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Union of Egoists

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-Kevin I. Slaughter

What is a UnionOfEgoists.com?

This is an informational resource provided by Kevin I. Slaughter of Underworld Amusements and Trevor Blake of OVO, initiated in February and publicly launched April 1st of 2016. The website initially focuses on providing historical, biographical and bibliographical details of a few their favorite Egoist philosophers. It is also integrating the archives of egoist website i-studies.com, the former project of Svein Olav Nyberg, and the EgoistArchives.com project of Dan Davies. Further, it will be home to Der Geist, a Journal of Egoism in print 1845 – 1945. UnionOfEgoists.com will be the best resource for Egoism online.

What is a Union of Egoists?

"We two, the State and I, are enemies. I, the egoist, have not at heart the welfare of this "human society," I sacrifice nothing to it, I only utilize it; but to be able to utilize it completely I transform it rather into my property and my creature; i. e., I annihilate it, and form in its place the Union of Egoists."

– Max Stirner, The Ego and Its Own

What is Egoism?

"Egoism is the claim that the Individual is the measure of all things. In ethics, in epistemology, in aesthetics, in society, the Individual is the best and only arbitrator. Egoism claims social convention, laws, other people, religion, language, time and all other forces outside of the Individual are an impediment to the liberty and existence of the Individual. Such impediments may be tolerated but they have no special standing to the Individual, who may elect to ignore or subvert or destroy them as He can. In egoism the State has no monopoly to take tax or to wage war."

-Trevor Blake, Confessions of a Failed Egoist

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WHO WANTS TO BE "FREE"?

by James J. Martin

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I am indicting a society which has no more concept of freedom and responsibility than it has of a twelve-legged dog. Is it 'free enterprise' which is to occupy the trial seat before socialism and communism?

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Is there anyone engaged in making profits by the present system who is willing to face the consequences of complete free enterprise - the reduction of all price through the most rigorous competition? Why no, he merely wishes the free-enterprise system to operate in his favour, and is as willing as the collectivist to employ the fantastic superstructure of law and police in prohibiting any freedom of action which endangers his privileged position.

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Who wants 'free enterprise' in the steel and other heavy industries? Who wants 'free competition' with the producers of the rest of the world? What banker is willing to tolerate any concept but that of the 'national' system? Would he willingly face the competition of free banking?

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The free enterprise of which special interest groups bray is that of the right to open a banana stand or shoe shine parlour, and function within the rigid rules of the atrophied system about them. Witness the struggle of a Tucker in penetrating the automobile manufacturing priesthood. Where can one turn to escape the hurdles of merely obtaining credit in order to enter the economy on a level higher than thread-peddling? Advocates of free enterprise are hypocrites until a breach is made in the above mentioned closed circles.

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The farmer is always cited as an example of unregenerate free enterprise, but where is there any campaign against the state crutch of subsidies, shouldering of the mortgage structure, protection with law and police of land monopoly for the perpetuation of tenantry, and other serious deviations from the principle of freedom!

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The great majority of people accept the current game and its rules without query, though there is a strong case to show the legal origin of the inequity in the system. With most people the complaint is the way the score is being compiled. This they want their politicians to bring into balance. Thus the politician has rapidly been acquiring a non-propertied power-holding stock in the 'system'.

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The great dodge of our time is 'society', a sociological dream-concept, in whose name we dump our responsibility as individuals. 'Society', we say, is to blame for any evils which beset people, yet an investigation would reveal a number of real humans with much guilt attached. Our spirit-sickness also calls on the government as the Hebrews called upon 'Jehovah in the desert, and denies the fact of individual life, liberty of action and its consequence, responsibility.

February
1971
No. 27

Price 5p (1/-)

Minus One

Perhaps a few will embrace decentralism, but the vast majority will, when the time comes, quietly crawl under a warm blanket of collectivism in their delusion that this is the way to security. Yet 'salvation' is even an individual matter, and those to whom freedom and responsibility still mean something can even now construct for themselves a passably satisfying existence in this indifferent environment.

From "The Interpreter" 1948

EN MARGE

by S.E.Parker

Victor Serge and Ego Anarchism.

Victor Serge (born Kibalchich) is one of my favourite novelists. His ability to depict persons and places in a few, vivid words was of the highest and only the circumstances of his life as a political fugitive prevented him from becoming a major writer. The best of his fictional works is undoubtedly "The Long Dusk" published in 1946 by The Dial Press. This is the story of the fates of a group of political exiles at the time of the "fall" of France in 1940. In his elegaic evocation of Paris just before the German army moved in one can almost smell the particular odours of that city.

