
"Ideas of Max Stirner" by James Huneker (1907)

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1. Transcriber's introduction

[Max Stirner](#)'s book on conscious egoism was published in English (as *The Ego and His Own*) for the first time in 1907 — 65 years after its original publication in German and over 50 years after Stirner's death. To mark the occasion, an essay by [James Huneker](#), transcribed below (from [the archived PDF](#) provided on nytimes.com), about the philosopher's life and ideas appeared in the *New York Times* on April 20, 1907.

Huneker's essay provides both a summary of John Henry Mackay's biography of Stirner ([Max Stirner: His life and work](#)) and a brief review of Stirner's book, with plenty of the

art critic's name-dropping flourishes throughout. In order to help today's reader appreciate the context from which Huneker wrote, I've hyperlinked most of the names that appear in the essay (pointing to their Wikipedia entries for the most part). This might be especially helpful in the case of those intellectual figures which were no doubt well-known to Huneker's [very cultured] audience in 1907, but which are no longer much discussed today.

A slightly modified and expanded version of this essay also appeared as the last chapter of Huneker's [*Egoists, a book of supermen*](#) (1909). In addition to the scanned book available on the Internet Archive at that link (and an okay OCR'd ebook), a nice transcription of this later version of the essay has been archived at The Anarchist Library as "[Max Stirner by James G. Huneker.](#)" (I did not discover this version until after I had transcribed the *New York Times* article below, otherwise I wouldn't have bothered. Oh well.)

The main difference between the two versions of the essay is that the later version, which appeared in Huneker's book, includes an additional section ("II"). There are also minor differences, a few of which I point out in the footnotes of the transcription below (the first footnote appeared in the original article, the rest are mine).

Finally, I'd like to give a few thoughts on one of Huneker's terms. Huneker sees Stirner's egoism as, if nothing else, "a handy weapon" against Socialism. He calls *The Ego and His Own* "the most drastic criticism of Socialism thus far presented." Given that Stirner's work has been taken up for the most part by self-described socialists — early on by Engels who saw Stirner's egoism as a possible philosophic foundation of communism, later by Benjamin Tucker who published the very book Huneker is reviewing, and by many anarchists today — these comments may be confusing.

Huneker's fear, like Spencer's earlier, was of an oppressive, heavy, grey *State* Socialism sacrificing individuals and individ-

uality to some notion of a mediocre "Society." But it is a narrow and one-sided (if popular) retreat from *socialism* which too eagerly, in 1907 and today, sacrifices individuals to existing conditions. Thus we see Marx and Engels in their manifesto mock their detractors who fear in communism what already exists in capitalism. And we see artists like Oscar Wilde (under the influence of Godwin and Kropotkin) claim that "Individualism, then, is what through Socialism we are to attain to." Indeed, Wilde not only considered socialism as necessary for a full individualism, he uses the terms almost as synonyms.

But the matter is not so simply cleared up by distinguishing between state and libertarian socialism (see Tucker's "[State Socialism and Anarchism](#)"), because similar bipolar tensions have always existed within libertarian socialism itself. Beginning with Proudhon's investigations of social antimonies and his rejection of "Communism," which finds an ally in Stirner's egoism, individualist anarchists have worried that socialist projects would end up simply mirroring the tyranny of capitalism and other exploitative societies: that instead of the few dominating the many, socialism would consist of the many dominating the few, or (to use Proudhon's somewhat paradoxical phrase) the exploitation of the strong by the weak. These tensions have played their part in the various calcified, broken, and re-calcified divisions which criss-cross the anarchist landscape to this day.

Still, Huneker's view of Stirner as mostly useful as an antidote to state socialism not only makes Stirner out to be less interesting than he is, but it ignores all the interesting bits of socialism. If we use the word in a minimalist sense, insofar as it means opposition to (and transcension of) capitalism and traditionalism — to exploitation and domination — Stirner's egoism is *only* useful to a socialist. For more along similar lines, see section G.6 of An Anarchist FAQ: "[What are the ideas of Max Stirner?](#)"

2. IDEAS OF MAX STIRNER.

First English Translation of His Book, "The Ego and His Own" — His Attack on Socialism — The Most Revolutionary Book Ever Published.¹ Written for The New York Times Saturday Review of Books by James Huneker, author of "Iconoclasts."

