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What is Egoism?

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Egoism is named after the word “ego,” which is latin for “I.” Everyone around us has an ego for which, Max Stirner understood that we all have a drive to serve ourselves and the I, the self. This philosophical observation is also often seen in the sciences, as any serious scientist studying in the field of psychology or zoology can tell you that humans act for their own self-interest. It is then asked, is altruism a case against egoism? The answer is no, for which even Stirner argues that even altruism is a form of egoism on its own. Stirner said that altruism and cooperation—and even community—is made because it serves our ego in a way. Why do we work with other people? For our own interests. This is the meat and flesh of egoism, it’s not at all complicated.

“Egoism means it’s fine to murder and rape people!” is one of the many strawmen that unfortunately many leftists can easily fall into, as frustrating it is as just how plain false it is. For which Stirner said in a classic quote,

I love men too—not merely individuals, but every one. But I love them with the consciousness of egoism; I love them because love makes me happy, I love because loving is natural to me, because it pleases me. I know no ‘commandment of love.’ I have a fellow-feeling with every feeling being, and their torment torments, their refreshment refreshes me too; I can kill them, not torture them.¹

Egoism is not a rejection of altruism, or collectivism. To call egoism an *opposite* to collectivism would just be plain false. It simply means to embrace an ego that is in all of us, and live for ourselves and to respect each other’s ego, uniqueness, and personality.

The divine is God’s concern; the human, man’s. My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is mine, and it is not a general one, but is—unique, as I am unique.

Nothing is more to me than myself!²

The roots of egoist thinking at its core is found in Max Stirner in his books *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, translated as *Ego and its Own*, and *Stirner’s Critics*, which are both incredible books to read and you should read—it’s not too long either.

¹ Max Stirner, *Ego and its Own*, Second Part: I, II. The Owner, ii. My Intercourse.

² *Ibid.*, All Things are Nothing to Me.

Another belief of egoism—and Stirner in particular—is the opposition of property. There seems to be a lot of confusion of leftists on his ideas of property, by which we have to make one thing very, very clear, stirner *does not* advocate for private property—just the opposite—he quotes,

The laborers have the most enormous power in their hands, and, if they once became thoroughly conscious of it and used it, nothing would withstand them; they would only have to stop labor, regard the product of labor as theirs, and enjoy it. This is the sense of the labor disturbances which show themselves here and there. The State rests on the slavery of labor. If labor becomes free. The State is lost.³

Stirner is not a capitalist, he was an anarchist in nature, even if he hasn't outright said it, and a socialist especially. He especially does not believe in "private property" nor even normal "property," at all. He puts in his book, that property has to be fought for, harshly to be owned, you cannot own a property (personal or private), without violence. One cannot own a property by simply saying, "this is mine!"—by which stirner then observes, that property is fought for in violence, the violence of the state, and the bourgeoisie. The violence of the state and the bourgeoisie are spooked, handling themselves in the false idea of "property," in which they then use to exploit and extract! To put this in a quote, "[p]roperty exists by grace of the law. It is not a fact, but a legal fiction." Stirner extensively goes on about this in the section of *Ego and Its Own* known as "Political Liberalism," in which he regularly critiques liberals and the state, and exposing their spookiness and hatred towards the proletariat in a false sense of "freedom" and "choice." In a quote,

So runs the speech of commonality. The commonality is nothing else than the thought that the State is all in all, the true man, and that the individual's human value consists in being a citizen of the State. In being a good citizen he seeks his highest honor; beyond that he knows nothing higher than at most the antiquated—being a "good Christian."⁴

Another idea that egoists believe in, is the Union of Egoists. This idea of organization by Stirner is not literal, but rather, a metaphorical one. It simply means that

towards workers, "If you don't want to work! You'll be living on the streets like those poor hobos! Do you want that? Do you want to live like a hobo?" And I'm especially not alone here in these thoughts.

Once I noticed and fully understood just how spooked society is, that's when I've truly become so much more free and happy. I can recall many days in grade school where I was left crying in my bed 'cause, "I'm not good enough," for society, and once I've fully taken in that these spooks don't matter, it made me so much better, happier, and free. I believe that is the value in egoism as a philosophy, and together with other nihilistic, postmodernist literature in philosophy, and that is why we must start reading Stirner and be free. It is especially valuable in the Philippines, as many, many of the proletarians and people here are spooked into religion, into "responsibility," into human society as a whole.

