

Closer to our own time, the utilitarian paradigm has been questioned in the work of Max Horkheimer, a leading exponent of the philosophy of the so-called Frankfurt School of philosophy which formed in the stunned aftermath of the rise of National Socialism in Germany. After Hitler came to power, Horkheimer was one of those who asked, why did the revolutionary situation in Germany after WWI evaporate and transmogrify into National Socialism instead of Communism or some other form? Why did the populace move to what might be called the "cultural Right"? Horkheimer's response leads us to assume that he took a step back from mechanistic explanations rooted in Comtean sociology and Marx's own materialist conception of history to consider the question in the following manner: Is it basically a question of psychic or physical chains that lie at the fundamental level of human subjugation? He distinguished his position from that of classical Marxism, which is, alas, saddled with this same utilitarian ethos that capitalism harbors, namely as rooted in the utilitarian *Summum bonum*, by asserting in his essay "Authority and the Family" of 1936, that "naked coercion cannot by itself explain why the subject classes have borne the yoke so long in times of cultural decline, when property relationships, like existing ways of life in general, had obviously reduced social forces to immobility and the economic apparatus was ready to yield a better method of production." What is this thing that naked coercion cannot explain?

Assuming that Horkheimer's analysis is accurate, only psychology can help us at this juncture. Horkheimer's elucidation points to something in the heart of humanity, some fatal flaw, which predisposes the great mass of humanity to submission when another path is available. The fault is not in the stars but in ourselves. One might call this a "will to submission". The psychologist Erich Fromm wrote on this phenomenon with cogency, saying, in his paper "Disobedience as a Psychological and Moral Problem" of 1963: "Obedience to a person, institution or power (heteronomous obedience) is submission; it implies the abdication of my autonomy and the acceptance of a foreign will of judgment in place of my own. Obedience to my own reason or conviction (autonomous obedience) is not an act of submission but one of affirmation. My conviction and my judgment, if authentically mine, are part of me. If I follow them rather than the judgment of others, I am being myself; hence the word obey can be applied only in a metaphorical sense and with a meaning which is fundamentally different from the one in the case of "heteronomous obedience." Here we arrive at the locus of our inquiry: heteronomy. One can define heteronomy as the state or condition of being subject to the domination, in a moral or spiritual sense, of another person or concept. This is the subject of Kant's famous essay "What Is Enlightenment?" He answers this question by a succinct phrase: Enlightenment is the escape from tutelage.

Kant's pathway to the escape from tutelage, however, was a harsh one: it involved the Categorical Imperative. One understands this Imperative as the linchpin of a deontological theory of morals, in other words, one in which duty forms the basis. It is: *Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.* But such a theory, with inflexible duty at its heart, often leads to undesirable outcomes. Consider the case of a man who is hiding from someone who wants to kill him. The would-be killer comes to his victim's door and the victim's wife, who knows where he is and loves him, answers. The would-be killer demands to know where his victim is. The wife recognizes him as an enemy and realizes his intention. According to the Categorical Imperative, she must tell him where her husband is hiding anyway. Kant's escape from tutelage takes away the self-other dynamics of heteronomy as embodied in subjection to the will of the King or a law that is not freely obeyed by enjoining one to make one's own moral code. But it could be argued that one is thereby merely shifting the locus of heteronomy from some outside entity to a potentially even more inflexible one that is located within one's own mind.