2.1. I.

In 1888 [John Henry Mackay](#), the Scottish-German poet, an intransigent, while at the British Museum reading [Lange's](#) "History of Materialism," encountered the name of Max Stirner and a brief criticism of his forgotten book, "Der Einzige und sein Eigentum." ["The Only One and His Property"; in French translated "L'Unique et sa Propriété," and in the first English translation more aptly and euphoniously entitled "The Ego and His Own."] His curiosity excited, Mackay, who is a man of assured talents, wealth, and an ardent scholar,² procured after some difficulty a copy of the work, and so greatly was he stirred that for ten years he gave himself up to the study of Stirner and his teachings, and after incredible painstaking published in 1898 the story of his life. ["Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk," John Henry Mackay, Schuster & Loefler, Berlin and Leipsic.] To Mackay's labors we owe all we know of a man who was as absolutely swallowed up by the years as if he had never existed. But some advanced spirits had read Stirner's book, the most revolutionary ever written, and had felt its influence. Let us name two: [Henrik Ibsen](#) and [Frederick Nietzsche](#). Though the name of Stirner is not quoted by Nietzsche, he nevertheless recommended Stirner to a

¹["THE EGO AND HIS OWN." By Max Stirner. Translated from the German by Stephen T. Byington, with an introduction by James L. Walker. New York: Benjamin R Tucker. \\$1.50](#)

²The later version of this essay described Mackay simply as "an anarchist"

favorite pupil of his, Prof. Baumgartner at Basle University. This was in 1874.³

One hot August afternoon in the Year 1896 at [Bayreuth](#) I was standing in the marktplatz when a member of the [Wagner Theatre](#) — the performances were in progress that Summer — pointed out to me a house opposite, at the corner of the Maximilianstrasse, and said: "Do you see that house with the double gables? A man was born there whose name will be green when [Jean Paul](#) and [Richard Wagner](#) are forgotten." It was too large a draught upon my credulity, so I asked the name. "Max Stirner," he replied. "The crazy Hegelian," I retorted. "You have read him, then?" "No; but you haven't read [Nordau](#)." It was true. All fire and flame at that time for Nietzsche, I did not realize that the poet and rhapsodist had forerunners. My friend sniffed at Nietzsche's name; Nietzsche for him was an aristocrat, not an Individualist. In reality, a lyric expounder of [Bismarck's](#) gospel of blood and iron. Wagner's adversary would, with [Renan](#), place mankind under the yoke of a more exacting tyranny than Socialism, the tyranny of culture, of the Over-Man. Ibsen, who had studied both Kierkegaard and Stirner — witness Brand and Peer Gynt — Ibsen was much nearer to the champion of the Ego than Nietzsche. Yet it is the dithyrambic author of "Zarathustra" who is responsible, with Mackay, for the recrudescence of Stirner's teachings.

2.1.1. Stirner, Nietzsche and the Doctrine of Individualism

Nietzsche is the poet of the doctrine, Stirner its prophet, or, if you will, its philosopher. Later I secured the book, which had been reprinted in the cheap edition of [Reclam](#). [1882.] It seemed colorless, or rather gray, set against the glory and gorgeous rhetoric of Nietzsche. I could not see what I saw a decade later — that Nietzsche only used Stirner as a spring-

³But see Wikipedia's ["Relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner"](#)

board, as a point of departure, and that the Individual had vastly different meanings to these widely disparate temperaments. Stirner, indifferent psychologist as he was, displayed nevertheless the courage of an explorer in search of the pole of the Ego.

The man, whose theories make a tabula rasa of civilization, was born at Bayreuth Oct. 25, 1806, and died at Berlin June 25, 1856. His right name was Johann Caspar Schmidt, Max Stirner being a nickname bestowed upon him by his lively comrades in Berlin because of his very high and massive forehead. His father was a maker of wind instruments, who died six months after his son's birth. His mother remarried, and his stepfather proved a kind protector. Nothing of external importance occurred in the life of Max Stirner that might place him apart from his fellow-students. He was very industrious over his books at Bayreuth, and when he became a student at the Berlin University he attended the lectures regularly, preparing himself for a teacher's profession. He mastered the classics, modern philosophy, and modern languages. But he did not win a doctor's degree; just before examinations his mother became ill with a mental malady, (a fact his critics have noted,) and the son dutifully gave up everything so as to be near her. After her death he married a girl who died within a short time. Later, in 1843, his second wife was [Marie Dähnhardt](#), a very "advanced" young woman, who came from Schwerin to Berlin to lead a "free" life. She met Stirner in the Hipfel circle, at a Weinstube in the Friedrichstrasse, where radical young thinkers gathered: [Bruno Bauer](#), [Feuerbach](#), [Karl Marx](#), [Moses Hess](#), [Jordan](#), [Julius Faucher](#), and other stormy insurgents. She had, it is said, about 10,000 [thalers](#). She was married with the ring wrenched from a witness's purse — her bridegroom had forgotten to provide one. He was not a practical man; if he had been he would not have written "The Ego and His Own."

