

Max Stirner

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Max Stirner (October 25, 1806 – June 26, 1856), born **Johann Kaspar Schmidt**, was a German philosopher who was a major influence on the nineteenth century development of ideas of nihilism, existentialism and individualist anarchism.

Contents

- 1 Quotes
 - 1.1 *The False Principle of our Education* (1842)
 - 1.2 *The Ego and Its Own* (1844)
 - 1.3 *Stirner's Critics* (1845)
- 2 External links

Quotes

- Whoever will be free must make himself free. Freedom is no fairy gift to fall into a man's lap.** What is freedom? To have the will to be responsible for one's self.
 - As quoted in *Forbes* Vol. 78 (1956), and in *Lifetime Speaker's Encyclopedia* (1962) by Jacob Morton Braude, p. 275
- The state calls its own violence law, but that of the individual, crime.**
 - As quoted in *The Great Quotations* (1960) by George Seldes, p. 664

The False Principle of our Education (1842)

Max Stirner (1842) *The False Principle of our Education*. Translation Ralph Myles 1967

- Because our time is struggling toward the word with which it may express its spirit, many names come to the fore and all make claim to being the right one. [...] Without our assistance, time will not bring the right word to light; we must all work together on it. If, however, so much depends on us, we may reasonably ask what they have made of us and what they propose to make of us; we ask about the education through which they seek to make us creators of that word. Do they conscientiously cultivate our predisposition to become *creators* or do they treat us only as *creatures* whose nature simply permits training? [...] Therefore we are concerned above all with what they make of us in the time of our plasticity; the school question is a life question.



I say: liberate yourself as far as you can, and you have done your part; for it is not given to every one to break through all limits, or, more expressively, not to everyone is that a limit which is a limit for the rest.

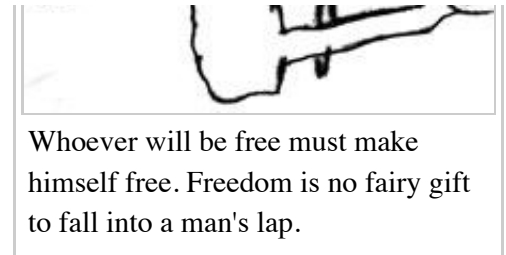
- p. 11
- Apart from any other basis which might justify a superiority, *education*, as a power, raised him who possessed it over the weak, who lacked it, and the educated man counted in his circle, however large or small it was, as the mighty, the powerful, the imposing one: for he was an *authority*.
 - p. 12
- *Wollen wir etwa die Pädagogik den Philosophen in die Hände spielen? Nichts weniger als das! Sie würden sich ungeschickt genug benehmen. Denen allein werde sie anvertraut, die mehr sind als Philosophen, darum aber auch unendlich mehr als Humanisten oder Realisten.*
 - Do we want to put pedagogy into the hands of the philosophers? Nothing less than that! They would behave themselves awkwardly enough. It shall be entrusted only to those who are more than philosophers, who are in that respect more even than humanists or realists.
 - p. 19
- *Yes, so it is that knowledge itself must die in order to blossom forth again in death as will; the freedom of thought, belief, and conscience, these wonderful flowers of three centuries will sink back into the lap of mother earth so that a new freedom, the freedom will, will be nourished with its most noble juices.*
 - p. 19
- *The will is not fundamentally right, as the practical ones would like very much to assure us; one may not pass over the desire for knowledge in order to stand immediately in the will, but knowledge perfects itself to will when it desensualizes itself and creates itself as a spirit "which builds its own body."*
 - p. 21
- If it is the drive of our time, after *freedom* of thought is won, to pursue it to that perfection through which it changes to *freedom of the will* in order to realize the latter as the principle of a new era, then the final goal of education can no longer be *knowledge*, but the will born out of knowledge, and the spoken expression of that for which it has to strive is: the *personal* or *free man*. Truth consists in nothing other than man's revelation of himself, and thereto belongs the discovery of himself, the liberation from all that is alien, the uttermost abstraction or release from all authority, the re-won naturalness. Such thoroughly *true* men are not supplied by school; if they are there, they are there *in spite* of school.
 - p. 21
- It is truly not the merit of the school if we do not come out selfish. Each sort of corresponding pride and every wind of covetousness, eagerness for office, mechanical and servile officiousness, hypocrisy, etc., is bound as much with extensive knowledge as with elegant, classical education, and since this whole instruction exercises no influence of any sort on our ethical behavior, it thus frequently falls to the fate of being forgotten in the same measure as it is not *used*: one shakes off the dust of the school.



- p. 22

- On the contrary, to educate *rational* people, that should be sufficient; it is not really intended for *sensible* people; to understand things and conditions, there is the matter ended,—*to understand oneself* does not seem to be everyman's concern.