All this points to a mechanism in the mind, going back thousands of years, that predispose all but a small percentage of the population to what can only be called an abdication of self. Etienne de la Boetie, in his 1553 treatise "Discourse on Voluntary Servitude", explains this sorry state of affairs by saying that this will to servitude happens because men are born serfs and remain that way by dint of custom. This, in concert with the hierarchies of wealth and power, inducing those who might otherwise rebel to "play ball" with the ruling elite in order to continue receiving the ruler's largesse, yield the lugubrious state of affairs of the many ruled by the few. But the inner mechanism of just how this persists is not fully articulated in de la Boetie's analysis. Social forces up to this time militated against the kind of thinking that might lead out of this particular labyrinth, but one acknowledges that the Renaissance in general, with its emphasis on the human over the realm of God, opened such doors as would dispell the old hierarchies. One recalls the notion of the Great Chain of Being, in which rigid hierarchies of a spiritual nature found their analogic instantiation in the rigid stations of human beings. A hierarchy encompassing inanimate nature, animals, humans, and on to the angels and finally the omnipotence of the Godhead found its social expression in the serf, vassal, lords and finally the king. This scheme gradually broke down beginning with Dante and Petrarch in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, continuing into the Renaissance proper and by the time of the French and American Revolutions was ostensibly vitiated. But "ostensibly" is the operative word here. The overt expression dies and the covert force which underlies it lives on.

What is called for, in order to continue to follow this thread to its logical conclusion, as God continues to recede beyond the horizon of relevance, is a reduction of theology to anthropology. This was the signal achievement of Ludwig Feuerbach, who was the first to delineate what is now termed the anthropological essence of religion. Feuerbach reduced God to an aspect of the human understanding. In his early work, Feuerbach demonstrated that in all pertinent aspects, God corresponds to some feature of human nature. Gone is the Tetragrammaton, in which God is essentially unknowable. Instead, God, as actually experienced in the hearts of men and women, is, in transitioning from the Judaic to the Christian conception, given what are essentially human attributes, although perfected ones not subject to the maddening vacillations and other impurities of the human heart. He did this by an ingenious reversal of predicates: If one begins by saying God is Love, one can say with greater understanding that Love is God. This inexorably leads to the idea of *projection*. Humankind, in its state of fear and insecurity, projects, upon a locus outside of him or herself, its own better qualities. Moreover, Feuerbach asserts, this projection is for all intents and purposes zero-sum: what God accrues in this process of projection, humanity loses. Humanity finds its essence in *abjection*. But, Feuerbach says, all one has to do is to re-incorporate these qualities of godliness, stemming from the realization that God is the ultimate illusion, back into the soul in order to create the long-yearned-for Heaven on Earth. And so the project becomes one of the obviation of *hypostasis*, revealed in its underlying form as the *idée fixe*. I invite the reader at this juncture to consider this concept from within the purview of mental pathology: *idée fixe* is a condition in which the afflicted has no capacity for rational processing of a given idea but continues on in the face of overwhelming evidence in its exercise. A contemporary illustration of the nature of the *idée fixe* is furnished by Richard A. Clarke, head of counter-terrorism in the George W. Bush administration: "Iraq was portrayed as the most dangerous thing in national security. It was an *idée fixe*, a rigid belief, received wisdom, a decision already made and one that no fact or event could derail." A decision that no fact or event could derail. This is the definition of *idée fixe* in a nutshell. This is complex that stands in tyranny over the hapless individual, demanding fealty. One recalls at this point the meaning of this term as loyalty without qualification to a person or idea. My country, right or wrong. It is the quintessential feature of the feudal mindset. The ostensible commitment to the overcoming of feudalism in the formation of the Republic is in light of this examination called into question.

To reiterate: the task, in light of the problem of the will-to-obedience is to obviate the *idée fixe*. Feuerbach, in his epochal work *The Essence of Christianity* of 1841, outlines the basic schema one might employ in achieving this millennial goal. But

