Max Stirner: The Last Hegelian or the First Poststructuralist?

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1997

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human being is ascribed a fixed and general nature, rather than being protected under the 'Rights of Man' suggested by liberal humanism, they lose their unique identities and become objects of domination. The transcendental ideal pits the body against the intellect. We become slaves to the conceivable posing as truth. Difference is negated in favor of the general. The value of true individualism cannot be realized where the 'I' does not represents a unique set of experiences and ideas.

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essence is not 'me,' but is only a name (p.366). I am at every moment creating myself (p. 150). Or, as Michel Foucault put it, each life is a work of art in progress.[36]

Conclusion

The basis of Stirner's claims was epistemological. Therefore, the assertion that he is the culmination of the Hegelian tradition cannot be sustained. Hegel's defense of the state as the reflection of universal spirit was, to Stirner, just another fantastic aberration in order to justify the state's domination. In the Hegelian state, there can be no '. Nothing could be more abhorrent to Stirner. He is far more an anti-Hegelian than, as some authors suggest, the pinnacle of the Hegelian tradition.

Is Stirner the first poststructuralist? I n a sense, this is an absurd question that only has meaning within the confines of linear history. Stirner is part of a perspective that goes back to the earliest Western civilizations. The sophists understood that the mind was to be used as a means to a pleasant life, not to become a source of tyranny against the body (p.17). With transcendentalism came a transformation in philosophy. As Foucault described it, after Plato, the idea of true and false discourse replaced open inquiry.[37] The idea of fixed and universal truth had supplanted dynamic critique. The stage was set for the folly that has been Western philosophy.

Stirner, Nietzsche, and contemporary poststructuralism all share this view. Further, they are concerned for what this condition of knowledge means in social life. They believe that any fixed representation of the human character is both epistemologically flawed and politically dangerous. Ideas cannot be fixed. Truth is plural, dynamic, and contingent. When the

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[36] Foucault, 'The Genealogy of Ethics', afterword in Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, p.236.

[37] Foucault 1971, p.25.

individual bodies. It is the state that carries out the imposition of what humanistic culture demands.

Intellectuals have been the bearers of the liberal humanist tradition, and can be identified with its oppression. Denying the possibility of the transcendental removes the intellectual from the privileged place granted since Plato's Republic. Since intellectuals can no longer be seen as the bearers of truth, they are seen by Foucault as occupying a specific place in the power hierarchy.[35] they are the legitimators of the totalising concepts within the structure of power, whether in the name of theology or science.

At this point epistemological critique and political commentary come together. If 'I' am not the flesh and blood, thought and desire, that is someone else's 'I,' then I must be unique. According to Stirner, my value is that I am an 'I' (pp.365-66). If this is the case then the entire Enlightenment project, what Stirner would include as both social liberalism and humane liberalism, must be mistaken. 'I' cannot be generalized. What is important in the understanding of 'I' is not universal but unique. The 'I' must generate a politics of 'difference.' A politics built around what is different and unique is all that can emerge based on the anti foundational premises of Stirner, Nietzsche, and the post-structuralists. Thus when Stirner denounces the state and calls for a 'Union of Egos' in its place (p.179), it is a claim in favor of respecting the 'I' not the generalized concept 'Man'. Respect for difference creates a positive political stance toward the individual. It does not degrade human nature by reducing it to the lowest common denominator. It puts human beings beyond the grasp of any single concept.

Any assertion that human beings can be defined by any assertion of 'essence,' 'identity' or 'human nature' must be rejected. Critique does not set dogmas. It crushes fixed ideas and opposes systems (p. 147). What is designated as generalized

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[35] Foucault, Power l Knowledge, p. 132.

Abstract:

Most political philosophers have argued that Stirner's concerns are compatible with those put forward by Hegel and by those influenced by Hegel. However, there is good reason for disputing this view, and for understanding Stirner as an original thinker, whose ideas in some ways anticipated The concerns of contemporary post-structuralists.

In 1845 Max Stirner published The Ego and His Own. The work, as a whole, can best be portrayed as a individualistic challenge to the legitimacy of the state. This work stands in stark contrast to other treatises on anarchism in the late nineteenth century. While the works of Kropotkin, Godwin, Proudhon, and others sought to create a philosophic basis for an anarchist position that retained the notion of community, Stirner's work defended an anarchist position based solely on the individual. Stirner argued that the individual ego is the measure of the world, which has led Stirner to be criticized by Hegelians, Marxists, and other anarchist writers.

