphysical foundations are the metaphysical foundations of nihilistic egoism, which is as far removed from individualist anarchism in ethics as solipsism is from pluralism in metaphysics.
11. Cf. "That's that: the uses of tautology", public lecture in the University of Manchester by Prof. D.M. Emmet, January 26, 1960.
12. I may, of course, respond to a situation by characterising it descriptively, e.g. "This speaker is failing to hold the attention of his audience." A response such as, "What a boring speaker!", however, is quite different, and cannot simply be reduced to a descriptive characterisation, for it contains exclamatory elements which are designed (a) to mitigate the effects of the situation upon the exclaimant and his hearers (b) to promote a definite attitude to the situation (c) thus to ensure that this situation, and similar

situations, shall not be deliberately permitted to recur. It is the latter kind of response to which Stirner's metaphysical utterances are analogous.

Notes to Chapter 7.

1. Stirner was, however, the pupil of Schleiermacher, an enthusiastic admirer of the Schlegels, and he might well have been familiar with their views on the morality of individualism.
2. Cf. Mackay, "Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk", Ch. 2, "Lern- und Lehrjahre".
3. Since the Direktor of his Gymnasium in Bayreuth, a Dr. Gabler, is known to have been an enthusiastic disciple of Hegel, Stirner might already have been introduced to Hegelian ideas in a more diffuse way.
4. In the intervening period, Stirner spent a short time at the University of Königsberg, where Herbart held the chair of philosophy. He did not, however, attend any lectures.
5. He heard Marheineke's lectures on dogmatics, church symbolism, and the relevance of recent philosophy to theology; he attended the lectures of Neander (the opponent of Strauss) on ecclesiastical history and Christian antiquity; and he heard both Michelet and Trendelenburg lecture on Aristotle. Trendelenburg, who was one of Stirner's examiners, found that his "speculative ability" was not matched by his knowledge of the history of philosophy, and that the influence of "recent philosophy" could not be discerned in his essay, "On School Rules".
6. It is unlikely that he had met Marx, although he might have known of his very first writing; at this time Marx, who did not become editor

of the Rheinische Zeitung until October, 1842, had not yet published anything of major note.

7. Cf. "Phenomenology of Mind" (trans. Baillie), p.87, viz. that "knowledge of the form which is indispensable to knowledge of the essence".

8. Cf. "Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems", in "Erste Druckschriften", esp. pp.17-18.

9. Cf. "Phenomenology of Mind", p.93, viz. mind "enduring its being in death".

10. Cf. "Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie", pp.430ff.

11. In the "Phenomenology of Mind", Hegel refers to "making what is objectively presented a possession of pure self-consciousness" (trans. Baillie, p.94). The thinking subject, "comprehending" the world as "his" world, is truly free when he has appropriated all externality and holds his existence as his own undisputed property in complete self-sufficiency and independence (cf. op.cit., pp.190-1). Stirner's doctrine of "appropriation" and "ownership" in "Der Einzige" is obviously in the direct Hegelian lineage, although these particular elements in its heredity play a negligible part in the conceptual metabolism of the educational essay.

12. Cf. op.cit., pp.173-4. 13. Op.cit., p.604. 14. Op.cit., p.103.

15. Cf. esp. "Der Einzige", pp.392ff. Cf. also Rolf Engert's preface to his edition of Stirner's examination essay "On School Rules" (1920) where he refers (pp.7-8) to Stirner's characteristic ability to reproduce orthodox doctrines which he regarded as in themselves worthless, with the

calculated purpose of deceiving his orthodox examiners. (For comment on Engert's theory, see Ch. 8 of the present thesis.)

16. Useful accounts of the intellectual climate in which Stirner's ideas germinated are to be found in Part I, Ch.2 of "L'Individualisme Anarchiste: Max Stirner", by Victor Besch, and in "Max Stirner: Leben, Weltanschauung, Vermächtnis", by Anselm Ruest (pp.90-116). The extent to which men like St. Simon, Comte, and Proudhon, of whose writings there is no proof that Stirner was even aware in 1842, could have contributed indirectly, by their general impact on the European consciousness, to mould his state of mind at the time of writing his essay, can, however, only be a matter for pure speculation. More general accounts of the literary and intellectual influences moulding speculative opinion in the Germany of Stirner's time may be found in such works as "Die Deutsche Litteratur des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts" (1899), by R.M. Meyer, and Vols. II ("The Romantic School in Germany") and VI ("Young Germany") of "Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature" (Eng. trans. 1905), by George Brandes. Friedrich Paulsen's "Geschichte des Gelehrten Unterrichts" is a valuable guide to the educational movements leading theory and practice in the early Nineteenth Century Germany. Among works dealing with the later history of Hegelianism and with its critics and opponents, Karl Löwith's "Von Hegel zu Nietzsche" (1941) is particularly interesting.

