

Max Stirner – the successor of the Marquis de Sade

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“Je ne parle qu'à des gens capables de m'entendre. Ceux-là me liront sans danger.”

(D. A .F. de Sade)

Introduction

There are numerous approaches to reading and interpreting D. A. F. de Sade. He has been read as a philosopher, an author of pornographic writings and a scientist, as well as a precursor of surrealism. Attempts to understand him as a philosopher have often led to comparisons with the German Young Hegelian Max Stirner¹, whose œuvre, similar to that of Sade, has a radical, egocentric starting point. Accordingly, the list of authors who have made a connection between the two thinkers includes sexologists (Eugen Dühren, Albert Eulenburg), Sade's biographers (Jean-Jacques Brochier, Albert Drach, Jean-Jacques Pauvert), essayists

¹In the following, I will use the English translation of this work by Steven T. Byington (1907).

(Simone de Beauvoir, Willem Frederik Hermans) and also the editor of the Portuguese edition of Stirner's works – José A. Braganca de Miranda.²

In general, the connection between the two thinkers is noted with regard to their radical individualism and seemingly immoral ethics. Based on this, some authors such as Iwan Bloch (= Eugen Dühren) even argue that Stirner was possibly familiar with Sade's work. In "Der Marquis de Sade und seine Zeit" he wrote:

"Already H. Ströbel has highlighted that Stirner's theory of egoism is not new and rather reminiscent of the ideas of enlightenment philosophers Holbach, La Mettrie and Helvetius. We cannot altogether silence the thought of Stirner possibly having known the writings of the Marquis de Sade, as well. Because neither Holbach nor La Mettrie and Helvetius defend incest and murder. Those are genuinely Sadean thoughts".³

This thesis could not be corroborated in the context of my current research. While there was a Sade reception in Germany at the time (cf. Julia Bohnengel, *Sade in Deutschland*), there are no references pointing to Stirner having read him, whether directly or from within his circle. Stirner indubitably took note of the contemporary French literature and philosophy, as is demonstrated by, amongst others, his references to Charles Fourier, Eugène Sue and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

²A first chronology of the comparison of the two thinkers appeared in 2005 in "Der Einzige. Vierteljahresschrift des Max-Stirner-Archivs Leipzig." An expanded version of that contribution can be found on my homepage, <http://mauriceschuhmann.lima-city.de/downloads/sade-stirner-vergleich.pdf>.

³"Schon H. Ströbel hat hervorgehoben, dass Stirner's Theorie des Egoismus nicht neu sei und an die Ideen der Aufklärungsphilosophen Holbach, La Mettrie und Helvetius erinnere. Wir können uns dem Gedanken nicht verschließen, dass Stirner auch die Schriften des Marquis de Sade gekannt hat. Denn weder Holbach noch La Mettrie und Helvetius verteidigen Blutschande und Mord. Das sind echt sadische Gedanken." Bloch, Iwan. *Der Marquis de Sade und seine Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Kultur- und Sittengeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, (Hanau / M.: Schusteck Verlag, 1970), 486.

As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote so smugly in the „German ideology“: “‘Recently' Saint Sancho has vaguely heard miscellaneous news 'from France' (cf. *Wigand*, 190)”. (Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*).

In this context I wish to re-read Sade’s œuvre from a Stirnerian perspective in order to determine to what extent such a reading offers a better understanding of Sadean philosophy – especially in terms of his reflections on an individualistic ethics and the glorification of crime. Those two aspects – individualistic ethics and crime, which already appear in Iwan Bloch’s statement quoted above, lend themselves well to analysis, as they are elements central to both thinkers’ philosophies. The Dutch neo-anarchist Roul van Duyn wrote, drawing a connection between their perceptions of crime: "(D)e Sade (...), in his passionate propaganda for crime, can be compared to only one person: the anarchist philosopher Max Stirner (...) For both, crime is the weapon in the fight against religion, morality" (van Duyn, *Max Stirner en Marquis de Sade*, 10). The common basis for both thinkers is the assumption that "selfishness" is the basic constant of human action. Starting from this consideration, they reject altruism as non-existent and justify an egocentric view of the world.