Stirner is most often discussed as part of the Hegelian tradition. Hegel's writings on philosophy, politics, and community had a profound impact on nineteenth and twentieth century political thought, particularly as the Hegelian tradition was interpreted by Karl Marx. Stirner's connection to this tradition is problematic, however, given his distrust of community. Nevertheless, Lawrence S. Stepelvich,echoing similar claims of David McLellan, argues that Stirner can be seen as a disciple of Hegel and perhaps even the 'last Hegelian."[1] Other scholars have supported this view. Fredrich Engels and Karl Lowith treated Stirner's work as the culmination of the Hegelian conception of absolute spirit, although Karl Marx and Sidney Hook saw Stirner as a dangerous apologist for the failing

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[1] Stepelvich 1985; McLellan 1969.

bourgeoisie.[2] The link between Stirner and the Hegelian tradition is an uncomfortable one. It is largely explained, I believe, by Stirner's attraction to some of the ideas of Hegel while a student in Berlin. In addition, Stirner spent a period of his life socialising with the group known as the Young Hegelians. Yet, as Stepelvich recognized, Stirner does not employ any of the Hegelian concepts in his work. There are no references to the dialectic, no use of the Hegelian triad, and there is none of Hegel's technical language. Further, The Ego and His Own can easily be interpreted as an attack on Hegel. Stepelvich explains his, and others, continued interpretation of Stirner as a Hegelian by employing Hegelian technique; Stepelvich argues that as the last Hegelian Stirner completes the dialectical process by appearing as an anti-Hegelian.

This essay will argue that attempts To understand Stirner within the structural confines of a Hegelian ontology cause a serious misreading of Stirner's work. While Stirner's discussion of the state and the political order does contain assumptions regarding human nature that are essentially individualist in nature, and might be seen as the culmination of spirit coming to self realization as 'ego,' (an interpretation that can loosely be called Hegelian)there is something fundamentally different in Stirner's approach that sets him off from others in the Hegelian tradition. Stirner's criticism of the political domination of the state does not primarily have its origins in a discussion of human nature, and the heavy ontological language of the Hegelian system. The means by which he attacked the state are primarily epistemological in character. He is far more interested in the way state power gains legitimacy within a system of power l knowledge than he is in challenging the Hegelian conception of the state as 'objective spirit.' To Stirner, the modem state legitimates itself through creating the illusion of fixed and essential ideas, and by convincing the population

duction units, police computers, and concentration camps[29] As Todd May describes the poststructuralist project, all assertions of human essence, even humanism, must be rejected.[30] As is the case with the poststructuralists, Stirner also rejected the possibility that any totalising concept of 'Man' could do justice to the unique character of each individual. What links this position to the criticism of the state is the relationship between the construction of truth and the conditions of power in society. If truth is an historical construction and if it does not have any link to a transcendental ahistorical universal 'law' or condition, then the structures from which truth is generated cannot be separated from the institutions of power which make them possible.[31]

Hence, Stirner draws the only logical conclusion possible based on his premises, that it is the state that maintains the generalized concept, or ideal, to which the individual must conform, and it is the state, therefore, that must be resisted. Power attaches identities to people. Power imposes a law of truth that ties people to power.[32] Hence, Michel Foucault concluded that the real political battle is not over the content of truth, but over the status of claims to truth.[33] This is precisely what Stirner recognized in rejecting the 'fixed idea.' The state reinforces the fixed idea by imposing a code of conduct and discipline on the population. The generalized concept 'Man' is the bearer of the idea of normalcy. Normalcy provides the foundation for the code of discipline.[34] Discipline takes the form of control over

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[29] Ibid., p.3 17.

[30] May, 1994, p.75.

[31] Foucault, Power l Knowledge, 1980, p.13 1.

[32] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 1983, p.212.

[33] Foucault, Power l Knowledge, p. 132.

[34] Compare the discussion by Foucault in Power l Knowledge, p.106, and Language,Counter-memory, Practice. 1977, pp.209-211, and Stirner, The Ego and His Own.pp.2 18-219,238.

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[2] Stepelvich 1985, pp.604-5.

meaning.[26]It is precisely this gesture in the act of generating concepts that produces the fundamental error of the fixed idea. From the perspective of Stirner, Nietzsche, the poststructuralists, and the sophists, such stability is epistemologically unsound. Its value is political. Fixing a concept or idea within a closed system of identities and meanings lends authority to utterances. This process is a means of generating power.