In his youth Serge spent several years among the anarchist individualists of Paris, during which time he became the de facto editor of their weekly paper "l'anarchie" and wrote under the pseudonym of "Le Retif" (The Stubborn One). Condemned to five years imprisonment as a result of the Bonnot Gang affair, he went to Barcelona after his release. Here he abandoned individualism and joined the syndicalists of the C.N.T. After this he went to Russia, became a Bolshevik, rebelled against Stalin, suffered imprisonment, then exile, and died in Mexico in 1947.

But, excellent writer though he was, this 'evolution' from individualist to socialist made Serge curiously reticent about his ideas and activities during his youth. This was particularly the case in his autobiography "Memoirs of a Revolutionary", as I pointed out when reviewing it in "Anarchy" some seven years ago.

Recently Penguin Books issued his novel "The Birth of Our Force" which was first published in 1931. This is a fictionalized account of Serge's experiences in Spain and France towards the end of World War I. It contains some skilful cameos of various individualists (or "ego anarchists" as he calls them here) who were sitting out the war in Barcelona. Serge, however, cannot refrain from attacking "ego anarchism" and its "poison", nor from repeating his usual accusation that conscious egoism prompts its adherents to become police informers.

Now it is undoubtedly true that some individuals who have called themselves conscious egoists have sold out to the police, but so have some who called themselves communists, socialists, democrats, catholics, or what have you. Wherever there is illegal activity there will be someone sooner or later who will be tempted to collaborate with the police and to betray their friends. This is a fact of life and any illegalist has to accept it as one of the risks of the game. Despite what Serge claims, however, there is no evidence that conscious egoism leads to any more "mouchardisme" than any other philosophy, nor does Serge attempt to give any beyond mere assertion.

One can only conclude that Serge's continual harping on this theme represents an effort to purge himself of his youthful affair with individualism and to fortify his conversion to that marxist collectivism that brought him so much misery and torment. What did he gain from exchanging the "poison" of "ego anarchism" for the monstrous mountain of corpses and bullet-ridden dreams of Bolshevism? He gave up the fight for the individual, proclaimed that "The word 'I' is repellent to me as a vain affirmation of self....I prefer to use the word 'we'". What profit did the 'Is' of his "iron cohort" of Old Bolsheviks reap when they were crushed by the 'We' of the Soviet Collective?

Some Nockian 'Cogitations'.

The Nockian Society have sent me an interesting brochure of selections from the writings of Albert Jay Nock called "Cogitations". There is much in Nock that is to my taste, although I disagree strongly with his distinction between "government"(social power) and the State. This distinction seriously flaws his individualism. If these two "powers" are in conflict, as Nock claimed, there are nonetheless both inimical to the power of the individual. I also think that Nock never really freed himself from being a Christian minister. He treats Christianity far too gently and his treatment of Jesus as an individualist is as silly as other attempts to drag this mythical figure into support for

'pet theories.

In these "Cogitations" there is a description of what Nock called the "Remnant" which sums up the "condition" of individualists very well. They are "an order of persons - for order is the proper word, rather than a class or group, since they are to be found quite unassociated in any formal way, living singly or nearly so, and more or less as aliens, in all classes of our society..."

These are words to keep in mind when faced with the current obsession - particularly in the U.S.A. - with "socializing" individualism.

One significant omission from these "Cogitations" is any excerpt giving Nock's unorthodox views of marriage, love and the family. Is this because they might rile too many of the conservative "libertarians" of the Christian persuasion?

Hippies versus Outsiders.

In the November, 1970, issue of "Anarchy" there is an incisive critique of the current "hippie" counter-culture by George Woodcock. Amongst other things he writes:

"Though the extent of the youth rebellion has in fact been exaggerated by middle-class journalists who judge by their own class and do not realise how many of the working class youth are trying to make it into square respectability, the counter culture is strong enough to provide companionship and solidarity. Arising out of essentially American traditions, making the massed thousands of the rock festival its public face, it stresses the old pioneer virtue of 'togetherness' as vehemently as the Daughters of the American Revolution, whereas the older, European-born counter culture chose as its typical figure the 'outsider', the lonely rebel who draws on his own resources of inner strength or is inevitably defeated. (The basic theme of Paul Herr's novel "Journey Not To End" - S.E.P.) And, while no doubt it is more pleasant to forget about inner strength and snuggle together in the fuggy, freaky burrows of Haight-Ashbury, or Fourth Avenue, Vancouver, or their European equivalents, the penalty is the mentality of those who live in burrows."

The views expressed by Woodcock in this particular article tremble on the edge of individualism, despite some vestigial remains of his "anarcho-communist" past (He worries, for instance, about the tone of the "undergroundpress" alienating "those masses of the underprivileged who should be the natural allies of a true radicalism". The "should" is significant - and one wonders how these "masses" would treat Woodcock's "lone rebel" if they could understand him?)