³ *Ibid.*, II. Men of the Old Time and the New, iii. The Free, 1. Political Liberalism.

⁴ *Ibid.*

way possible. Fascist ideology is riddled with spooks: the belief that one race is superior, that Jews bad cause something something, using christianity to justify genocide, and the use of religion in general to be an ass. Fascism, anti-semitism, race, inherent superiority, unfortunately has not material and/or scientific basis, but the fascist does not care, why? It's not meant to be logical, pure reactionary, to gain and use state violence under a fake coat of "populism."

Egoist Analysis

Egoist analysis explains a lot of things, especially useful for understanding class conflicts and how the bourgeoisie abuses spooks to hinder the egos of the working class and force them to conform. If you think about it, Marx uses egoism unconsciously in his works to philosophically and scientifically explain bourgeoisie activity and what they do under capitalist society. While it is true that the bourgeoisie do things for their own ego, they do so in complete disrespect of the ego of others, in this case, the proletariat. As explained earlier, egoist analysis simultaneously explains why we are both not only egoistic, but also altruistic. The whole debacle about individualism vs collectivism is a false dichotomy, they're both great and useful to serve our egos!

Egoist analysis is a nice philosophical reflection that confirms a lot of things that I thought about my experience as a Filipino and Filipino society. Like, why are we really altruistic, but at the same time, we're also individualistic? Why is the state always so rude and mean towards the poor people, why does it feel like there's a massive disconnect between the poor and the rich? While these can be answered through Marxism, I've found that egoism is a more useful tool in figuring this out.

The Liberating Potential of Egoism

Egoism is a liberating philosophy that explains a lot of my angers towards modern Filipino society. This is first seen and acknowledged by me when in very early on in school, I continue to keep asking myself, every year, "why do we keep having to go school? Why can't we just be free and do whatever we want, even if education is so important, why are these teachers so strict about our lives, freedoms, uniqueness?" The answer to this is always been, "well, it's for your grades! You have to keep working when you're older, it's your *responsibility*, as a human being!" Then after that, they start to threaten you with terrible things that happened

a union of egoists is a group of voluntary people and/or egoists that are in association with each other out of pure will, not due to some spook, or "inheritance." In *Stirner's Critics*, Stirner brilliantly explains this concept further by writing:

It would be another thing indeed, if Hess wanted to see egoistic unions not on paper, but in life. Faust finds himself in the midst of such a union when he cries: "Here I am human, here I can be human"—Goethe says it in black and white. If Hess attentively observed real life, to which he holds so much, he will see hundreds of such egoistic unions, some passing quickly, others lasting. Perhaps at this very moment, some children have come together just outside his window in a friendly game. If he looks at them, he will see a playful egoistic union. Perhaps Hess has a friend or a beloved; then he knows how one heart finds another, as their two hearts unite egotistically to delight (enjoy) each other, and how no one "comes up short" in this. Perhaps he meets a few good friends on the street and they ask him to accompany them to a tavern for wine; does he go along as a favor to them, or does he "unite" with them because it promises pleasure? Should they thank him heartily for the "sacrifice," or do they know that all together they form an "egoistic union" for a little while?⁵

And in another quote, he says,

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.⁶

To make things simple to understand, egoists believe that we have all an innate ego that we can activate at any time, an ego that works for a self-interest that does not bow down to any spook or false idea that statist and/or liberals will throw down on you. An ego that loves all egos, while obliterating all that stands away or harm egos, i.e. Spooks, in which we will talk about in a second.

⁵ Max Stirner, *Stirner's Critics*, Hess.

⁶ Max Stirner, *Ego and its Own*, Second Part: I, II. The Owner

What is a Spook?