It was finished between the years 1843 and 1845; the latter date it was published. It created a stir, though the censor did not seriously interfere with it; its attacks on the prevailing

government were veiled. In Germany rebellion on the psychic plane expresses itself in metaphysics; in Poland and Russia music is the favorite medium. Feuerbach, Hess, and [Szeliga](#) answered Stirner's terrible arraignment of society, but men's thoughts were interested elsewhere, and with [the revolt of 1848](#) Stirner was quite effaced. He had taught for five years in a fashionable school for young ladies; he had written for several periodicals, and translated extracts from the works of [Say](#) and [Adam Smith](#).

2.1.2. Max Stirner and His Wife.

After his book appeared, his relations with his wife became uneasy. Late in 1846 or early in 1847 she left him and went to London, where she supported herself by writing; later she inherited a small sum from a sister, visited Australia, married a laborer there, and became a washerwoman. In 1897 Mackay wrote to her in London, asking her for some facts in the life of her husband. She replied tartly that she was not willing to revive her past; that her husband had been too much of an egotist to keep friends, and was a man, "Very sly." This was all he could extort from the woman, who evidently had never understood her husband and execrated his memory, probably because her little fortune was swallowed up by their mutual improvidence. Another appeal only elicited the answer that "Mary Smith is preparing for death" — she had become a Roman Catholic. It is the irony of things in general that his book is dedicated to "My Sweetheart, Marie Dähnhardt."

Stirner, after being deserted, led a precarious existence. The old jolly crowd at Hippel's seldom saw him. He was in prison twice for debt — free [Prussia!](#) — and often lacked bread. He, the exponent of Egoism, of philosophic anarchy, starved because of his pride. He was in all matters save his theories a moderate man, eating and drinking temperately, living frugally. Unassuming in manners, he could hold his own in debate — and Hippel's appears to have been a rude debating society — yet one who avoided life rather than mastered it. He was of medium height, ruddy, and his eyes deep blue.

His hands were white, slender, "aristocratic," writes Mackay. Certainly not the figure of stalwart shatterer of conventions, not the ideal iconoclast; above all, without a touch of the melodrama of communistic anarchy, with its black flags, its propaganda by force, its idolatry of assassinations, bomb throwing, killing of fat, harmless policemen, and its sentimental gabble about fraternity. Stirner hated the ward Equality: he knew it was a lie, knew that all men are born unequal, as no two grains of sand on earth ever are or ever will be alike. He was a solitary. And thus he died at the age of fifty. A few of his former companions heard of his neglected condition and buried him. Nearly a half century later Mackay, with the co-operation of [Hans von Bülow](#), affixed a commemorative tablet on the house where he last lived, Phillipstrasse 19, Berlin, and alone Mackay placed a slab to mark his grave in the [Sophienkirchhof](#).

2.1.3. The Most Thoroughgoing of nihilists.

Figure 1. Max Stirner. Portrait sketch made by Friedrich Engels. From John Henry Mackay's "Max Stirner," (Schuster, Loeffler & Co., Berlin.) The only portrait of the great "individualist" extant. The philosopher of anarchy looks like a harmless domino player.



It is to the poet of the ["Letzte Erkenntniss,"](#) ("Sum of Knowledge,") with its stirring line, "Doch bin ich mein," ("But I am mine,") that I owe the above scanty details of the most thoroughgoing Nihilist who ever penned his disbelief in religion, humanity, society, the family. He rejects them all. We have no genuine portrait of this insurrectionist — he preferred personal insurrection to general revolution; the latter, he asserted, brought in its train either Socialism or a tyrant — except

a sketch hastily made by [Friedrich Engels](#), the revolutionist, for Mackay. It is not reassuring. Stirner looks like an old-fashioned German and timid pedagogue, high coat-collar, spectacles, clean-shaven face and all. This valiant enemy of the State, of Socialism, was, perhaps, only brave on paper. But his icy, relentless, epigrammatic style is in the end more gripping than the spectacular, volcanic, whirling utterances of Nietzsche. Nietzsche lives in an ivory tower and is an aristocrat. Into Stirner's land all are welcome. That is, if men have the will to rebel. Above all, if they despise the sentimentality of mob rule. "The Ego and His Own" is the most drastic criticism of Socialism thus far presented.