Woodcock argues that drug-taking and rebellion are not necessarily identical. On the contrary, he thinks that in the near future governments will come to realise the value of legalizing certain drugs as a means of maintaining passivity among their subjects. He believes the tendency is more towards "Brave New World" than towards "1984".

Here is his trenchant conclusion:

"All I have met who laboured under the delusion that their minds have been expanded by drugs and so have become chemical supermen, have in fact turned out to be the dullest of Circean beasts, whipped by the goddess. That of course is their right. Every man has a right to be a slave. Every man has the right to grovel. Every man has the right to belong to his chosen herd. But we do not take him seriously when he boasts of liberation."

Among the Exchanges.

Much to be recommended is the Los Angeles journal "Libertarian Connection". It maintains a fairly high level of polemic and its contributors are predominantly, but not exclusively, of the "anarcho-capitalist" orientation (Several Minus One writers also contribute). It appears every six weeks. Details from: Lisa Dawn, P.O.Box 90913, Worldway Postal Centre, Los Angeles, Calif. 90009, U.S.A.

Another interesting publication is the "Broadsheet", published by the Sydney Libertarians. Recent issues (Nos. 60 and 61) have featured two very good articles on "Illegalism" and "Morals - The Libertarian View" by K. Maddock and A.J. Baker respectively. Details from: Broadsheet Committee, Box 3015, G.P.O. Sydney, N.S.W. 2001, Australia. And from France the anarchist individualist review "EGO". Details from: Pierre Jouventin, 30 - le Caladon par Aumessas, France. (This is full Address!)

VALUE - THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS ABOLITION.

by E. Armand

(translation by Francis Ellingham)

Intrinsic value and measurable value. To say that those objects which can be made into property have, in themselves, an intrinsic value, is to propound something obvious, a truism which cannot be invalidated or shattered by any hair-splitting, or any sophistry. It is possible - to be sure it will always be possible, by a legal device to enact that the utilities essential for human life do not possess in themselves any measurable value, that is to say any value which makes them susceptible of being exchanged by mutual agreement for other utilities of measurable value; that will not alter the fact that a piece of bread, a glass of water, a rug, or a dictionary, will have, in all times and in all places, an intrinsic value of great importance for every human being who needs to eat, to drink, to get warm, or to be informed about the correct meaning of a word. Things which can be made into property, or, as the economists say, utilities, possess therefore a twofold value: an absolute value, the value which they have in themselves, corresponding to the human need which they are intended to satisfy, in other words, an intrinsic value; and a value which is relative or measurable by another value called exchange value, thanks to which one utility can be bartered for another utility, can be traded, can become an object of business.

It is measurable value which we intend to consider here.

Measurable value and the individualist point of view. Given the individualist (anti-authoritarian or anarchist) idea of human activity in its economic aspect, and the demands to which this gives rise: individual and inalienable ownership by each man of his means of production; the right to dispose freely and wholly of the outcome of strictly personal effort, or the "product"; absence of interventionism in all its forms; abolition of the rule of man over man or the milieu, or the other way round, of the exploitation of man by man or the milieu and vice versa - given this brief account of the aspirations of this individualism; is it useful or profitable for the individualist - producer or consumer - that those objects which can be made into property, or economic utilities, should be endowed with measurable value, should possess exchange value?

Current definition of measurable value. In the first place, before all discussion, it is necessary to define what is to be understood by "value" in present economic circumstances.

Value is the ratio between two needs and two powers: a need to exchange and a power to supply on the part of the producer or owner of the economic utility - a need to take possession and a power to purchase on the part of the consumer or middleman.

Everything it is desired to include in this ratio: cost price, debt redemption, account of work done, equivalence in human services and tutti quanti, all this is only supplementary. Given the conditions of human life as it is at present, value is the ratio between the supply of, and the demand for, every utility or object of consumption.

Two or three examples will "prove the point":

It is raining: a man needs an umbrella. He has enough in his pocket to buy one. He makes his way to an umbrella-dealer's shop. And this is what happens: he needs to take possession of this utility and, thanks to the contents of his purse, he has the power to obtain it, while the umbrella-dealer feels at least an equal need to acquire, thanks to the profit which the sales of his wares leaves him, utilities relating to his upkeep: food, clothing, lodging, etc. Two needs come face to face, and there is a meeting of two powers: the power to supply on his side, the power to purchase on the customer's side. The price of the umbrella can fluctuate: it can be on sale at 10 francs,

at 20 francs, at 100 francs, that is to say the value can differ in proportion to the handsomeness or durability of the material used in its manufacture; of the stick which can be in precious wood or have a handle in solid silver. But these fluctuations are only accessories - if it had not been raining, if this man had not forgotten his umbrella, or again if his purse had only contained 35 sous, one could offer him for 2fr. 50 an umbrella of pure silk with a stick in wood-of-the-isles, and it would be labour lost.