he only went half-way, leaving the essence of the hypostasis intact. In maintaining that “Man is to Man the true Supreme Being”, it could be argued that he is merely setting up a new, more generalized, “quasi-anthropologized”, *idée fixe* or hypostasis. This was the contention of Max Stirner, whose 1844 book *Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum* (*The Ego and Its Own*) set out to achieve the final demolition of the religious mindset. Feuerbach had used Hegel as his mechanism of escape from the realm of the hegemony of abstract thinking by critiquing Hegel’s posited beginning of philosophy in “presuppositionless Being”, otherwise known as Being-as-such, following Aristotle. In his important paper “Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy”, written two years before *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach attacks the idea of presuppositionless Being, which Hegel equates with the originary Idea, that is, God. “But how can it do so, [that is, to prove itself as true] if being itself has to presuppose the Idea, that is, when the Idea has already been presupposed as the Primary? Is this the way for philosophy to constitute and demonstrate itself as the truth so that it can no longer be doubted, so that skepticism is reduced once and for all to absurdity?...[W]hat if someone said, your indeterminate and pure being is just an abstraction to which nothing real corresponds, for the real is only real being...is the *Logic* [of Hegel] above the dispute between the Nominalists and the Realists?”

This passage, I am prepared to argue, constitutes the opening salvo against the reign of abstraction that animated Christianity for over 1500 years. Only concrete being is real being. Language conspires at times to make this seem untrue, as Aristotle’s examination of Being in the *Metaphysics*, Book XII, demonstrates. But our Western, post-Renaissance commitment to philosophical Nominalism impels us to reject this Medusa. Feuerbach, in his positing of Humanity as the new incarnation of God, makes Humanity his *idée fixe*. Stirner treats this as the beginning of a new religion. What is necessary, in his view, is the rejection of God and anything that could conceivably take his place, his Person as well as his Office. In his demonstration of Feuerbach’s continued enslavement to the *idée fixe*, he levels the devastating charge of theological thinking against Feuerbach’s overall conception:

Let us, in brief, set Feuerbach’s theological view and our contradiction against each other! ‘The essence of man is man’s supreme being; now by religion to be sure, the supreme being is called God and regarded as an objective essence, but in truth it is only man’s essence; and therefore the turning point of the world’s history is that henceforth no longer God, but man, is to appear to man as God.’ To this we reply: The supreme being is indeed the essence of man, but, just because it is his essence and not he himself, it remains quite immaterial whether we see it outside him and view it as ‘God’, or find it in him and call it ‘essence of man’ or ‘man’. I am neither God nor man, neither the supreme essence nor my essence, and therefore it is all one in the main whether I think of the essence as inside me or outside me.

One searches for a reason for the seeming contradiction in Feuerbach, that, although he champions particular, sensuous existence over the bloodless realm of presuppositionless Being, he nevertheless retains the collectivist, abstract notion of *species as subject*. Throughout his writings, Feuerbach eschews the notion that the individual is the proper subject of history, a curious position for someone who so emphatically championed the notion that all Being is determinate being. He had argued in *The Essence of Christianity* that the better human qualities formerly attributed to God must be claimed as coextensive with the nature of humanity as a whole, thereby making the subject of the divine predicates not the individual, but the species. Feuerbach justified this perspective by maintaining that individuals find themselves to be constricted and limited. The frustration and humiliation that accompanies the individual's realization of limits has to be soothed somehow. It is the idea of the species that brings deliverance; for the idea of the species allows me to delight in possibilities which are "mine" although I may never realize them. Everything that other people do is also my achievement because they merely actualize potentialities of a human nature which we all share as humans. Unless the sense of limitation is removed by the idea of the species, people will recreate God in some form to alleviate this aching sense of lack. But the notion of hypostasis remains to challenge such a notion as the species as subject. While it may be true that I am only a particular determination of a general human potentiality, and that from the perspective of the species I am incomplete, the general potentialities, which from the point of view of the species constitute my true nature, are something that forever lie outside of me. "My" real nature is not me, but the species! Is this not the resurrection of the notion of abstract Being, only shifted from the locus of God to that of the Species? Surely this is tantamount to recreating God through the Office of Humanity. At bottom, my desires are not, in any real way, satisfied by others' pleasures. My interests are in the final analysis *not* interchangeable with the interests of others. For Feuerbach had made reflection on human nature the key human function; he had turned human nature into an *Idea*. Within the Idea, one construes that one has no greater regard for the human nature in oneself than in anyone else, and therefore that what happens to me is no more significant than what happens to anyone else. From my personal perspective, however, it is of the utmost importance whether it is I or someone else that lives in poverty or dies on the battlefield. The notion of species-as-subject is nothing else than the God's-eye view at its most abstract and generalized.