2.2. II.

The book called "The Ego and His Own" is divided into two parts: first, The Man; second, I. Its motto should be, "I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones." But Walt Whitman's pronouncement had not been made, and Stirner was forced to fall back on Goethe — Goethe, from whom all that is modern flows. "I place my all on Nothing." ["Ich hab Mein Sach auf Nichts gestellt," from the joyous poem "Vanitas! Vanitatum Vanitas!"] is Stirner's keynote to his Egoistic symphony. I, Me, Ich, Ego, je, moi — the list might be lengthened of the personal pronoun in various languages. The hateful I, as [Pascal](#) said, caused [Zola](#), a solid egoist himself, to assert that the English were the most egotistic of races because their I in their tongue was but a single letter, while the French employed two, je, and not capitalized unless beginning a sentence! Stirner must have admired the English, as his I was the sole counter in his philosophy. His ego and not the family is the unit of the social life. In antique times, when men were really the young, not the ancient, it was a world of reality. Men enjoyed the material. With Christianity came the rule of the Spirit; ideas were become sacred, with the concepts of God, Goodness, Sin, Salvation. After [Rousseau](#) and the French Revolution humanity was enthroned, and the State became our oppressor. Our first enemies are our parents, our educators — an idea first enunci-

ated by [Stendhal](#), though also original with Stirner. It follows, then, that the only criterion of life is my Ego. Without my Ego I could not apprehend existence. Altruism is as pretty disguise for egotism. No one is or can be disinterested. He gives up one thing for another because the other seems better, nobler to him. Egotism! The ascetic renounces the pleasures of life because in his eyes renunciation is nobler than enjoyment. Egotism again! "You are to benefit yourself, and you are not to seek your benefit," cries Stirner. Explain the paradox! The one sure thing of life is the Ego. [Descartes] Therefore, "I am not you, but I'll use you if you are agreeable to me." Not to God, not to man, must be given the glory. "I'll keep the glory myself." What is Humanity but an abstraction? I am Humanity. Therefore the State is a monster that devours its children. It must not dictate to me. "The State and I are enemies." The State is a spook. A spook, too, is freedom. What is freedom? Who is free? Free for what? The world belongs to all, but all are I. I alone am individual proprietor.

2.2.1. Stirner's Idea of Property.

Property is conditioned by might. What I have is mine. "Whoever knows how to take, to defend, the thing, to him belongs property." Stirner would have held that property was not only nine but ten points of the law. He repudiates all laws. Repudiates competition, for persons are not the subject of competition, but "things" are; therefore if you are without "things" how can you compete? Persons are free, not "things." The world, therefore, is not "free." Socialism is but a further screwing up of the State machine to limit the individual. Socialism is a new god, a new abstraction to tyrannize over the Ego. And remember that Stirner is not speaking of the metaphysical Ego of [Hegel](#), [Fichte](#), [Schilling](#), but of your I, my I, the political, the social I, the economic I of every man and woman. In a sense Stirner is not a philosopher. He is, rather, an Ethiker. He spun no metaphysical cobwebs. He reared no lofty cloud palaces. He did not bring from Asia its pessimism, as did [Schopenhauer](#); nor deny reality, as did Berkeley. He was a foe to general ideas. He was an implacable realist. Yet

while he denies the existence of an Absolute, of a Deity, State, Categorical Imperative, he nevertheless had not shaken himself free from Hegelianism [he is Extreme Left as a Hegelian,] for he erected his I as an Absolute, though only dealing with it in its relations to society. Now, nature abhors an absolute. Everything is relative. So we shall see presently that with Stirner, too, his I is not so independent as he imagines.