- p. 22



- In the pedagogical as in certain other spheres freedom is not allowed to erupt, the power of the *opposition* is not allowed to put a word in edgewise: they want *submissiveness*. Only a formal and material training is being aimed at and only scholars come out of the menageries of the humanists, only "useful citizens" out of those of the realists, both of whom are indeed nothing but *subservient* people. Our good background of recalcitrancy [sic] gets strongly suppressed and with it the development of knowledge to free will. The result of school is then philistinism.

- p. 23

- If man puts his honor first in relying upon himself, knowing himself and applying himself, this in self-reliance, self-assertion, and freedom, he then strives to rid himself of the ignorance which makes a strange impenetrable object a barrier and a hindrance to his self-knowledge.

- p. 23

- If one awakens in men the idea of freedom then the free men will incessantly go on to free themselves; if on the contrary, one only *educates* them, then they will at all times accommodate themselves to circumstance in the *most highly educated and elegant manner* and degenerate into subservient cringing souls.

- p. 23

- Thus the radii of all education run together into one center which is called *personality*.

- p. 25

- The difficulty in our education up till now lies, for the most part, in the fact that knowledge did not refine itself into will, to application of itself, to pure practice. The realists felt the need and supplied it, though in a most miserable way, by cultivating idea-less and fettered "practical men." Most college students are living examples of this sad turn of events. Trained in the most excellent manner, they go on training; drilled they continue drilling.

- p. 25

- [...] then the necessary decline of non-voluntary learning and rise of the self-assured will which perfects itself in the glorious sunlight of the free person may be somewhat expressed as follows: *knowledge* must die and rise again as *will* and create itself anew each day as a free *person*.

- p. 28

The Ego and Its Own (1844)

Max Stirner (1844) *The Ego and Its Own*. Translations: Tucker, New York 1907; S. Byington, trans. (1913); Cambridge 1995; Dover 2005

- **What is not supposed to be my concern!** First and foremost, the Good Cause, then God's cause, the

cause of mankind, of truth, of freedom, of humanity, of justice; further, the cause of my people, my prince, my fatherland; finally, even the cause of Mind, and a thousand other causes. Only my cause is never to be my concern. "Shame on the egoist who thinks only of himself!"

- Cambridge 1995, p. 5
- I have no need to take up each thing that wants to throw its cause on us and show that it is occupied only with itself, not with us, only with its good, not with ours. Look at the rest for yourselves. Do truth, freedom, humanity, justice, desire anything else than that you grow enthusiastic and serve them?
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 6
- **The divine is God's concern; the human, man's.** My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is mine, and it is not a general one, but is — unique, as I am unique. Nothing is more to me than myself!
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 7
- Just as the schoolmen philosophized only inside the belief of the church, ... without ever throwing a doubt upon this belief; as authors fill whole folios on the State without calling in question the fixed idea of the State itself; as our newspapers are crammed with politics because they are conjured into the fancy that man was created to be a *zoon politicon*,—so also subjects vegetate in subjection, virtuous people in virtue, liberals in humanity, etc., without ever putting to these fixed ideas of theirs the searching knife of criticism. Undislodgeable, like a madman's delusion, those thoughts stand on a firm footing, and he who doubts them—lays hands on the *sacred*!
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 44
- Man, your head is haunted; you have wheels in your head! You imagine great things, and depict to yourself a whole world of gods that has an existence for you, a spirit-realm to which you suppose yourself to be called, an ideal that beckons to you. You have a fixed idea! Do not think that I am jesting or speaking figuratively when I regard those persons who cling to the Higher, and (because the vast majority belongs under this head) almost the whole world of men, as veritable fools, fools in a madhouse. What is it, then, that is called a "fixed idea"? An idea that has subjected the man to itself. When you recognize, with regard to such a fixed idea, that it is a folly, you shut its slave up in an asylum. And is the truth of the faith, say, which we are not to doubt; the majesty of (e. g.) the people, which we are not to strike at (he who does is guilty of — lese-majesty); virtue, against which the censor is not to let a word pass, that morality may be kept pure; — are these not "fixed ideas"? Is not all the stupid chatter of (e. g.) most of our newspapers the babble of fools who suffer from the fixed idea of morality, legality, Christianity, etc., and only seem to go about free because the madhouse in which they walk takes in so broad a space?
 - New York 1907, p. 54, 55
- Feuerbach ... recognizes ... "even love, in itself the truest, most inward sentiment, becomes an obscure, illusory one through religiousness, since religious love loves man only for God's sake, therefore loves man only apparently, but in truth God only." Is this different with moral love? Does it love the man, this man for this man's sake, or for morality's sake, for Man's sake, and so—for *homo homini Deus*—for God's sake?
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 56
- The young are of age when they twitter like the old; they are driven through school to learn the old song, and, when they have this by heart, they are declared of age.
 - Cambridge 1995, pp. 61-62