The Stirneran *idée fixe* points up the wide gulf between the two thinkers: 24

Do not think that I am jesting or speaking figuratively when I regard those persons who cling to the higher, and (because the vast majority belongs under this head) almost the whole world of men, as veritable fools, fools in a madhouse. What is it, then, that is called a 'fixed idea'? An idea that has

subjected the man to itself. When you recognize, with regard to such a fixed idea, that it is a folly, you shut its slave up in an asylum. And is the truth of the faith, say, which we are not to doubt; the majesty of the people, which we are not to strike at (he who does is guilty of—*lese-majesté*); virtue, against which the censor is not to let a word pass, that morality be kept pure; are these not ‘fixed ideas’? Is not all the stupid chatter of most of our newspapers the babble of fools who suffer from the fixed idea of morality, legality, Christianity, and so forth, and only seem to go about free because the madhouse in which they walk takes in so broad a space? Touch the fixed idea of such a fool, and you will at once have to guard your back against the lunatic’s stealthy malice.

I ask again: why is it that the new cannot be born? I move forward in the examination of this question by citing another thinker who operated at the cusp of the modern era, Bruno Bauer. Bauer was a Hegelian exegete writing at the same time as Feuerbach and Stirner who rather quickly lost his faith in the Master (as Hegel was known to his students and colleagues) and thenceforward engaged in what has been called idealistic antithetics, as H. M. Sass puts it in his article “Bruno Bauer’s Critical Theory”,

Within a world-historical model he outlined an *apocalyptic theory of scientific and political action* as a *historical conflict theory* which operated upon individuals as well as society in general...Bauer joined ‘the good cause of freedom and his own private affair’, justifying it by announcing a general law of progress through separation and escalation of opposites. This *Model of Breach* is explicitly and evidently in opposition to the Hegelian mode of overcoming conflicts by way of mediation. In the actual crisis, which calls for necessary decision, the once progressive becomes the opponent of the new; it reveals itself as the antithesis to progress: progress in the form of the principle of self-consciousness, science, criticism. The *Departments of Theology*, which do not tolerate free research in their ranks, prove thereby that the principle of “limited” thinking is their maxim, despite all word play. *The state*, having meddled with the freedom of research and teaching through the lawsuit against Bauer, proves it cannot recognize and guarantee the freedom of science and criticism, and that it feels threatened by them. *Public opinion*, the masses, prove their bondage, by drowsily indulging in old prejudices rather than rebelling against the suppression of critique. Thus universities, state, and public opinion have, by declaring the sciences and critique its adversaries, excluded the principle of science and critique from themselves. Only the critical intellectual emancipated from all these bondages, still carries within himself the principle of science and the principle of the ‘natural judge of history.’

But Bauer, brilliant as he was, remained intellectually confined within the realm of the critique and when this critique, as exemplified and executed within his own situation in the German University system, failed to precipitate the revolution he expected, he was at a loss. Karl Marx, a close associate and erstwhile collaborator to Bauer, saw the deficiencies in Bauer’s theory and translated some of his idealist antithetics into programs that incorporated a theory of revolution involving more direct forms of action, and the rest is history, as they say. Nevertheless, the Bauerian Model of Breach remains to instruct us on the dynamics of resistance to revolutionary ideas and how to counter it. In particular, the notion of the *escalation of opposites* appears as a potentially viable model of action. This, coupled with a realistic appraisal of the role of the general public in such an escalation of

opposites takes us away once and for all from the liberal models which have dominated political thought since the French Revolution. The general public is part of the reaction against the new, as long as and only as they “indulge in the old prejudices”. The old prejudices—does this not refer to feudalism as it persists in liberal thought? The mechanism of projection surely plays a pivotal role in humankind’s will to submission, causing a deep psychic split in the human soul, recreating the conditions of the eschatological datum that can only lead to God’s hegemonic return, now in some form that hides the old representation. One yearns for the end to this state of alienation, to this fearful state of a person having some part of him- or herself exist in some other place, but instead as incorporated in an unruptured self.