What Stirner, Nietzsche, and the poststructuralists claim is that the authority generated by the fixed idea is not the authority of truth, but the authority of power. The fixed idea is a fiction created because it legitimates power. Fixed ideas do not have transcendental validity. They have only a utility function in the nexus of power/knowledge. As a utility, fixed ideas grant authority to words. Transcendentalism in speech is what causes both Stirner and Derrida to identify such fixed systems with theology.[27] o both of these authors, truth must be treated as something historical.

IV. The Politics of the Self

The fixed idea provides the illusion that there are fixed universals around which human life can be constructed. It generates a belief in stable representations and expectations that are 'naturally' human. Fixing a stable representation of the human being is precisely what Stirner meant by the generalized concept 'Man.'(p.75) Once the human being is represented as a stable objective concept he or she becomes replaceable.[28] As objectified subjects, the 'I' has lost its power. There is only a mass. As Jacques Derrida put it, the process of objectification Turns a world of unique individuals into the material for pro-

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[26] Ibid., p. 3 16.
[27] See Derrida, Of Grammatology, 1976, pp.12-13, and Stirner, The Ego and His Own, p.176.
[28] Derrida 1982, p.3 17.

that it has 'discovered' immutable truth. Only by understanding Stirner's attack on what he called the 'fixed idea' will his position make any sense. In short, rather than being the 'last Hegelian' Stirner might just as easily be said to be the 'first post structuralist,' in offering the first modem epistemological critique of the way in which state power is legitimated through the nexus of power l knowledge contained within the dominant culture.

After summarizing Stirner's claims about the illegitimacy of state power this paper will explore the epistemological basis of this claim. Specifically, Stirner's attack on the 'fixed idea' will be discussed with reference to some ofthe concepts used by contemporary poststructuralist writers. The poststructuralists assert that in any culture power legitimates itself through its connection to the validating mechanism for truth claims. This position effectively negates all transcendental truth claims by the state as well as calling into question the sanctity of collective decision making. Stirner shares this point of view, and the parallels will be elaborated in the discussion.

I. Individualism, politics, and the modern state

For Max Stirner the state is an enemy.[3] In the state individuals must sacrifice their labor, body, and freedom to a collective called the state (pp.111-116). The government needs money so it takes property and labor (pp.100, 115). It subordinates human beings to its will and crushes them if they resist. The state is, therefore, the enemy of all human beings.

Stirner claimed that this is the case even with the development of modem institutions and the emergence of democratic

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[3] Stirner, The Ego and His Own, 1973, p. 179. Future references to this work will be given in the text.

political practice. Thus when Stirner spoke of the liberal political tradition, he spoke with nothing but disdain. The liberal revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not free the individual from the state but made the individual subservient to the state. Citizenship is the value promoted in the state. The liberal revolutions created the idea of the citizen and then subjected the people to it (p. 1 1 1). In what can be read as an attack on the organic description of the state presented by Hegel, Stirner argued that 'social liberalism' seeks to generate the idea that the state has a body, not the individual (p.128). That body must be nurtured with all doing their part to support it. What Stirner called 'humane liberalism' (more in the tradition of Kant) sought to obliterate the concept of self and replace it with a generalized concept, 'Man,' to which all would owe their allegiance in the modem state (p.128).

Both of these forms of liberalism create the dream of freedom, but the promise cannot be fulfilled. In fact, this freedom is not real, it lives in the realm of dreams (p.157). The real is what Stirner called 'ownness.' Owness is personal and internal. It is not linked to the authority of the state. 'I am my own only when I am master of myself, instead of being mastered either by sensuality or by anything else (God, man, authority, law, State, Church) (p.169).' Owness cannot be achieved within the two modem political traditions (socialism and liberalism).

They reject the idea that the individual is unique. For Stirner the unique character of each human being is undeniable and critically important. This conclusion stems from a resolute ontological position. Stirner means the 'individual' in the strictest sense of the word. Only the individual has real being. Only organisms think, feel pain, breath, live and procreate. Each is, therefore, a repository of unique experience and ideas. To subordinate this uniqueness to any concept of state, collective union, or society that would negate this ontological reality would be an affront to reason.

terpretation to this claim, suggesting the human need to interpret the world as an act necessary for survival.[19] But Nietzsche makes it very clear that 'interpretation' is something linked to history, context, and need. Perceptions, logic, and reason, developed because they were useful for life, not because they were true or accurate portrayals of a transcendental reality.[20] Thus, like Stirner, Nietzsche claimed there can be no basis for maintaining the belief in fixed ideas.