He says "crimes spring from fixed ideas." The Church, State, the Family, Morals, are fixed ideas. "Atheists are pious people." They reject one fiction only to cling to many old ones. Liberty for the people is not my liberty. Socrates was a fool in that he conceded to the Athenians the right to condemn him. [Proudhon](#) said, "Property is theft." Theft from whom? From society? But society is not the sole proprietor. Pauperism is the valuelessness of Me. The State and pauperism are the same. Communism, Socialism abolish private property and push us back into Collectivism. The individual is enslaved by the machinery of the State or by socialism. Your Ego is not free if you allow your vices or virtues to enslave it. The intellect has too long ruled, says Stirner; it is the will (not Schopenhauer's Will to Live, or [Hartmann](#)'s Will to Power,⁴ but the sum of our activity expressed by an act of volition; old-fashioned will, in a word) to exercise itself to the utmost. Nothing compulsory, all voluntary. Do what you will. *Fay ce que voudras*, as [Rabelais](#) has it in his Abbey of Theleme. Not "Know thyself," but get the value out of yourself. Make your value felt. The poor are to blame for the rich. Our art to-day is the only art possible, and therefore real at the time. We are at every moment all we can be. There is no such thing as sin. It is an invention to keep imprisoned the will of our Ego. And as mankind is forced to believe theoretically in the evil of sin, yet commit it in its daily life, hypocrisy and crime are engendered. If the concept of sin had never been used as a club over the weak-minded, there would be no sinners — i.e., wicked people. [Here the Christian Scientists should read.] The individual is himself the world's history. The world is my picture. There is no other Ego

⁴The later version of this essay reads "Nietzsche's Will to Power"

but mine. [Louis XIV](#) said, "L'Etat, c'est moi"; I say, "l'Univers, c'est moi." [John Stuart Mill](#) wrote in his famous essay on liberty that "Society has now got the better of the individual."

2.2.2. Ibsen and Rousseau.

Rousseau, a madman of genius, is to blame for the "social contract" and the "equality" nonsense that has poisoned more than one nation's political ideas. The minority is always in the right, declared Ibsen, as opposed to [Comte](#)'s "Submission is the base of perfection." To have the will to be responsible for one's self, advises Nietzsche. "I am what I am," (Brand.) "To thyself be sufficient," (Peer Gynt.) Both men failed, for their freedom kills. To thine own self be true. God is within you. Best of all is [Lord Acton](#)'s dictum that "Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is of itself the highest political end." To will is to have to will (Ibsen.) My truth is the truth (Stirner.) Mortal has made the immortal, says the Rig Veda. Nothing is greater than I (Bhagavat Gita.) I am that I am, (the [Avesta](#), also Exodus.) [Taine](#) wrote, "Nature is in reality a tapestry of which we see the reverse side. This is why we try to turn it." Hierarchy, oligarchy, both forms submerge the Ego. J. S. Mill demanded: "How can great minds be produced in a country where the test of a great mind is agreeing in the opinions of small minds?" [Bakounine](#) in his fragmentary essay on [God and the State](#) feared the domination of science quite as much as an autocracy. "Politics is the madness of the many for the gain of the few," [Pope](#) asserted. Read [Spinoza](#), "The Citizen and the State," (Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.) Or [Oscar Wilde](#)'s epigram: "Charity creates a multitude of sins."

Science tells us in this century that our I is really a "we"; a colony of cells, an orchestra of inherited instincts. We have not even free will, or at least only in a limited sense. We are an instrument played upon by our heredity and our environment. The cell, then, is the unit, not the Ego. Very well, Stirner would exclaim (if he had lived after [Darwin](#) and 1859,) the cell is my cell, not yours! Away with other cells! But such an autonomous gospel is surely a phantasm. Stirner, too, saw a

ghost. Stirner, too, in his proud Individualism was an aristocrat. No man may separate himself from the tradition of his race unless to incur the penalty of a sterile isolation. The solitary is usually the abnormal man. Man is gregarious. Man is a political animal. Even Stirner recognizes that man is not man without society.

2.2.3. "Letting Go and Holding On."

In practice he would have agreed with [Havelock Ellis](#) that "all the art of living lies in the fine mingling of letting go and holding on."⁵ The body includes the soul and the soul permeates the body. That gentle mystic [Joachim of Flora](#) said: "The true ascetic counts nothing his own, save only his harp." But Stirner, sentimental, henpecked, myopic Berlin professor, was too actively engaged in wholesale criticism — that is, destruction of society, with all its props and standards, its hidden selfishness and heartlessness — to bother with theories of reconstruction. His disciples have remedied the omission.⁶ He speaks, though vaguely, of a Union of Egoists, a Verein, where all would rule all, where man, through self-mastery, would be his own master. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Indeed, Stirner's notions as to Property and Money — "it will always be money" — sound suspiciously like those of our captains of industry. Might conquers Right. He has brought to bear the most blazing light rays upon the shifts and evasions of those who decry Egoism, who are what he calls "involuntary," not voluntary, egotists. Their motives are shown to the bone. Your [Sir Willoughby Patternes](#) are not real Egoists, but only half-hearted, selfish weaklings. The true egotist is the altruist, says Stirner; yet [Leibnitz](#) was right; so was [Dr. Pangloss](#). This is the best of possible worlds. Any other is not conceivable for