Notes to Chapter 8.

1. "Ueber Schulgesetze".
2. Cf. "Max Stirner: Ueber Schulgesetze", edited with an introduction by Rolf Engert (1920), p.13.
3. Stirner refers to this activity as "Herausbilden".
4. Stirner refers to the same activity, viewed from this aspect, as "Hineinbilden".
5. Education ("Bildung") is the synthesis of "Herausbilden" and "Hineinbilden". Cf. "Ueber Schulgesetze", pp.14-15.
6. Cf. U.S.,p.14. 7. Cf. U.S.,pp.15-16. 8. Cf. U.S.,pp.16-17.
9. Cf. U.S.,p.17. 10. Cf. U.S.,pp.18-19. 11. Cf. U.S.,pp.20-21.
12. Cf. U.S.,p.21. 13. Cf. U.S.,p.17. 14. I.e. "Herausbilden" and "Hineinbilden".
15. Introduction to U.S., by Rolf Engert, p.6. 16. U.S.,p.19.
17. He merely noted ("Das Unwahre Prinzip", p.9) that "if 'everyone is perfect in himself', your community, your social life, will also be perfect."
18. U.S., introd., p.5. 19. Cf. U.S., introd., p.8.
20. U.S., introd., p.7. 21. U.S.,p.14. 22. U.S.,p.13.
23. U.S.,p.14. 24. U.S.,pp.14-15.
25. Stirner's assertion (U.S., p.13) that school rules are "the expressed content of the concept of the pupil" is another statement, the significance of which might plausibly be exaggerated by someone obsessed by Stirner's later claims on behalf of the child's self-expression.

Shortly after making this assertion, however, he declares (U.S.p.17) that, since the teacher is the "object" for the pupil, school rules are also deducible from the nature of the teacher; these two statements are not necessarily incompatible, but it is noteworthy that, when Stirner comes to expound the actual content of specific rules, he in fact chooses to derive them from the nature of the teacher.

Notes to Chapter 9

1. John Henry Mackay: "Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk"(1914) p.108
2. Victor Basch: "L'Individualisme Anarchiste: Max Stirner", p.30.
3. Basch, op.cit., p.40.
4. Henri Arvon: "Aux Sources de l'Existentialisme: Max Stirner", p.27.
5. Cf. the comments of Basch, op.cit., Part I, Chap.1.
6. "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum" (Reclam, Leipzig, 1892), p.14.
7. D.E.,p.382. 8. D.E.,p.414. 9. D.E.,p.373.
10. D.E.,pp.375-6. 11. D.E.,p.347. 12. D.E.,p.185.
13. D.E., p.185. 14. D.E.,p.299. 15. D.E.,p.244.
16. D.E.,p.361 17. D.E.,p.361. 18. D.E.,p.28
19. D.E.,p.28. 20. Cf. D.E.,p.39. "What then is Spirit? It is the creator of a spiritual world."
21. Cf. D.E.,p.41. "....what belongs to Spirit, i.e. ideas."
22. "Das Unwahre Prinzip Unserer Erziehung", p.26.
23. Cf. D.E.,p.401. "....if I attain to property in thought, they (thoughts) stand as my creatures". Also p.175 "....a stretching of the limbs shakes off the torment of thoughts!"

24. Cf. U.P., p.23. "Not until man stakes his honour on feeling, knowing, and asserting himself, in self-reliance, self-consciousness, and freedom...."

25. D.E., p.159. 26. D.E., p.97. 27. D.E., p.413.

28. D.E., p.374. 29. D.E., p.398. 30. D.E., p.346.

31. D.E., p.375. 32. D.E., p.229. 33. D.E., p.420.

34. U.P., p.14. 35. D.E., p.48. 36. U.P., p.25. 37. U.P., p.25.

38. Cf. D.E., p.168. "In order to secure (my property), I continually take it back into myself...swallow it..."

39. U.P., p.20. 40. U.P., p.21. 41. D.E., p.175. 42. D.E., p.401.

43. D.E., p.479. 44. U.P., p.24. 45. U.P., p.24. 46. U.P., p.14.

47. U.P., p.25. 48. U.P., p.25. 49. U.P., p.21. 50. U.P., p.23.

51. U.P., p.21. 52. D.E., p.213. 53. D.E., p.292. 54. D.E., p.230.

55. D.E., p.18. 56. D.E., p.190. 57. D.E., p.190. 58. D.E., p.429.

59. Basch, op.cit., p.42. 60. U.P., p.21. 61. U.P., p.23.

62. U.P., p.26. 63. U.P., p.24. 64. U.P., p.24. 65. U.P., p.25.

66. U.P., p.25. 67. U.P., p.25. 68. U.P., p.23. 69. U.P., p.21.

70. D.E., p.341. 71. D.E., p.338. 72. D.E., p.375.

73. There is, admittedly, (U.P., p.20) a scornful reference to one's "vocation as man", but Stirner fails to enlarge this into a criticism of the general notion of "vocation". Indeed, he describes the problem of education as the problem of "what will be made out of us"! (U.P., p.9)