Nietzsche also confronts this issue in a slightly different manner in The Use and Abuse of History. There Nietzsche makes reference to the problem of epistemological closure in speaking of the 'shifting horizon of truth.'[21] Epistemological closure is created when an object is given a stable identity. The representation of objects always commits an error of omission. Something is always left out in order to close the system of identities. If there are only interpretations of the world, there is no fixed truth and no possibility of stable representation.[22] priori truths are only provisional assumption.[23] The result of all this is the conclusion that rather than having only one truth, the world is seen to have countless meaning.[24]

The contemporary movement in French philosophy known as poststructuralism pursues the problem of epistemological closure in its critique of 'representation.' Representation is a structural illusion/plain[25] created by closing off a concept from its multifaceted meaning. This epistemological closure grants power to texts through creating the illusion of stability. Stability generates a clear boundary between meaning and non

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[19] Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p.272.
[20] Ibid., p. 276.
[21] Nietzsche, The Use and Abuse of History, p.8.
[22] Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p.267.
[23] Ibid., p.273.
[24] Ibid., p.267..
[25] Derrida, Dissemination, p.297.

away 'power' is revealed. But here power must be understood in a very specific sense and can only have meaning in relation to a general notion of property. To Stirner, private property is a reflection of personal power (p.256). Personal property is the measure of individual power. Such measure is upset within the state because of the rules and regulations that make no one's property their own (pp.25 1-52). True property is the expression of unique individual power. To Nietzsche, property, broadly construed, would include the creative acts of individuals and also represent the measure of the character. Acts are our own. They are products of uniqueness, not to be diminished by the collective. Fixed and generalized concepts diminish what is our own.

Stirner, Nietzsche, and the contemporary poststructuralists assert a similar criticism of the fixed idea. All deny the possibility of demonstrating the validity of fixed, transcendental, universals. There can be no demonstration of universals that cannot be shown to have its validity rest on the assumed validity of another universal. With no validating mechanism other than the connection to other transcendental assertions back through history, such texts have no original moment in which their truth can be verified.[18] All such fixed ideas, therefore, lack epistemological validity.

In Stirner the fixed idea is responsible for the fundamental moral and political error that has been perpetrated on individuals by the state. However, Stirner never developed the language to go into greater depth on the construction, functioning, and consequences of the fixed idea. Language for such an inquiry is introduced by Nietzsche, but carried to its full fruition with the poststructuralists. In The Will to Power Nietzsche echoes something mentioned by Stirner. In The Ego and His Own Stirner recalled a time in which the mind confronts the world to make sense of it for survival (p.18). Nietzsche gave a naturalist in-

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[18] Derrida, Dissemination.

Even to say 'one' is unique because one is part of a unique group is to return to the safety of the herd and to sacrifice ontological independence (p.138). Stirner puts it very directly. 'Doubtless I have similarity with others, yet that holds good only for comparison or reflection; in fact I am incomparable, unique. My flesh is not their flesh, my mind is not their mind' (p.138). Any structure of authority resting on a concept that seeks to make the individual subordinate to a concept or idea beyond this principle is the enemy. Liberals do not see man, but only the concept 'Man' (p.173). They do not allow room for individuals. The individual man is refused, only the general human being is revered (p.205). The true individual must desecrate all that the state demands (p.184). Aware that the state has power, Stirner comments, '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' (p.184).

The current system of morality that informs state practices is groundless. The danger for the individual within this social, political, legal, and philosophic construction cannot be overstated. Once any authority has the power to determine the ideal to which life should be oriented the individual is in danger. Ideals get fixed within the laws, code, and practices of the state. Then … 'the butchery goes on here in the name of the law, of the sovereign people, of God, etc! ' (p.205). Thus, it is impossible to separate Stirner's rejection of the state's authority from his comments about what he calls the 'fixed idea.' The fixed idea is the basis of modem morality and legality (p.43). Applied in the law, the construction of fixed ideas creates the basis for creating the label 'criminal behavior' by which the state can justify its existence (p.238).

Criticize the fixed idea and you will have to deal with a violent and dangerous public that lives by the herd instinct. 'Touch the fixed idea of such a fool, and you will at once have to guard your back against the lunatic's stealthy malice … Every day

now lays bare the cowardice and vindictiveness of these maniacs, and the stupid populace hurrahs for their crazy measures.' (p.43).