This concept of alienation, then—considered in conjunction with de la Boetie’s concept of voluntary servitude—describes the cathexis between the liberal spirit and this state of subjection. For the American culture, this dynamic takes on a Christian Protestant form. Stirner addresses this dynamic in the pages of *The Ego and Its Own*:

Through the fact that in Protestantism the *faith* becomes a more inward faith, the *servitude* has also become a more inward servitude; one has taken those sanctities up into himself, entwined them with all his thoughts and endeavors, made them a ‘*matter of conscience*’, constructed out of them a ‘*sacred duty*’ for himself. Therefore what the Protestant’s conscience cannot get away from is sacred to him, and *conscientiousness* most clearly designates his character. Protestantism has actually put a man in a position of a country governed by secret police. The spy and the eavesdropper, ‘conscience’, watches over every motion of the mind, and all thought and action is for it a ‘matter of conscience’, that is, police business. This tearing apart of man into ‘natural impulse’ and ‘conscience’ (inner populace and inner police) is what constitutes the Protestant.

At this juncture, it should have become clear to the reader that Stirner’s way of thinking functions as a direct precursor to Freud’s notion of the unconscious mind. Stirner is rather obscure today, even in Germany, but in 1900 he was enjoying, albeit posthumously, something of a renaissance in the German-speaking countries especially but elsewhere as well, due to his perceived connection with the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche. Freud, however, as critics such as Richard Webster in his influential study *Why Freud Was Wrong* attest, combined a belief in the necessity in uncovering the buried memories within the unconscious mind with a strict disapproval of their actualization in within the cultural horizon of the “civilized” world. This amounted to a recrudescence of a picture of the human soul rooted in traditional Judaeo-Christian conceptions of right and wrong, that the unconscious was a seething cauldron which had to be controlled, and that any insights into its workings remain confined to the intellectual plane of a functional understanding of these impulses while simultaneously rejecting their instinctual expression. This is

the price of civilization as outlined in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Stirner's insight into the hidden workings of the psyche, in Freud's view, are to be grafted onto an outlook that simultaneously embraces and rejects experience of these repressed desires. How could the result be anything other than extreme anxiety and despondency? One accesses the forbidden desires and then admonishes the patient not to indulge in them for fear of the societal consequences.

But there was a psychologist who in his early professional life was a close associate of Freud's, but differed from the Father of Psychoanalysis on this crucial point, that the unconscious desires must be suppressed and controlled in traditional Protestant fashion after their partial uncovering. This was the troubling figure of Otto Gross, who went so far as to proclaim "The psychology of the unconscious is the philosophy of the Revolution!" and "Whoever wants to change the structures of power (and production) in a repressive society has to start by changing these structures in himself and to eradicate the authority that has infiltrated one's own inner being." We are speaking here of Authority as fixed idea, that notion so aptly described by Richard A. Clarke in his characterization of the GW Bush administration's attitude concerning the invasion of Iraq in 2003: "It was an *idée fixe*, a rigid belief, received wisdom, a decision already made and one that no fact or event could derail." This is the nature of the Authority that Stirner and Gross wished to address, not legitimate authority, which is so desperately needed in a world where all values have been called into question and are rapidly becoming subsumed within a regime of lies and misrepresentations. But then, to differentiate it from the prison of the *idée fixe*, one must call this notion of legitimate authority by its real name, that of *wisdom*.