74. U.P., p.15. 75. U.P., p.28. 76. D.E., p.184.

77. D.E., p.185. 78. D.E., p.185. 79. D.E., p.186.

80. D.E., p.187. 81. D.E., p.185.

82. Cf. U.P.,p.9. "If 'each is perfect in himself', then your community, your social life, will also be perfect."
83. Cf. D.E.,p.282. "Like religion, politics also wanted to educate man....to make something out of him." Cf. also p.245. "the character of a society is determined by the character of its members."
84. Cf. U.P.,p.29, where Stirner repudiates the suggestion that his pedagogy will merely inculcate new moral rules, "as has always previously been done"; on the contrary, he aims "to transfigure" the pupil's self-will.
85. Cf. D.E.,p.84. "They storm heaven, only to make another heaven, they destroy an old power, only to legitimise a new power, they - only ameliorate."
86. Cf. U.P.,p.24, viz. the "reasonable and practical life" of the "useful bourgeois", "the civilised man who is so close to the animal."
87. Cf. (e.g.) D.E.,p.130. "In the bourgeois-state there are only 'free people' who are compelled to do a thousand things."
88. Cf. U.P.,p.22. "Where will the goal be the free man, and not the merely educated (formed)?"
89. Cf. D.E.,p.202. "He (the Liberal) sees in you, not you, but the species." 90. D.E.,p.364. 91. D.E.,p.364. 92. D.E.,p.374.
93. "Stirner'sche Ideen in einem paranoischen Wahnsystem", in the Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten, Band 36, Heft 3 (1903).
94. D.E.,p.243. 95. D.E.,p.247. 96. D.E.,p.306.
97. Cf. D.E.,p.366. "If Society is above you, then it is more to you than yourself".

98. Cf. D.E.,p.366. "....(the State's) only care is how to destroy me, i.e.,how to make me into another Me, a good citizen."
99. Cf. D.E.,p.366. "....in Society you, with your working strength, will be employed."
100. Cf. D.E.,p.366. "....the 'egoistic' man is its (i.e. the State's) enemy."
101. Cf. D.E.,p.274. "He (i.e. the unique one) unites freely and separates freely." Cf. also p.365. "....I will preserve it (i.e. my membership of "the association") only so long as it represents my multiplied strength."
102. Cf. D.E.,p.367. "....the association exists for you and through you."
103. D.E.,p.364. 104. Cf. D.E.,pp.366-7. "....the association is merely the tool or sword whereby you sharpen and increase your natural strength."
105. Cf. D.E.,p.365. "....(a fellow-man is for me) an object, for which I may or may not have sympathy, an interesting or uninteresting object, a useful or useless subject."
106. Cf. D.E.,p.366. "....in the former (i.e. the association) you live egoistically."
107. Rousseau: "Du Contrat Social", Book I, Chap. I.
108. D.E.,p.366. 109. D.E.,p.17. 110. D.E.,p.21.
111. In a later section of "Der Einzige", Stirner offers yet another dialectical interpretation of human development, this time representing its progress through the stages of "Negritism, Mongolism, and Caucasianism." Cf. D.E.,Part I, 2, 11(3), "Die Hierarchie".

112. As examples of "thoughts and feelings instilled into us from childhood on", Stirner mentions the emotions surrounding the ideas of "God, Immortality, Freedom, Humanity, etc.", which may unconsciously rule us because we are "possessed by them". Feelings which are only "aroused", on the other hand, "are my own, egoistic, because they are not inculcated into me as feelings" (although the stimulus which evokes them is in fact external to me.) Cf. D.E., pp.79-80.
113. D.E., p.113.
114. Cf. D.E., p.319. "While everyone can occupy these positions, only the unique power belonging to the individual alone can, so to speak, give them life and meaning."
115. Cf. D.E., p.405. "...but at the same time I want to be thoughtless and to preserve my thoughtlessness rather than my freedom of thought."
116. D.E., p.242. Cf. also D.E., p.238. "You against me can never be a criminal, but only an opponent."
117. D.E., p.429.
118. Cf. U.P., p.27. "If I bring the rigour of my own freedom to bear, the defiance of the child will dissolve of itself. Whoever is a whole man does not need to be - an authority. And if candour breaks out as insolence, the latter loses its power against...the firmness of the man."
119. D.E., p.338. Cf. also p.389. "The efforts to 'form' all men.... are wrecked against indomitabile individuality, against their own nature, against egoism."
120. D.E., p.423.
121. Willy Storrer: "In Memoriam Max Stirner" (Introduction to Basel, 1926, edition of U.P.), p.9.