From which it follows that, if there is to be measurable value, it is essential that there should come into being a supply and a demand.

Where there is a supply and no demand, where there is a demand and no supply, there is no place for measurable value.

A second example: another man is on the point of setting out as a commercial traveller for Polynesia and, in order to do better than his competitors, he has reckoned that it would be extremely advantageous for him to master the more or less Maori dialect which is spoken in those remote and happy islands. Now, there are only to be found, where he lives, a few primers or vocabularies in this dialect, and these at very high prices: 200 to 250 francs a copy, although very inferior, as regards usefulness and quality, to similar works for the study of ordinary languages, which are to be found on sale at very moderate prices. He is well aware of all these details, but he does not hesitate, even so, to make the necessary hole in his savings to obtain the vocabulary in question.

The unusualness of the demand is, in this case, an effective determinant of the value of the utility. But suppose one could sell such a quantity of primers or vocabularies in this dialect that the publisher could put them on sale at 2 francs a copy; if he does not need them, the aforesaid man will not buy any. Likewise if, needing them and only having 1fr.75 in his pocket, he cannot find a means of obtaining the 25 centimes that he lacks.

Even when, tempted by their low price, one buys utilities for which one has no immediate need, one does it because one foresees that they will be needed later on. If one did not foresee this later use, one would leave them with their seller, maker or owner.

This definition of value as a ratio between two needs and two powers makes it possible to understand, immediately, the mechanism of the rise and fall of prices, a phenomenon related to fluctuations in supply and demand.

The more a utility is needed, the more its price rises, but also the more its production increases.

Increase in demand gives rise to, calls forth, increase in supply.

The number of seller-makers or owners of a given utility grows in proportion to the increase in the number of buyers; the sellers enter into competition and the result of competition is a fall in prices.

Therefore competition is the regulator, in present circumstances, of the price of utilities or objects that can be made into property.

Abolition of measurable value. It is clear that the definition of measurable value, as we have just made it, does not fail in its application to give rise to a very large number of corrupt practices.

It is possible, indeed, to be in urgent need of an economic utility and to find oneself unable to get it - in other words there are consumers unable to obtain, through lack of means of exchange, cash or goods allowing them to deal with the producer or owner, the objects of consumption which they want.

There are paupers, outcasts of fortune, wretched people of every kind,

who find it totally impossible to get hold of essential utilities, absolutely necessary for their nourishment, for their clothing, for their lodging, for their mental culture. And the more human beings, the more various needs there are.

Noble minds and distinguished theorists have agreed in declaring or expounding that it was easy to put an end to this lamentable state of affairs by abolishing - not intrinsic value, as ignorant people suppose - but the measurable value of objects.

All the systems put forward amount, in the last analysis, to this: the suppression of direct exchange between individuals producing or consuming, and the replacement of the individual middleman by the administrative middleman - a middleman so privileged that without his participation no deal can take place.

These systems assume that since each member of the society has a right to steady work, he can be given the corresponding duty to deposit the fruits of his work, of his productive effort, in a store or warehouse, or some other establishment.

In return for this act of putting back or giving up, he has the power to provide himself, in this store, warehouse, or whatever it may be, with everything he needs for his consumption.

There exist several schools of thought, various projects and different plans carrying them into effect but all of them - and they include libertarian communism - are intended to lead to the same end: the blotting out of poverty, not only by the suppression of the exploitation of man by man, but also by that of direct relations between the producer and the consumer.

The abolition of measurable value and its consequences - The abolition of value does away with the individual producer, beginning with the craftsman. Indeed, as soon as the cost of the product cannot be suggested by the producer and questioned by the consumer, as soon as the product can be no longer tendered directly by the seller to the man who wants it and asked for by the consumer from the producer - in short, from the time when all deals must take place through the instrumentality of an impersonal and anonymous administration, there is no longer, there can be no longer, anything but an automatic, mechanical, impersonal, collective type of production. The producer does not know who is to consume his product - he works for the distributing administration. Personal production in one's own home is doomed to disappear in a short while through fear of possible fraud. How would the producer own a single tool for production, the least scrap of raw material? How would he withhold a particle of his output? Who would prevent him, in that case, from trading on the sly with a neighbouring consumer, or from working secretly on the latter's account?

It may be doubted whether systems of that kind lead to the disappearance of economic inequalities; it seems, on the other hand, that they tend towards a narrow restriction of human autonomy, if it is intended to put them into practice in a manner which would produce the expected result.