- He who is infatuated with *Man* leaves persons out of account so far as that infatuation extends, and floats in an ideal, sacred interest. *Man*, you see, is not a person, but an ideal, a spook.
 - Dover 2005, p. 79
- Now, on the contrary, when every one is to cultivate himself into man, condemning a man to machine-like labor amounts to the same thing as slavery. If a factory-worker must tire himself to death twelve hours and more, he is cut off from becoming man. Every labor is to have the intent that the man be satisfied. [...] His labor is nothing taken by itself, has no object *in itself*, is nothing complete in itself; he labors only into another's hands, and is *used* (exploited) by this other.
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 108
- The habit of the religious way of thinking has biased our mind so grievously that we are — terrified at *ourselves* in our nakedness and naturalness; it has degraded us so that we deem ourselves deprived by nature, born devils.
 - Dover 2005, p. 162
- Now why, if freedom is striven after for love of the I after all — why not choose the I himself as beginning, middle, and end?
 - Dover 2005, p. 163
- "Freedom" awakens your *rage* against everything that is not you; "egoism" calls you to *joy* over yourselves, to self-enjoyment.
 - Dover 2005, p. 163
- Whether nature gives me a right, or whether God, the people's choice, etc., does so, all of that is the same *foreign* right, a right that I do not give or take to myself. Thus the Communists say, equal labour entitles man to equal enjoyment. [...] No, equal labour does not entitle you to it, but equal enjoyment alone entitles you to equal enjoyment. Enjoy, then you are entitled to enjoyment. But, if you have laboured and let the enjoyment be taken from you, then – 'it serves you right.' If you *take* the enjoyment, it is your right; if, on the contrary, you only pine for it without laying hands on it, it remains as before, a, 'well-earned right' of those who are privileged for enjoyment. It is *their* right, as by laying hands on it would become *your* right.
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 170, 171
- Man with the great M is only an ideal, the species only something thought of.
 - Dover 2005, p. 182
- It would be foolish to assert that there is no power above mine. Only the attitude that I take toward it will be quite another than that of the religious age: I shall be the *enemy* of every higher power, while religion teaches us to make it our friend and be humble toward it.
 - Dover 2005, p. 184
- I say: liberate yourself as far as you can, and you have done your part; for it is not given to every one to break through all limits, or, more expressively, not to everyone is that a limit which is a limit for the rest. Consequently, do not tire yourself with toiling at the limits of others; enough if you tear down yours. [...] He who overturns one of his limits may have shown others the way and the means; the overturning of their limits remains their affair.
 - New York 1907, p. 187

- Liberty of the *people* is not *my* liberty!
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 190
- Everything sacred is a tie, a fetter.
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 192
- But let the individual man lay claim to ever so many rights because Man or the concept man ‘entitles’ him to them, because his being man does it: what do I care for his right and his claim? If he has his right only from Man and does not have it from *me*, then for *me* he has no right. His life, for example, counts to *me* only for what it is *worth* to *me*. I respect neither a so-called right of property (or his claim to tangible goods) nor yet his right to the ‘sanctuary of his inner nature’ (or his right to have the spiritual goods and divinities, his gods, remain un-aggrieved). His goods, the sensuous as well as the spiritual, are *mine*, and I dispose of them as proprietor, in the measure of my — might.
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 219
- What matters the party to me? I shall find enough anyhow who *unite* with me without swearing allegiance to my flag.
 - Dover 2005, p. 236
- One is not worthy to have what one, through weakness, lets be taken from him; one is not worthy of it because one is not capable of it.
 - Cambridge 1995, p. 237
- *People* is the name of the body, *State* of the spirit, of that *ruling person* that has hitherto suppressed me.
 - Dover 2005, p. 242
- Where the world comes in my way — and it comes in my way everywhere — I consume it to quiet the hunger of my egoism. For me you are nothing but — my food, even as I too am fed upon and turned to use by you. We have only one relation to each other, that of *usableness*, of utility, of use.
 - Dover 2005, p. 296, 297
- [...] Because the Egoist is to himself the warder of the human, and has nothing to say to the state except: "Get out of my sunshine!"
 - Tucker 1907, p. 307
- Whoso is full of sacred (religious, moral, humane) love loves only the spook, the “true man,” and persecutes with dull mercilessness the individual, the real man.
 - S. Byington, trans. (1913), p. 383
- **Revolution is aimed at new *arrangements*; insurrection [Empörung] leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves**, and set no glittering hopes on “institutions.”
 - S. Byington, trans. (1913), p. 421

Stirner's Critics (1845)

Max Stirner (1845) *Stirner's Critics*

- If a concept lacks an essence, nothing will ever be found that completely fits that concept. If you are

lacking in the concept of human being, it will immediately expose that you are something individual, something that cannot be expressed by the term human being, thus, in every instance, an individual human being.

External links

- www.flag.blackened.net The Ego and his Own (<http://flag.blackened.net/daver/anarchism/stirner/theego0.html>)
- [Nonserviam.com](http://www.nonserviam.com) (<http://www.nonserviam.com/egoistarchive/stirner>) with more about Stirner's works

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