Structure

The first part of this attempt is a short representation of Stirner’s philosophy based on his main work “Der Einzige und sein Eigentum” (“The egoist and its own”) and the reply to his first critics (“Stirners Recensenten”). Herein, my particular focus lies on his reflections on both ethics and crime. Both aspects are based on the Stirnerian terminology of "egoism" that is at the heart of his thought.

In the second part, I will critically read selected passages from the libertine work of Sade, utilizing the focus sharpened in the Stirner reading; and I will seek to match them to the latter’s

philosophy. The libertine works (“*Les Cent vingt journées de Sodome*”, “*La Nouvelle Justine*”, “*Histoire de Juliette*”) – alongside his autobiographically shaped novel “*Aline et Valcour*” – have been used regularly by above authors as sources of reference for the comparison.

In the conclusion, this then leads to a heightening of the possibilities to read Sade as a precursor of Stirner and thus, to also qualify the resulting reading of Sade as an early thinker of radical individualism who is to be taken seriously philosophically.⁴

Max Stirner and his philosophy

The German writer Max Stirner (1806-1856) is regarded as one of the most radical representatives of Prussian Young Hegelianism. In the 1840s, he frequented the Berlin “circle of the free”, a group of young intellectuals around the Bauer brothers Bruno and Edgar, and participated in the discourse of that time. Those discourses he not only responded to them but radicalised to the extreme (e.g. based on the critique of religion) in his main work “*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*” (“*The Egoist and its own*”), published in 1844. This led to a temporary ban of his work in several German states. The censorship authorities suspected an attack on the foundations of morality, the state and religion in his work. In fact, Stirner deconstructed morality, state and religion, as well as other ideas of a universal character, as “fixed ideas”⁵ and impediments to the free development of the specific individual and his individuality.

In contrast to G. F. W. Hegel’s philosophy of history, to him, history is not a development towards freedom, but merely a process during which one fixed idea keeps being replaced by another. In

⁴ Cf. Maurice Schuhmann, *Radikale Individualität. Zur Aktualität der Konzepte von Marquis de Sade, Max Stirner und Friedrich Nietzsche* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2011).

⁵ “What is it, then, that is called a fixed idea? An idea that has subjected the man to itself.” Max Stirner, *The Egoist and its own*, translation by Steven T. Byington (New York: Benjamin R. Tucker 1907), 55.

that context, he speaks of self-denial and calls even his contemporaries obsessed. On the other hand, in the second part of his “Einziger” (“the unique one”), he presents a philosophy of individual liberation and empowerment. The individual – in Stirner: the “egoist” or “the owner” – has to free himself of all interfering shackles and to reflect on himself. The uniqueness of the individual takes the place of universal rules. His uniqueness and his power – power in terms of prowess and potential – define his ethics and form the single measure of his thinking and actions. “I derive all right and all warrant from me; I am entitled to everything that I have in my power. I am entitled to overthrow Zeus, Jehovah, God, etc., if I can. ” (Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 247). Stirner underlines this thought with the provocative theory that even murder is legitimate as long as the individual wants it and has the power to perpetrate it. “But I am entitled by myself to murder if I myself do not forbid it to myself, if I myself do not fear murder as a wrong.” (Stirner, *The ego and its own*, 247).

The concrete individual, “ineffable” in the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, is both the starting point and the goal of his philosophy. „I have set my affair on nothing” (Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 3).⁶

In the spirit of this philosophy, the criminal is someone who breaks the universal rules to liberate themselves and to act according to their own ideas. In crime the egoist⁷ has hitherto asserted himself and mocked at the sacred; the break with the sacred, or rather of the sacred, may become general” (Stirner, *The Egoist and its own*, 323). In this, crime is closely linked to the

⁶The statement is a reference to Goethe's youth poem "Vanitas! Vanitatum, vanitas" (1806).

