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"We do not aspire to communal life but to a life apart." — Max Stirner

Warzone Distro
WARZONEDISTRO.NOBLOGS.ORG
2025



The Union of Egoists

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What is Egoism?

Anarcho-Egoism - or simply *Egoism* - is a school of anarchist thought, developed by 19th-century German philosopher Max Stirner, that prioritizes empowerment of the individual and advocates for personal liberation by rejecting all subordination to external authorities and moral codes designed to govern the individual. Egoism is derived from the understanding that all ideas and actions begin on an individual level, and so placing greater emphasis on individual power and autonomy is viewed as the most practical approach toward dismantling internalized social conditioning in pursuit of total liberation.



“Revolution is aimed at new arrangements; insurrection leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and set no glittering hope on “institutions” — Max Stirner

III

Our worlds change and flux before us, and we can follow our desires, needs, and passions, as our worlds and lives unfold before us, entering into unions and associations as individuals come into and out of our power. By seeking out those who have some commonality and affinity with us, we may gain much, and by enjoying ourselves in a mutual and reciprocal way, we share ourselves and our desires with those we choose to be with. Our activities are limited only by our imaginations, power, and finding willing partners.

Our unions are like a flowing river, they are in constant change, coming together and coming apart, growing, contracting and expanding, sometimes a vigorous, passionate, and raging river, other times only a small, quiet, and gentle spring. We are much like our unions, are also in constant motion, in a state of stochastic and chaotic change, ebbing and flowing throughout our lives.

We need not play along with the dull and uninteresting, the expected, and submissive roles and behaviors that are desired of us by our rulers, masters, and lords. Our own lives are far too enjoyable for us to allow such a thing. We have no need to hold ourselves to any of the codes, laws, and morals of those who claim power over us. We need only to live our lives, and create ourselves in every moment as we see fit and as our individual power allows.

“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*

The phrase *union or association of egoists* is found only a few times in Max Stirner’s “The Unique and Its Property”, and yet it is often referred to as Stirner’s alternative to the relationships of state and citizen; lord and servant; master and slave. Stirner did not provide us with a blueprint for the future, nor a new system, to replace the socioeconomic and belief/thought systems he critiqued and attacked. I believe that this omission was intentional — Stirner was not about to annihilate all fixed ideas, authority, and sacred beliefs only to recreate a new fixed idea.

The *union* is something more mundane, if not commonplace, yet an incredibly powerful tool for all individuals. The *association* is a phenomena that we all experience and create throughout our lives.

The *union* is often referred to as some crystallized structure or organization. This is at complete odds with Stirner’s actual writings on union, association, and relations between individuals in “The Unique and Its Property”. Stirner does not discuss the *union* as some static relation between two or more individuals, but instead as shared life activity of two or more self-interested individuals. The *association* is one of both immanence and transience, it is felt, lived, and experienced in-the-moment. When me and a good friend part ways after a night of both enjoyable and pleasurable fare, our *union* has come to an end; when our rebellious plot has been successfully hatched and we split up to lay low, our *association* has ceased to be.

The enjoyable thoughts remain, the love I feel for my lover after parting from them, the excitement and restlessness at the thought of our next *union* — but the *association* itself has come to a timely end, only the idea or thought of the *union* exists and an idea or thought is not what I am relating with. Instead I relate to you as I, and you relate to me as you, in the flesh, as corporeal, and sensuous individuals. We accept no representations in such a relation, no symbolic determinations or flesh-and-blood masters as mediators of this relationship. In our union with one another, we are ourselves and we bring ourselves with all of our property.

Our *union* is a thing of self-interest, self-enjoyment, and self-fulfillment.

We come together for a common and shared aim, not because we are bound by duty, honor, morality or any other cause, but because we both find some mutual utility in such a *union*. Our shared activity could be anything: Gardening, hiking, botany, insurrection, photography, writing, art, cooking, sex, farming, fishing, hunting, robbing a bank, playing a game, etc. The only thing that matters is that you and I are both getting our own fulfillment or satisfaction from our association with one another.

Our relationship is one of mutuality and reciprocity. We both gain what we desire from our *union*, and thus are satisfied. We consume, but are also consumed. We are used by the union, while also using the union. The union is our tool, our power, it is created for our own needs, desires, and purposes—for our own selfish ends. The union of egoists is a union of self-interest, a union of power.

When we no longer find such an *association* as beneficial to ourselves we withdraw and end the *union*. The *union* only exists at the behest of our own individual power. If we find that we are working towards another's ends, no longer enjoying oneself, or desiring a new activity—we withdraw—ending our association.

Throughout our lives we enter and exit many relationships with individuals that are intentional, enjoyable, based on reciprocity, and mutuality. You do this without thinking about it, hanging out with your friends because they bring you happiness, having sex because it is pleasurable for all participants, cooking a meal for guests because it brings you joy at feeding your friends, resisting political authorities because you refuse their orders and commands, every day you come into and out of relationships of shared selfish activities with others.

II

We also engage in many relationships not based on intentionality, mutuality, or reciprocity. Such relationships are ubiquitous in our lives, we are forced through various means to associate with those that we do not care for, engage in activities that are not our own, and take part in relationships where we do not get our own satisfaction and fulfillment. We repress our desires, our wants, and needs, and sacrifice them to hollow and empty ideas that are backed with heavy handed violence, intimidation, guilt, and shame.

The society is to have power over the individual, while the individual is to have power over the union. The individual is a tool of the society, the union is a tool of the individual. The societies claim over the individual is absolute, the individual may not end this claim, an association is transient, ends when the individual wills it. The society is a relationship of master and slave, the union is a relationship of individuality, reciprocity, and mutuality. The society is imposed upon you, an association is an intentional act of your own power.

Why should we feed the rotten and stagnant "gardens" of society, when we could instead water the sweet ephemeral blooms of our own *unions*? We should be with those actual living, breathing individuals that bring us satisfaction and enjoyment, engaging in activities that all bring us self-fulfillment. Instead, we trudge endlessly in boring and unfulfilling activities, working for the accumulation of others power and wealth for most of our lives, forced to associate with people we have zero interest in and have no mutuality or affinity for.

Do you ever ask yourself: Am I really enjoying what I am doing at this present moment? This is not to say that acknowledgment of our unenjoyment in some sort of present condition or activity will free us from its constraints and power. We must exercise our own power to free ourselves from those individuals, relationships, and activities that fill our lives with the boring, mundane, and unimaginative.

Who should enjoy you but yourself? A strange question to some perhaps, but a question that needs asking. Only you feel and experience yourself and your life, why should your life be for any other than you? Only I can feel the ache of my muscles and bones after a grueling 12 hour shift. Only you can feel the stress and anxiety that builds when you don't have enough money to make rent. We should not be passively submitting to those who maintain, reproduce, and build the systems of domination and exploitation we experience, but should instead actively resist and strike back.

What exactly you experience in your daily life is most certainly different then what I experience, but of course we may find commonality, mutuality, and affinity in our personal experiences with our worlds. Our mutual domination and exploitation can merely be the spark for our shared fires of resistance.