A spook is a social construct, an abstract concept made up by society with no material basis—an immaterial spirit, a figment of the imagination. The motherland, fatherland, nationalism, God, religion, morality, and the obligation to work under capitalist society are all spooks. “But it is not only man that ‘haunts’; so does everything. The higher essence, the spirit, that walks in everything, is at the same time bound to nothing, and only—appears’ in it. Ghosts in every corner!”⁷ Spooks are around us all, under the fake liberalism of the US, or the fake ethno-nationalism of the DPRK. All spooks are created by humanity, usually for political power and purposes, to keep down ego, and to keep down the freedom of the individual, to disallow the free association of individuals, to prevent the exploration of our ego!

I hate capitalism ‘cause it’s spooked, right? But I don’t like the spooked way socialism is promoted and enforced. This can be seen in the ultranationalism of the USSR or DPRK, the obligation, the duty, to build socialism, not because of an inner egoist desire, but because, “it’s for the motherland! ‘Cause I said so!” Now continue working under state owned property. No, I want socialism not ‘cause it’s for “a greater cause;” I want socialism so I can really do whatever I want! Like, play *League of Legends* all day! Or having intense gay sex with no risk of economic collapse due to medical bills! Or to make whatever weird wood statues I can make, just because!

Stirner actually spent a section of the book criticizing socialism and socialists at the time, the section was called “Social Liberalism” in *Ego and its Own* and how socialists can often be as spooked as normal liberals. In which in a memorable quote, he says,

By the principle of labor that of fortune or competition is certainly outdone. But at the same time the laborer, in his consciousness that the essential thing in him is “the laborer,” holds himself aloof from egoism and subjects himself to the supremacy of a society of laborers, as the commoner clung with self-abandonment to the competition-State. The beautiful dream of a “social duty” still continues to be dreamed. People think again that society gives what we need, and we are under obligations to it on that account, owe it everything. They are still at the point of wanting to serve a “supreme giver of all good.” That society is no ego at all, which could give, bestow, or grant, but

⁷ *Ibid.* II. The Moderns, 2. The possessed, The spook

an instrument or means, from which we may derive benefit; that we have no social duties, but solely interests for the pursuance of which society must serve us; that we owe society no sacrifice, but, if we sacrifice anything, sacrifice it to ourselves—of this the Socialists do not think, because they—as liberals—are imprisoned in the religious principle, and zealously aspire after—a sacred society, e.g. the State was hitherto.⁸

Two classic examples of spooks that invade us all, is nationalism and the state. The state is a spook because it institutes and enforces laws that aren’t real. Laws are not material in reality, thus must be violently enforced via state violence. Whether something as simple as a law to put logos on tax bills, or more extreme laws, ones that actively harm people and the proletariat, i.e cops.

Nationalism is a spook. The entire idea of countries is a spook—borders are made up, thus, has to be violently enforced via borders, guards, and the *law*. Nationalism is then—through another spook—culture, and is a deadly combination to not only enforce capitalism, but also put down the ego. In which it goes hand in hand with the idea of “cultural hegemony,” as brought forth by a Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, in many ways, the observations of the use of culture by Stirner and Gramsci are very similar. As Gramsci put in his books, that cultural hegemony is what happens when the bourgeoisie uses culture to put down socialism and class consciousness and enforce capitalism,⁹ for any kind of reasons, as can be observed in US liberal society, Philippines, Japan, and many others.

Culture in itself is a spook, if not the ultimate spook as culture shapes entire societies. The study of culture is the study of a spook. Traditional customs, requirement to pray, requirement to cite a pledge of allegiance, where do these ideas come from? All but figments of the imagination, a spirit, a spook.

We can see this dynamic, the dynamic between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat under capitalist societies play out in many cultures, and how it intentionally or unintentionally, enforces capitalism. I’ll give you a classic example in Filipino society: the obligation to work and do well because “*responsibilidad mo to! para to kay Jesus!*” In the USSR, many workers have to keep doing labor “for the motherland!” In Imperial Japan: “work or you will throw away your family honor! If you throw away your honor, you must execute yourself!” The worst example of this is Fascist Germany. Fascism is dangerous because it abuses spooks in the worst

⁸ *Ibid.* 2. Social Liberalism

⁹ Gramsci, Antonio (1992). Buttigieg, Joseph A (ed.). *Prison Notebooks*. New York City: Columbia University Press. pp. 233–38.