Let us try without prejudice to understand how far those restrictions can extend by asking ourselves - unrepentant lovers of human dignity as we are - whether the champions of these systems have fully thought out the logical consequences.

It stands to reason that the ban on establishing contact between the one who produces and the one who consumes levels requirements and gives production a uniform character. Ignorance about the individual consumer leads to ignorance of the range of personal needs. Clothes cut on the same pattern, pieces of furniture without style, buildings and homes that do not differ from one another, all this is not new. The method of production called "prefabrication", or the method of manu-

2 manufacture named "mass-production", has accustomed us to the absence of originality in the appearance of most of the things with which man surrounds himself. But the rule of regimes like those in question here would soon wipe out all that still remains to the producer in the way of creative spirit, initiative and an inclination to perfect the method of manufacture.

2 The anonymous producer has nothing to gain by making an effort to produce an article which differs from those which he has already produced, to alter the least cog in the routine process of manufacture to which he is harnessed each day for a greater or lesser number of hours. Furthermore, the collectivity, the social aggregate, can decree to the majority that such-and-such production is useless, arguing that it is concerned with articles of luxury or unnecessary utilities for which there is very little demand, or a demand from such a small minority that it is not worth bothering about. It can reject or prohibit the copying or distributing of a given piece of work because it is inconsistent with the artistic or economic criteria prevalent in the social environment. The administration-arbiter, in so far as he is the representative or delegate of the collectivity, can likewise deny to any manual or intellectual producer, who wants to break away from the current dogma or doctrine, the means of voicing his views on such-and-such a method of manufacture, or such-and-such an educational procedure. Bereft of the means of production, it is impossible for him to resist, to react, to assert himself.

Brands /
Produced by
people
individually
by consumers.

Suppose a man wished to produce for his personal use some carved furniture or other articles of original workmanship with the sole intention of adorning his house with them. Where is he to find, how is he to obtain the tools or materials necessary to accomplish this desire, if the majority of the group to which he belongs does not see any necessity to get in touch with the countries where the precious woods he needs grow, or to carry out the research necessary to obtain the tools required for his work? And if another man, less ambitious, expresses quite simply the desire to censure the executive system, the way the administrators are elected, the way majority decisions are implemented, etc. - where will he find a printing press, paper, a publisher, if the vast majority of the milieu from which he springs decline to grant him access to the type, the machines or the presses which are at its disposal? Take an artist: he is in danger of not finding a single room to exhibit his sculptures or pictures, or to give himself a hearing if he is a musician or an actor, the moment his style of painting, his manner of sculpting or his performance ruffles the prejudices or goes against the conventions of the collectivity on which he depends. As for an inventor, where can he still cherish the hope of finding amid the competition an opening for his invention?

In the systems which propose the abolition of value there is clearly nothing to guarantee the possibility of producing any article whatsoever if it is outside the category of utilities in general use.

So it is easy to understand Proudhon's dictum that value is the corner-stone of the economic structure.

Consumer bonds - It is possible to mitigate some of the disadvantages set out above by the use of "consumer bonds" issued to each producer in proportion to his contribution to, or deposit in, the common store. This system allows, up to a point, the possession of tools, or devices for production, in the producer's own home. Moreover, the consumer bond, which can be a "bearer bond", or, just as well, a "registered bond", enables the man who presents it at the pay desk of the administrator-distributor, to get himself issued with the utilities he needs, and this in any establishment whatsoever.

This method, which can be imagined in practice without difficulty, shatters the idea of the abolition of measurable value. It is impossible to picture the issuing of such bonds without a means of checking them. One can conceive that in exchange for the whole of his production, the whole of a human being's consumption might be guaranteed. It is

inconceivable that a consumer bond, with the same appropriating-power - I nearly said purchasing-power - should be issued to two producers whose contribution is calculated, in one case, by two pairs of clogs, and, in the other case, by a hundred watch-springs. There must be a standard of some kind or other. This will be the work-time, the weight, the bulk of the article, the quality of the material which has gone into its manufacture - but there must be a measure. And this measure will be used to determine the quantity and the kind of consumer utility to which the bond issued to the producer entitles him. This consumer bond will therefore act as a wage. Like all wages, it will be a matter for bargaining, unless it is imposed by force. Furthermore, if it is a "registered bond", it could be the object of hoarding and if it is a "bearer-bond", of "speculation". I say this only because I remember when fraudulent consumer bonds were put into circulation. The use of consumer bonds is a halfbreed system. It bans direct relations between the producer and the consumer, but it opens the door to all the deceptions which it was intended to eradicate by this ban, and it does not hold out any of the advantages offered by the method of dealing by mutual agreement.