Unfortunately, Gross, for most of his adult life a debilitated user of morphine and cocaine, never systematically articulated an overall theory of psychoanalysis, and he died of exposure to cold at the age of 40. His views survive only in a series of articles published in moments of insight between his bouts of addiction, but these show the flashes of a singular intellect. He was quite influential in certain circles of artistic Expressionists who were trying to escape the ravages of WWI, hiding from conscription in such places as Ascona, Switzerland, where a colony of freethinkers had formed around Gross and others as far back as 1903. As a corollary to his theories on the nature of the subject's proper relation to its unconscious self, Gross advanced the notion that the eternal conflict between the individual and society was more founded in the oppressiveness of the latter than in the iniquity of raw instinct. In addition, following Freud's theories on the nature of male aggression, in particular that the aggressive character of the male expressed itself in anti-social terms, he put forth the idea that increasing social sanctions against the expression



of violent, anti-social impulses was a definite sign of the degeneration of the species, in other words, that repression in the form of Law and morality was counterproductive in the attempt to manage the aggressive instincts. In support of this thesis, one of his associates, a certain Richard Ohring, had written a paper called "Compulsion and Experience" which describes these forces as polar opposites. "Experience" represents the anarchic creative force of personality, the potentiality for which is innate. "Compulsion" is every external or internal barrier to the free development of experience. External compulsion exists in the laws of nature and in the laws, morals and customs of society. After infancy, the external compulsions become internalized through the mechanisms of obedience and obligation. Thus, from the outset, everything is aimed at establishing compulsion as a force at war with our experience, against our tendency to self-expression, and at forcing us to fit into the existing scheme. Only by breaking away, by refusing to compromise, can one re-establish the primacy of experience and reduce compulsion to a secondary position in the psychic life of the individual. The influence of Stirner's outlook is obvious here. But the intransigent reality of the aggressive component of human behavior remains to be addressed. Unleashing "experience" without having dealt with this abiding destructive phenomenon of compulsion would be tantamount to falling out of the frying pan and into the fire. Ohring did attempt to address this by pointing to a new notion of community, one that was not linked to compulsion but one in which experience was allowed free rein: "When the yearning of belief calls forth the source of hidden communality from the dead landscape of compulsion, then the belief will become unshakeable that all community is only that of experience."

To recapitulate: Gross' underlying thrust was aimed at transforming psychoanalysis from an essentially conservative defense of status-quo values to something that could be called truly revolutionary, through a wholesale revision of Freudian instinct theory. In his later writings, only published posthumously, he argued against the idea that aggressive behavior and the closely related phenomena of sadism and masochism were instinctual in the species and that therefore the suppression of instinct by reason and conscience was an inescapable feature of civilization. Secondly, he denied Freud's tenet that innate differences in the nature of men and women accounted for the dominance of the aggressive-sadistic character in men and the passive-masochistic character in women. This, Gross maintained, was attributable to the patriarchal organization of society, which, in its enforcement of conformity by the means of the mechanism of compulsion, became an instrument of male domination, itself arguably operative due to catastrophic deficiencies in understanding of the self. Liberalism partakes of this partial or distorted understanding, in its conservancy of the spirit of feudalism. It is a shell

