

Engels to Marx, in 1844, on 'The Dialectic of Communist Egoism'.

The implicit seed of 'Communist Egoism', that the *For Ourselves* collective of 'Individualist Collectivists' -- or of 'Collectivist Individualists' -- detected in the writings of Marx and Engels, within the never-fully-stated foundations of the new Marx/Engels world-view, and which they also elaborated and documented in their book *The Right to be Greedy: Theses on the Practical Necessity of Demanding Everything*, were, nevertheless, quite explicitly articulated by Frederick Engels himself, in the very *second* of his [surviving] letters to Karl Marx [whether or not *For Ourselves* knew about this passage], viz. --

“You will have heard of Stirner’s book, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* [Ed.: *The Ego and His Own*], if it hasn’t reached you yet. ...”

“The noble Stirner ... takes for his principle Bentham’s egoism, except that in one respect it is carried through more logically and in another less so.”

“More logically in the sense that Stirner as an atheist sets the ego above God, or rather depicts him [Ed.: the ego] as the be-all and end-all, whereas Bentham still allows God to remain remote and nebulous above him; that Stirner, in short, is riding on German idealism, an idealist who has turned to materialism and empiricism, whereas Bentham is simply an empiricist.”

“Stirner is less logical in the sense that he would like to avoid the reconstruction effected by Bentham of a society reduced to atoms, but cannot do so.”

“This egoism is simply the essence of present society and present man brought to consciousness, the ultimate that can be said against us by present society, the culmination of all the theory intrinsic to the prevailing stupidity [Ed.: cf., under this same description, the later “philosophy” of “Objectivism” of that refugee from Russian, Leninoid-Stalinoid state-capitalism, Ayn Rand, the “[de]mentor” of former Federal Reserve Chairman and ‘bubble-engineer’ Allan Greenspan, of ‘austerizer’ Paul Ryan, etc., etc., «*ad nauseam*»].”

“But that’s precisely what makes the thing important ...”

“We must not simply cast it aside [Ed.: which would constitute an act of *undialectical*, *abstract negation*], but rather use it as a perfect expression of present-day folly and, *while inverting it*, continue to build on it [Ed.: an act, instead, of *dialectical*, «*aufheben*» *negation*, in the form of *immanent critique*].”

“This egoism is taken to such a pitch, it is so absurd and at the same time so self-aware, that it cannot maintain itself even for an instant in its one-sidedness, but must immediately change into communism.”

“In the first place it’s a simple matter to prove to Stirner that his egoistic man is bound to become communist out of sheer egoism. That’s the way to answer the fellow.”

“In the second place he must be told that in its egoism the human heart is of itself, from the very outset, unselfish and self-sacrificing, so that he finally ends up with what he is combatting.”

“These few platitudes will suffice to refute the *one-sidedness*. But we must also adopt such truth as there is in the principle.”

“And it is certainly true that we must first make a cause our own, egoistic cause, before we can do anything to further it -- and hence that in this sense, irrespective of any eventual material aspirations, we are communists out of egoism also, and it is out of egoism that we wish to be *human beings*, not mere individuals.”

“Or to put it another way: Stirner is right in rejecting Feuerbach’s ‘man’, or at least the ‘man’ of *Das Wesens des Christentums*.”

“Feuerbach deduces his ‘man’ from God, it is from God that he arrives at ‘man’, and hence ‘man’ is crowned with a theological halo of abstraction.”

“The true way to arrive at ‘man’ is the other way about. We must take our departure from the Ego, the empirical, flesh-and-blood individual, if we are not, like Stirner, to remain stuck at this point but rather proceed to raise ourselves to ‘man’.”

“‘Man’ will always remain a wraith so long as his basis is not empirical man.”

“In short we must take our departure from empiricism and materialism if our concepts, and notably our ‘man’, are to be something real; we must deduce the general from the particular, not from itself or, *à la* Hegel, from thin air.”

“All these platitudes needing no explanation; they have already been spelled out by Feuerbach, and I wouldn’t have reiterated them had not [Ed.: Moses] Hess -- presumably because of his earlier idealistic leanings -- so dreadfully traduced empiricism, more especially Feuerbach and now Stirner. ... Hence he also hates any and every kind of egoism, and preaches love of humanity, etc., which again boils down to Christian self-sacrifice.”

“If, however, the flesh-and-blood individual is the true basis, the point of departure, for our ‘man’, it follows that egoism -- not of course Stirner’s intellectual egoism *alone*, but also the *egoism of the heart* -- is the point of departure for our love of humanity, which otherwise is left hanging in the air.”

[Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, volume **38, 1844-1851** [Correspondence], Internat’l. Publishers [NY: **1982**], Engels, in Barmen, to Marx, in Paris, No. **2, 19** November **1844**, pp. **11-12**, square-bracketed editorial commentary added by *Anonymous*].