Influence of monopoly and privilege in the current assessment of value.- It stands to reason that in the economic conditions to which the present societies are tied, there are only a few opportunities, or none at all, for direct relations between the actual producer and the true consumer. The fact of exploitation, the existence of privileged people, of monopolists, of middlemen of all kinds, gives the product a value which is often arbitrary and sometimes imaginary, and increases its price by all sorts of expenses. The actual producer is frequently a wage-earner who hires out his labour to a hoarder of cash and of means of production. He never, in many cases, deals with the actual consumer.

Even when he owns the productive equipment, it is more often than not with a middleman, a retailer, that he does business, and it happens that before being obtained by the true consumer, a product has passed through numerous intermediate hands. From the privileged proprietor of the factory, the owner of gigantic machines and the hirer-out of the labour of thousands of workers, to the last middleman, a petty retailer in a street stall, each one cuts off a rate of interest, a premium, a profit of some sort.

I will only mention briefly the very important effect of the Trusts, of the Cartels or Corporations - vast associations of privileged people endowed with an immense purchasing-power, in possession of enormous means of production, organized for the purpose of "controlling" the production of an article or of a range of articles for consumption in a given territory or even abroad - thus succeeding in fixing the quantity to be produced and the sale price - or, again, achieving a world-wide monopoly of the raw materials, the manufacture, and the marketing of a product.

It can therefore be said that the free play of supply and demand is impaired by the conditions in which production and consumption take place at the present time, or rather by the conditions to which the actual producer and consumer are tied when it comes to establishing relations with each other. The current assessment of value has nothing individualist about it. It depends neither on those who produce nor on those who consume - it depends on those who exploit other's work.

To be continued.

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ROCK

by Wm. Flygare

I am a rock,
not a big rock
like Gibraltar, Alcatraz,
but a rock,
a lone stone
sticking its head up out of the sea.
(Spring, 1957)

The sun
shines as well on me
as on the largest empire
of servant dogs and orient-ants.

I am my I,
and when I sink,
and the sea shall draw me in,
I shall have been...I shall have been.

BOOK REVIEWS

Men Against The State.: The Expositors Of Individualist Anarchism in America 1827-1908. By James J. Martin. Ralph Myles Publisher Inc. P.O.Box 1533, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80901, U.S.A. \$2.50. Available in Britain from Freedom Press at 21/-.

Reviewed by S.E.Parker.

This second edition of *Men Against The State* is most welcome. It comes at a time when there is a distinct revival of interest in the Warren-Tucker school of anarchism. In a model of historical scholarship, Dr. Martin details the growth and decline of the talented group of libertarian writers and publicists whose ideas found their ultimate synthesis in the work of Benjamin Tucker. He describes in depth the activities of Josiah Warren, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Lysander Spooner, J.K. Ingalls, W.B. Greene, Ezra Heywood and the Tucker associates. His story is a fascinating one, but it may well prove depressing for those whose perspectives are shaped by the belief that anarchism can be universalized.

Consider: here was a movement born at a time of social ferment and optimism in a country where the government was comparatively weak. It had capable theoreticians, practical exponents of "community living" and its supporters were virtually all "natives". Yet after eighty years of activity it petered out, despite the efforts of a few survivors.

Some reasons: Because of their desire to establish a future society on the basis of their ideas the Warrenites and Tuckerites tried to fit their anarchism into a societal context. They had to tailor their individualism in order to make it compatible with social engineering. As a result, their championship of the individual was deformed by the irons of utopia. Warren's experiments showed that anarchism could become at least a partial reality for a small minority of individuals. But that was all he accomplished in a positive sense. His belief that the examples of his "equity villages" would convince the mass proved delusory. The mass remained a mass and the individualists remained "outsiders". Nor does the gulf between them today appear any more bridgeable.

Neither Warren nor Tucker seem to have really come to grips with the intractable problem of social organization. Robert Michels has outlined with sombre effectiveness what he called the "iron law of oligarchy" - the invariable tendency of all organized efforts to give birth to an oligarchy. This means that any social application of anarchism - were it possible - would fall into the hands of new oligarchs who would become - de facto if not de jure - rulers over the individual. At most it would result in what Estey called the "anarchism of groups", but not the "anarchism of individuals".

Later anarchist individualists have developed a more realistic perspective: the continual conflict of the individual with the social - the unique against the Collective.

However, Josiah Warren's concept of the individualization of interests as opposed to their combination, was one of the most fruitful contributions ever made to anarchism. Its eclipse by attempts to link anarchism with collectivism proved disastrous, and led to the idiotic identification of anarchism with "leftism" - even with such totalitarian monstrosities as Maoism.

The value of Warren's concept remains, however. Properly used it is an effective weapon in the unending struggle for the individual. The "sovereignty of the individual" may never replace the sovereignty of governments, but it can always be opposed to them.