game in which the powerless as defined by the dominant force in capitalist society, that of property, cannot lose. The outcome of the contest of the right of the large corporation against that of the lowly individual is preordained. Instead of leaving it to a system that can only favor the prerogatives of the powerful, those with large amounts of property, it is necessary to step outside this inherently unfair arrangement and realize oneself in concert with one's like-minded brethren. As Stirner says, "The tiger that assails me is in the right and I who strike him down am also in the right. I defend against him not my right, but *myself*." Defend yourselves against Monsanto, against Amazon, against Exxon Mobil, as individuals banded together in common cause, not as "citizens" who owe fealty to the nation and its laws. Here is Stirner at his most revolutionary: "He who will break your will has to do with you, and is your *enemy*. Deal with him as such. If there stand behind you some millions more, then you are an imposing power and will have an easy victory." It's time to finally get radical. But what does such a term mean in the context I am discussing? Obviously, I am not talking about a strict return to the Republican/liberal values which characterized the psychic progression away from monarchy and primogeniture, although of course this *was* radical in 1790. Nor am I talking about the implementation of a system based on the dictatorship of the proletariat; this "social liberalism", with its dependency on the specious theory of historical materialism, would inevitably institutionalize the sclerosis of the masses who, in pursuing a form of liberation based in economics, would remain psychically enslaved. For all freedom is self-liberation; just because it can be *blocked*, does not mean that it can be *bestowed*. The focus thus becomes the beleaguered individual, who has suffered the torments of the damned for millennia, never getting very far from the wretched conditions that have obtained since the times of human blood sacrifice, but experienced an awakening in the admirable fourteenth century as Dante and Petrarch opened the doors to a new concept of *nobility*.

To focus on this neglected view of nobility, I must bring in to the discussion the Catholic mystic Marguerite Porete (1250-1310), who wrote a remarkable book called *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. It, in turn is examined in Joanne Maguire Robinson's *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls*. Robinson begins by despairing of ever getting a true bead on the nature of nobility in the medieval, or for that matter, the contemporary mind--there is no consensus. She quotes a certain Maurice Keen who says "If one asks how late medieval people could hope to have it so many ways, to maintain for instance that virtue was the foundation of true nobility but that princely recognition was essential to make it valid while at the same time proclaiming the acceptability of the hereditary principle, the answer is, simply, that they are reflecting the tensions

and ambiguities of contemporary aspirations and of contemporary conditions." But a nodal point is reached through the luminous figure of Dante Alighieri as outlined in his book the *Convivio*. He argues that nobility is earned through virtuous conduct and that it must be engendered anew in succeeding generations, and that essentially, nobility is "the perfection of the nature proper to each thing". And, he continues, "so let none of the Uberti of Florence or the Visconti family of Milan say 'because I am of such a race I am noble', for the divine seed does not fall upon a race (that is, family stock) but on individuals, and...family stock does not make individuals noble, although individuals make family stock noble." And now, having dispensed with the notion of nobility as based in heredity or membership in some elect group and instead having established it as only proceeding from individual virtue, we come to the medieval paradigm of the quest for the heart's desire, Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*. Quoting from Robinson's book, "The *Roman* is an account of a young man's dream, in which he falls in love, is separated from his beloved, endures torments during the separation, and overcomes several obstacles before finally possessing his beloved...The *Roman de la Rose* provides an engaging secular counterpart to *The Mirror of Simple Souls* in several important

ways. Perhaps most importantly, the allegorical structure of the *Roman* was widely influential in teaching those of Porete's generation how to express abstractions, such as Love and, most particularly, love at a distance. This is evident in the allegorical dialogue form of the *Mirror*. Even more similarities can be found in the apparent world view of each text, best seen by looking at the more theological aspects of the *Roman*...theoretically, no individual is excused from following reason and using free will to act in praise of God. Nevertheless it is apparent that the lover in the tale seeks his beloved with impunity while ignoring the advice of Reason. This is a crucial parallel to Porete's understanding of the ultimate fate of Reason in the realm of Love...Those who wish to live in love must move beyond reason. In the *Roman de la Rose*, then, the lover places his heart and body entirely in the service of the God of Love...in proper service to the God of Love, moreover, the lover loses all ability to act on his own account. 'My heart is yours and not my own, for it must--for good or ill--do your will. No one can take it from you.'" This is the "annihilation" Porete strives for in her quest for her beloved, Jesus Christ. Of particular interest is her heretical (she was burned at the stake in 1310) contention that "annihilated" souls are freed from practicing the Virtues, making her perhaps the earliest exponent of antinomianism, the personal rejection of the external tenets of the Law. From Robinson's book again: "Porete has also been called the founder of another anomalous group, the heretical sect of the Free Spirits. This claim is based on similarities between the doctrines allegedly espoused by this "brethren"