⁵This was corrected in the later version of the essay to read "he would not have agreed with Havelock"

⁶This was expanded in the later version of the essay by the insertion of two sentences: "In the United States, for example, [Benjamin R. Tucker](#), a follower of [Josiah Warren](#), teaches a practical and philosophical form of Individualism. He is an Anarch who believes in passive resistance."

man, who is at the top of his zoological series. (Though [Quinton](#) has made the astounding statement that the birds follow the mammals.) We are all "spectres of the dust," and to live on an overcrowded planet we must follow the advice of the [Boyg](#): "Go roundabout!" Compromise is the only sane attitude. The world is not, will never be, to the strong of arm or spirit, as Nietzsche believes. The race is to the mediocre. The survival of the fittest is to the weak. Society shields and upholds the feeble. Mediocrity rules, let Carlyle or Darwin enunciate laws as they may. It was the perception of these facts that drove Stirner to formulate his theories in "The Ego and His Own." He was poor, a failure, and despised by his wife. He lived under a dull, brutal regime. The Individual was naught, the State all. His book was his great revenge. It was the efflorescence of his Ego. It was his romance, his dream of an ideal world, his Platonic republic. Philosophy is more a matter of man's temperament than some suppose. And philosophic systems often go by opposites. Schopenhauer preached asceticism, but hardly led an ascetic life; Nietzsche commanded us: "Be hard!" when he really meant it for his own tender, bruised soul. His injunctions to be free, to become Immoralists and Overmen, were but the buttressing up of a will diseased, by the needs of a man who suffered his life long from morbid sensibility. [James Walker](#)'s suggestion that "We will not allow the world to wait for the Overman. We are the Overmen," is a mordant criticism of Nietzscheism. I am Unique. Never again will this aggregation of atoms stand on earth. Therefore I must be free. I will myself free. (It is spiritual liberty that only counts.) But my I must not be of the kind described by the madhouse doctor in "Peer Gynt": "Each one shuts himself up in the barrel of self. In the self-fermentation he dives to the bottom; with the self-bung he seals it hermetically." The increased self-responsibility of life in an Egoist Union would prevent the world from ever entering into such ideal anarchy (an-arch, without government.) There is too much of renunciation in the absolute freedom of the will — that is its final, if paradoxical, implication — for mankind. Our Utopias are secretly based on Chance. Deny Chance in our existence and life will be without salt. Man is not a perfectible animal. He fears

the new and therefore clings to his old beliefs. To each his chimera. He has not grown mentally or physically since the Sumerians — or a million years before the Sumerians. Man is not a logical animal. He is governed by his emotions, his affective life. He hugs his illusions. His brains are an accident, possibly from overnutrition, as [De Gourmont](#) says. To fancy him capable of existing in a community where all will be self-governed is a rare poet's vision. That way the millennium lies. And would the world be happier if it ever did attain this truth?

2.2.4. Qualities of the English Translation.

The English translation of "The Ego and His Own" is admirable; it is that of a philologist and a versatile scholar. Stirner's form is open to criticism. It is vermicular. His thought is never confused,⁷ but he sees so many sides of his theme, embroiders it with so many variations, that he repeats himself. He has neither the crystalline brilliance nor the poetic glamour of Nietzsche. But he left behind him a veritable Breviary of Destruction, a striking and dangerous book. It is dangerous in every sense of the word — to socialism, to politicians, to hypocrisy. It asserts the dignity of the Individual, not his debasement. It fascinates even though it does not convince, and it is a handy weapon in these days when Socialism is tightening its sluggish coils preparatory to swallowing the State. [Herbert Spencer](#), too, foresaw the dangers of Socialism.

"Is it not the chief disgrace in the world not to be a unit; to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred of thousands, of the party, of the section to which we belong, and our opinion predicted geographically as the North or the South?"

But Spencer did not write these words, nor did Max Stirner. [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#) wrote them. J. H.

New York, April, 1907.

⁷In the later essay this reads instead, "His thought is sometimes confused"