Stirner's criticism of the state was unwavering. He denied the concept of authority because he denies that the state can have any firm footing on which to pass judgment. It creates the illusion he called the fixed idea, but Stirner denies that the fixed idea is anything but a fraud. The state generates power and illusion. It is, in reality, not constructed on the firm foundation of truth that it pretends. What is unique about Stirner's work is that it does not conform to the normal strategy employed by the other anarchist writers of the period. Most anarchist writers of this period began with a construction of human nature and then proceeded deductively. While there is some disagreement over how benign these authors saw the human character?[4]generally human nature was present in such a way that the state could be seen as unnecessary, irrelevant, and intrusive. (This positive characterization of human nature is also perceived to be one of the major criticisms against anarchism.) For example, in Mutual Aid Kropotkin asserts that, in contrast to Darwin, species that learn to cooperate are the most successful. In modem society institutions have disrupted the natural condition of human being[5] The same methodology is employed by Godwin and Proudhon[6] Society is spontaneous and natural, and it is the formal institution of the state that prevents the natural condition from realizing its potential. All of these conclusion ns, however, have their origins in a fixed view of human nature and human essence. Stirner rejects this strategy suggesting that it is not only flawed, but dangerous.

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[4] For example, note the contrast between the positions of Todd May (1994) and David Hartley (1 995).

[5] Kropotkin, Mutual Aid, 1987, p. 83).

[6] See Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Proudhon, What is Property?.

it is useful to examine what comes after Stirner in this tradition. Of critical importance to this task is Fredrich Nietzsche. While there is some debate over whether or not Nietzsche was familiar with Stirner's work, there is no doubt the two authors shared an epistemological concern over the integrity of the metaphysical foundation of the Western tradition.[12]

Nietzsche shared Stirner's distaste for both transcendentalism and the Christian tradition in morality. What Nietzsche adds to the discussion is the genealogical method by which the material origins of moral belief can be identified as products of history and culture.[13] For Nietzsche transcendental morals set human beings against themselves, denying their true natures. As Stirner put it, what a person does is human, not because it conforms to a concept, but by the very fact that a human does it (p. 178).

For Stirner, the state is founded on the lack of independence (p.224). It is the condition of living in the herd (p.223). This claim is echoed in Nietzsche who argued that the state is created by the superfluous people.[14] The herd creates morality against the strong and independent.[15] The herd invents the myth of equality and heralds its god as the 'categorical imperative.'[16] It is the death of real people, creative individuals capable of excellence, innovation, and, as Nietzsche states in The Use and Abuse of History, the ability to engage in dialogue with giants over the course of history."[17]

For both Stirner and Nietzsche, when the transcendental masks that hide human beings from themselves are stripped

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[12] Two diverse positions are presented by James Martin in the editor's introduction to The Ego and His Own, and James Huneker in The Egoists: A Book of Supermen, 1920, p.351.

[13] Nietzsche, The Genealogy ofMorals.

[14] Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 1971, p.77.

[15] Nietzsche, The Will to Power, 1967, p.156.

[16] Ibid., p.157.

[17] Nietzsche, The Use and Abuse of History, 1988, p.59.

possible to create a universal society and a universal history based on that fact.[11]

Stirner rejected such a strategy. It moves in precisely the wrong direction. The type of universal society described by the liberalism of either Kant or Marx is an affront to the 'own-ness' that can only be within the individual. What is needed, according to Stirner, is not a society of men, but a union of egos (p.179). Only such a union could really validate the distinct character of each individual. Only such an organization could really respect the differences represented by each unique being.

III. Poststructuralism and the epistemological problem with the fixed idea

The stress on the uniqueness of the individual is a cornerstone of Stirner's work, but it is not the complete picture. Stirner's confrontation with the fixed idea represents a confrontation with all philosophic and theological transcendentalism in the Western tradition. The fixed idea is a maxim, principle, or standpoint that has determined us (p.63). The fixing of ideas makes us prisoners to thought rather than creators of thought. Transcendentalism takes the fixed idea and then tries to shape the world in its image. Ultimately the 'idea' has subjected the human being to itself (p.43).