and those found in the *Mirror of Simple Souls*. Free Spirits were believed to hold that embodied humans could become one with God in this life; that certain individuals could dispense with the ministrations of the Church; and that moral strictures were fundamentally irrelevant to living the divine life on earth." Once bound to the service of the God of Love, anything one did or thought, indeed, one's entire being, was by definition virtuous. Porete's beliefs on this crucial point arguably eschewed such practices as free love and other violations of the sacred and secular Law, but many purporting to follow her example took certain shortcuts that perverted the spirit of Porete's teachings...in Porete's view leaving off of the Virtues can only be legitimately done by first practicing them strictly, passing through a seven-stage process of purification of the spirit which leaves all personal prerogatives behind. One is "annihilated" in the union with the God of Love, left without will, without any desire except to do the will of the beloved.

So proceeds the soul in its journey to true nobility in the mind of the Catholic mystic Marguerite Porete. The soul is both filled with "grace" (a concept which undeniably harbors some unresolved tensions, since grace means different things in different contexts, to wit, that it can operate as something that comes from above, from the Godhead, and so partakes of the most inflexible *heteronomy*, and in others, it is seen as immanent), and emptied of all personal content. The will is supplanted by the Spirit of Love which only wants what the beloved wants. But what if the beloved wants the same thing? Is there no possibility that fundamental reciprocity can be attained? The problem here is one of *love at a distance*. The love of Jesus Christ is by definition unattainable, since He is not present in a physical sense to Porete. But she *desires* him and this is rooted in the ego! Has the self become annihilated or merely transformed? In Porete, this can be characterized as love that proceeds from *Eros*, and not from *Agape*, to employ Anders Nygren's distinction. One can imagine that, if only the Christ could appear, that the Word could be made Flesh, that reciprocity could be effected. But in the tradition of love at a distance, in this tradition of courtly love, the Lady, in relation to her Knight, occupies a position that is for all intents and purposes unattainable. Bestowing roses on her only confirms the Knight in his station as *vassal*. We have returned to the concept of *fealty* and perhaps even found its fundament. The citizen/subject in liberal society occupies the same place in relation to the nation as the Knight to his Lady in the *Roman de al Rose*. It should be obvious that our territory here is that of the Mother-Son dynamic.

It may be apparent at this stage of the discussion that the alternative to liberalism I am positing, rejecting both classical and social liberalism, is anarchism, based in the *antinomian* ideal. But the pious, Tolstoian- Kropotkinian form of anarchism

cannot deliver us from the heteronomy we are mired in. It is morals, construed in their instantiation as *rules of conduct*, rooted in compulsion, which stem from the inability to love, as Porete discovered, that form the crux of our abiding distress. Stirner points out in this context that “The character of a society is determined by the character of its members: they are its creators.” If their characters are formed in the crucible of the vassal/lord split then this will be reflected in the nature of the society that results. Stirner points out in this context that “Ever far from letting themselves come to their full development and consequence, men have hitherto not been able to found their societies on *themselves*; or rather, they have only been able to found ‘societies’ and to live in societies.” Societies, I would venture, that have resorted to the regime of compulsion, as construed in the Ohringian sense outlined above, as the primary mechanism of cohesion.

It follows from all this that it matters little what form one institutes in the quest of a better world if the character of its members is not considered primary. Merely changing the form of society will not automatically transform its members into something better. Rather, as Otto Gross observed, in order to effect meaningful change, one must grant priority to the addressing of psychic pathologies at the individual level: “Whoever wants to change the structures of power (and production) in a repressive society has to start by changing these structures in himself and to eradicate the authority that has infiltrated one’s own inner being.”