Buy - read - reflect!

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La Setta Rossa. By Enzo Martucci. Editrice Humanitas. Via Vittoria Colonna 49, Pescara, Italy. Pp. 141. L 2000.

Reviewed by Stephen Marletta

First published in 1953 with the financial help of a generous sympathiser, the

second edition of "La Setta Rossa" (The Red Sect) appears in response to many requests.

Its raw materials are: a continuous propaganda of individualist anarchism since the age of 16; first hand accounts and close studies of communist and anarchist leaders; imprisonment; hypocrisy; betrayal; poverty.

Its keystone is: Martucci's repudiation of communism and authority. Reading this one soon becomes aware of a fighter of long standing, not only against bourgeois society, but also against Communism. Martucci explains that there are two types of anti-communism - the bourgeois and the anarchist. The first is "narrow-minded, niggardly, stupid and reactionary". The second is "diverse - expressing a strongly individualist sentiment, which rebels against the chains and hypocrisies of the present world, but at the same time opposes the advent of a future even worse in its rigid fitting of men into barracks and bureaucratic-industrial-Stalinist society." (Page 7)

In the chapter called "What is Marxism?", Martucci deals with historical materialism. He demonstrates that egoism is the motive force in men and that it does not depend on the satisfaction of economic needs alone. There is also the spiritual which is often independent of the stomach.

"Reality is the reverse of what Marx wrote. Man certainly has economic needs, but he also has sentimental, idealistic and passionate needs, and just as the first acts on the second, so this in turn acts on the first."

To Martucci the Communist represents a danger to the future of humanity:

"Between us there exists a reciprocal and violent antipathy. The issue is not only determined by a diversity of ideas, but also by the irreducible opposition of temperaments. I have a tormented and restless soul - romantic and dionysiac in temperament, refractory to be idling and athirst for the distant. My excessive sensibilities, my ardent passions, my breath for a new life of boundless freedom, make me a brother of those poets and vagabonds of the nineteenth century who sought beyond the stable order of things for the most mad intoxications. With Nietzsche I could set sail dreaming of a hot, tropical south, or a Greece arrayed in incorruptible indigo; with Stirner I could direct myself towards a chaotic future involving a free-and-easy anarchy, licentious as a Bacchante; bare-chested and erect with hair blowing in the wind; with Baudelaire I could inhale the poisonous fragrance of the flowers of evil, or madden with desire for a beauty that descends from heaven to hell, making the universe less foul and time less weary. But with Gramsci or Togliatti.....I would have to take the People's train to Moscow! No! My nature rebels....."

Again, he writes:

"I am a disciple of Nietzsche and Stirner, a convinced amoralist and a believer with La Rochefoucauld that Evil as well as Good has its heroes. I can understand Alexander the Great who conquers the Orient and dies of debauchery in Babylon; Nero who, to satisfy an artistic fantasy, set fire to Rome; Napoleon who stained Europe with blood while dreaming of world domination; Bonnot, the bank robber, who, alone against 500 police, fell heroically at Choisy le Roi ..

"I understand the tyrant as well as the rebel: the ego that affirms itself in freedom. But I despise the slave and the spy: the ego that humiliates itself and crawls. I admire the evil that makes the great - even when unfortunate - the evil that produces the promethean attempt, the strenuous struggle against the world. But I detest the object who reduces men to vermin and uneasily explains away his acceptance of an existence in which he is exploited on all sides in order to survive. Barabbas does not nauseate me, but Judas does. And for me this is a question of sentiment, not of morality."

For Martucci man is not of one piece, logical and utilitarian, but a problematic and mysterious being who continually reveals himself in new ways, abandoning himself to diverse and opposing passions that burst forth from an obscure depth. Reason will never succeed in disciplining the passions. Just as it will never succeed in subduing life to its orders.

A NOTE ON AUTHORITY

by Enzo Martucci

translated by. S.M.

? The freedom of the individual ends where his power ends.

If I want, and my power permits, I can command others. But in this case the power exercised over them is not authority, because they are not bound to recognise and respect it. In fact, if they would rebel and use their power to impede my attempt at domination then all would remain free without anyone threatening to lord it over them. (Anarchy).

If, on the contrary, from docility or cowardice, they did not rebel and allowed themselves to be dominated, then we would have the triumph of the best in the biological sense of the word (Natural aristocracy).

Authority is a power that oppresses in the name of the Sacred (God, Morality, Society, etc.) which it pretends to represent. It is a power which all must adore and serve even if they possess the energy and capacity to overthrow it.

To destroy authority one must overthrow the Sacred - commit the crime that Stirner describes. Only in this way can we be anarchists.