Stirner's epistemological position is not an isolated aberration. His argument is a modem formulation of an epistemological attack on the Western tradition in metaphysics and philosophy that extends from the ancient sophists to the twentieth century. To fully understand what Stirner is trying to say

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[11] "See 'Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent', in Friedrich edition of Kant

II. Stirner's critique of transcendentalism and the fixed idea

To understand Stirner's attack on the authority of the state, his attitude toward the Western philosophic tradition must be examined. Stirner treated the Western conception of the 'idea' as an historical phenomenon. It has changed from the early Greek civilization to the present. The ancient sophists understood that the mind was a weapon, a means to survival (p. 17). Truth was generated as the mind interacted with nature. But the world of nature was characterized by flux and change. It was not stable. Therefore, truth must also be in a constant state of transition.

This is an unsettling position for philosophy. Philosophy has treated the inability to have fixed and eternal truth as a fundamental flaw in the human character. To overcome this weakness, Western philosophers since Plato have created the illusion of stability. This 'error' continues within the 'modem' traditions in philosophy as well.

Modem culture has lost touch with the tradition that Stirner identified with sophism and skepticism. It has sought the safety of the 'fixed idea.' By a fixed idea Stirner means a concept, principle, or maxim that represents some aspect of the human character or that elaborates an ethical norm or standard which is not subject to historical circumstance. 'Fixed' means eternal, unchanging, and absolute. In the contemporary world, according to Stirner, we have adopted the belief in this folly.

In the modem period humans beings have abandoned the sophist's notion that truth does not present itself in absolutes. Stirner lays much of the blame for this illusion at the doorstep of Christianity. It is the rise of Christianity that created the lie of 'spirit' and separated humans from contact with the world (pp.24-25). Spirit now becomes the focal point of human life

and activity. Once we create this folly, the 'wheels in the head' of spirituality, we are beckoned to the fixed idea (p.43).

When human beings invented the idea of 'spirit' in order to give themselves spirituality, the foundation was laid for the fixed idea. The spirit within the individual is perceived to be that which endures in the human being. The spirit transcends the body and the finite character of corporeal existence. But spirituality teaches humans not to respect what is in the individual, but to care only for the image of

'Man' as a higher enduring essence (p.42). Human beings come to see each other as ghosts and spirits rather than flesh and blood. The spirituality of Christianity is mirrored and reinforced in the philosophic search for the fixed idea. Humanism is just the most recent metamorphosis of Christianity (p. 173). The common link is transcendentalism. While Stirner does not specifically mention Kant, the

transcendental philosophy of Kant elaborates precisely what Stirner finds so offensive. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant develops a demonstration of how the mind is capable of engaging in thought outside the natural stimuli from the environment. Kant claims that reason alone can tell us that when we take away the sense impression left by an object it must still have extension in space and time?[7]

This demonstration of transcendental reasoning also leads to the conclusion that human beings cannot know essences from their contact with objects, but essences lie only in a transcendental realm beyond our reach. What Kant hoped to deliver with his project was a 'mode of knowing' concepts that are fixed and unchanging.[8] In constructing such a system, Kant has established a secular defense of the fixed idea and laid the foundation for modem humanism.

In a similar fashion to Christian thought, Kant's creation of a transcendental foundation for thought establishes the basis for a Universalist morality. Adding only the assumption of 'free will' as the first principle of morality, Kant was then prepared to give his Universalist formulation of the Categorical Imperative: 'Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a general law of nature[9] the more specific Practical Imperative: 'Act so as to treat man, in your own person as well as in that of anyone else, always as an end, never merely as a means.'[10] It is these fixed, transcendental claims that lay the groundwork for Kant's Universalist claims in law and politics.

Law can be constructed according to transcendentally conceived notions that have no relation to experience, historical condition, or social custom. Reached transcendentally, conclusions regarding the law are not subject to critique based on any experiential knowledge. Morality and law have been divorced from actual lived sensation. The result is that the fixed transcendental idea now has the power to shape human life. From an anarchist perspective, real human beings are now under the power of that which is only an aberration. This is precisely how Stirner approached the issue.

This naive transcendentalism also produces political consequences. Universal ethics also provides the basis for a universal conception of human history. In the case of Kant, it is argued that human beings have the same basic characteristics, especially the equal power to engage in reasoning. Based on this assumption, a transcendental moral system can be 'discovered' through reason by which individuals can order their lives. Further, if human beings have the same character and are subject to the same unchanging, a priori principles of action, it is now

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[7] Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, 1958, p.27.
[8] Ibid., p. 36.

[9] Kant, 'The Metaphysical Foundation of Morals', 1949, p.170.
[10] Ibid., p. 178