122. Ruest, op.cit., p.120.

123. Mackay, op.cit., p.108.

Notes to Chapter 10.

1. Mackay's editions of Stirner's "Kleinere Schriften (1898 and 1914) and separate editions of the essay on education by Mackay (1911), Storrer (1927), and others (e.g., Jena, 1917; Magdeburg, 1925).
2. Recent writers on education who have expressed an interest in Stirner's ideas have been mainly anarchists, like Sir Herbert Read. Cf. (e.g.) Read's "The Education of Free Men", Ch.4. Stirner's ideas are occasionally quoted sympathetically in discussions of education in such anarchist journals as the English weekly, "Freedom". The source of such quotations is, however, invariably "Der Einzige" and never the essay on education.
3. Cf. (e.g.) "Das Unwahre Prinzip", pp.13-14 and p.16.
4. Cf. U.P., pp.12-13 and p.16.
5. Chapter 5 of the present thesis contains tentative suggestions of the subjects that a personalist curriculum might comprise.
6. Cf. U.P., pp.26-27.
7. U.P., p.29.
8. J.F. Herbart: "Ueber die Aesthetische Darstellung der Welt", p.1. (Werke, 1851, Band 11).
9. Cf. esp. Newman's "On the Scope and Nature of University Education", (Everyman) pp. 126-7.
10. Cf. esp. the five addresses which Hegel delivered as Rector of the Nürnberg Gymnasium between 1809 and 1815 (Werke, Original-Ausgabe, XVI, pp. 133ff.)

11. These appeared mainly in the "Hallische Jahrbücher" and "Deutsche Jahrbücher" of which he was editor.
12. Bauer's views on contemporary education are mainly to be found in Vol. III of his "Vollständige Geschichte der Parteikämpfe in Deutschland während der Jahre 1842-46" (1847).
13. Published 14th June, 1842.
14. Written in 1843, published in 1844.
15. Also published in 1844.
16. It was Engels who gave currency to the belief that Stirner was a kind of anarchist - a perplexing idea, since Stirner habitually refers to the egalitarian anarchism of Proudhon with the most scathing contempt. Although Mackay, who was responsible for reviving interest in Stirner, was personally a committed anarchist, this does not suffice to explain the peculiar interest in Stirner's ideas expressed by many modern anarchists. This interest is a historical fact, whether or not Stirner himself regarded his ideas as basically anarchist.
17. "The Education of Free Men", p.17.
18. In a letter to the present writer (26th June, 1961).
19. Cf. Arvon, "Aux Sources de l'Existentialisme: Max Stirner", Conclusion.
20. Buber: "Die Frage an den Einzelnen" (1936), esp. the section on "Der Einzige und der Einzelne", translated by R. Gregor Smith in "Between Man and Man" (1947).
21. Cf. Buber's essays, "Rede über das Erzieherische" (1926) and "Ueber Charaktererziehung" (1939), trans. by R. Gregor Smith (op.cit.)
22. Cf. esp. M.V.C. Jeffreys, "Glaucou: an Inquiry into the Aims of Education" (1950).

23. Even in "Der Einzige", Stirner's nihilism is not without inconsistencies, and it should be noted that "the unique one" is not even an entirely consistent egoist. The nature of the egoist's personal relationships (already by implication a problem in the educational essay) represents Stirner's chief problem, which he never satisfactorily resolved in terms of his system. See Chapter 9 of the present thesis for a discussion of the dilemma in which he found himself as a result of his simultaneous reluctance to attribute commensurate moral status to others and to sustain the austerities of the solitude which his unique status entails. In his most characteristic postures, however, Stirner leaves us in no doubt that, at the deepest level, as an end to be pursued, the welfare of others is of absolutely no consequence to the egoist, for whom human activities are ultimately not of the slightest concern.

24. Cf. "Der Einzige", p.426. "(The egoist) lives himself out, careless of how well or ill humanity may fare thereby."

25. Cf. "Der Einzige", p.390.

26. Cf. D.E., p.375.

27. Cf. (e.g.) D.E., pp.206ff.

28. Esp. D.E., pp.80, 92, 282, 347-8.

29. D.E., p.338.

30. See Chapter 6 of the present thesis for an account of Stirner's metaphysical assertions as representing their author's total intellectual response to the totality of his experience.

31. Cf. D.E., pp.346-7.

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