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LETTERS

Mike Muir puts up a poor criticism of my article when he says he does "not like definitions". Tastes so devoid of reasons have little appeal to my intellect, especially when they are his tastes and not mine. But to simply dislike definitions is absurdly infantile, indicating inexperience (or immaturity) in dialogue and thought. A precise definition so often clears the confusion in discussion that I wonder if Mr. Muir has ever engaged in any (as opposed to "arguments") It equally facilitates the precision of one's own thinking (bringing one closer to the "true essence" of the thing being defined).

If Stirner says the ideas of one ego cannot become the ideas of another ego through the seekings of the latter after the former (e.g. reading "The Ego And His Own"), I think he is wrong - yet I might still call myself a "Stirnerite" (or, less precisely, an "egoist"), not because my ego is so puny that it has no other individuality, but because such an appellation facilitates my communications. If and only if calling myself a "Stirnerite" interferes with my communications will I not do so. That is egoism (If Mr. Muir's "I" will be "dented" or lost in some giant vortex by describing himself in some manner, in some context, he has my sympathies).

Benjamin Best.

S.E.Parker, it appears, swallows every anti-Communist lie which is propagated by the literary lackeys of the Western ruling class. This is surprising because Parker calls himself an anarchist and thus should know what the State's kept intellectual class is up to. His polemic against me in MINUS ONE n. 26 indicates that he shares the same assumptions about "the Communists" that the John Birch Society espouses.

Most obvious in this regard was his denial that the Western imperialists had no effect on the rise of Soviet totalitarianism - as if "the devil" Lenin "created" almost alone the new bureaucratic class. The Bolsheviks were intent on destroying Statism, but were forced to ally with the old tsarist bureaucratic class in order to defeat the Whites and their imperialist backers. It is easy to see why Stalinism must be blamed on Wilson, Churchill, and their bloodthirsty cohorts. Lenin fought bureaucracy till he died, and was a great libertarian; as for the suppression of the anarchists, not even Voline could prove that Lenin had a hand in it.

? Leninism is Bakuninism, and Parker takes Bakunin to task. Once more we hear the regular moralistic garbage about how someone may get hurt if there is a revolution. Parker fails to mention that that "someone" is the ruling class; in an insurrection, the oppressed have a grand feast. But Parker is a true believer in rather, all opposition to their own statism! J.E.

"individuals insurrection"; if he was serious that would be suicide. Stirner advised the propertyless masses to unite and rise together so as to be sure of victory. In the final analysis, Parker is advocating precisely the same line as the State advocates: do not rebel against the government. Be good, do what you are told, obey orders. If this is "egoism", then the most rabid applause for egoism comes from the State. The State has nothing against the Anarcho-Statists (anarchists in words, statists in deeds); rather, it sees them as comrades.

Steve Halbrook

(I have printed the above for two main reasons: One, because it is one of the best examples of the kind of political invective made popular by the Stalinists - "literary lackeys", "bloody cohorts", but, unfortunately, no "fascist beast" - I have read for some time. Two, because it will show to those readers who are unfamiliar with Halbrook's "critiques" that my criticism of him in the last issue was not directed at a straw man set up for the purposes of an exercise in polemic.

As for Lenin, I doubt very much if any other reader of Minus One believes he was a "libertarian".

As for Bakunin as an "anarchist" with whom individualists can sympathise, I will commend the following letter written at the height of his "anarchist" activity:

"Did you ever ponder over the principal reason for the power and vitality of the Jesuit Order? Shall I tell you the reason? Well it consists in the absolute extinction of the individual in the will, the organization and the action of the community. And I am asking you: is this so great a sacrifice for a really strong, passionate and earnest man? This is the sacrifice which I demand from all our friends.... I do not want to be I, I want to be We."

(M. Bakunin: Gesammelte Werke, Berlin 1924.

Quoted by Max Nomad: Apostles of Revolution 1961, Page 184. Collier Books edition)

As for the rest, please read what I said in the last issue and compare. - S.E.P.)

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LITERATURE

A few copies of "The False Principles Of Our Education" by Max Stirner ("Essential Prelude to the Grand Fugue" - Wm. Flygare) are available price 25p (5/-) postage included.

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In a society like ours, bitterly resentful of privacy, the integrity of one's personality is constantly under attack from all sides; not only under direct frontal attack, but which is worse, it is always exposed to insidious influences which will infect it and rot it down. To the individualist, the integrity thus menaced is the most precious thing on earth; and the dangers to it being what they are, they beget a corresponding extreme sensitiveness and caution which in time becomes a sort of secondary instinct.

from an unpublished sketch by Albert Jay Nock
quoted by Robt M. Crunden in "The Mind and Art of
Albert Jay Nock.

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Freedom is the will to be responsible for oneself.

Friedrich Nietzsche