⁷In the “Egoist and its own”, Stirner defines the notion of the selfish man as: “A man who, instead of living up to an idea, i. e., a spiritual thing, and sacrificing to it his personal advantage, serves the latter”, (Stirner, *The Egoist and its own*, 37). In reply to his first critics, he stressed again that he does not want this term to be understood in the colloquial sense (cf. Max Stirner, *Recensenten Stirners – Kritik und Antikritik*. Mit einer Einleitung von Bernd Kast, herausgegeben von Kurt W. Fleming, (Leipzig: Verlag Max Stirner Archiv, 2002), 76 and following. The egoist is the individual who follows his own interests and ideas.

individual revolt, which he opposes to the revolutionary approach of social change. “Revolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous. The former consists in an overturning of conditions, of the established condition or status, the State or society, and is accordingly a *political or social* act; the latter has indeed for its unavoidable consequence a transformation of circumstances, yet does not start from it but from men's discontent with themselves, is not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it. The Revolution aimed at new *arrangements*; insurrection leads us no longer to *let* ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no glittering hopes on 'institutions.' It is not a fight against the established, since, if it prospers, the established collapses of itself; it is only a working forth of me out of the established. If I leave the established, it is dead and passes into decay. Now, as my object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose and deed are not a political or social but (as directed toward myself and my ownness alone) an *egoistic* purpose and deed.” (Max Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 420). In this sense, even an ordinary crime appears to him as nothing more than an act which places personal well-being above general. From this point of view, he explains: “What is the ordinary criminal but one who has committed the fatal mistake of endeavoring after what is the people's instead of seeking for what is his? He has sought despicable *alien* goods, has done what believers do who seek after what is God's.” (Max Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 265).

Closely linked to this is, thus, the idea of an individual ethics. It is based on Stirner's notion of the “conscious egoist” – the “owner” or “unique one” – , conceivable only as a specific individual – in contrast to Johann Gottlieb Fichte's “absolute ego”. Accordingly, that ethics is neither generalizable nor fixable. The scale of individual action can be found only in the individual itself, i.e. there is no external standard anymore. “Entitled or unentitled – that does not concern me, if I am only *powerful*, I am of myself *empowered*, and need no other empowering or

entitling.” (Max Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 275). This leads him to the provocative statement: “But I am entitled by myself to murder if I myself do not forbid it to myself, if I myself do not fear murder as a 'wrong.'” (Max Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 247). It is not possible to establish a universal morality on the basis of this egocentric philosophy, but it can also not be reduced to an antisocial egoism⁸. It is precisely in his concept of socialization – an “Union of Egoists” – that one may detect significant overlaps with the concept of free agreement by the Communist anarchist Peter Kropotkin. These considerations illustrate how his thoughts are not leading to a radical solipsism and isolation, as seems to be the case (of such a philosophy) with many of Sade’s protagonists (cf. Bernd Kast, *Nachwort des Herausgebers*, 374-378).

The concept of crime in the works of Sade

In order to read crime in the Sadean sense with Stirner, it is necessary to distinguish various meanings of this term. In the works of Sade, crime does not equal crime. In his works “*Les Cent vingt journées de Sodome*”, “*La Nouvelle Justine*” and “*Histoire de Juliette*”, Sade repeatedly reflected on the concept of crime. One can derive from them roughly three levels of his concept of crime:

- Crime as a breach of the law
- Crime as sexual stimulation for the libertines
- Crime as a metaphysical revolt

The first level is found in the ordinary deeds of his Libertines – such as theft, treason, counterfeiting. In many of his protagonists (such as the libertine Roland in the “*La Nouvelle*

⁸ In his response to the first critics, he explains: “The egoism, which Stirner proclaims, is not an opposite of love, not an opposite of thinking, no enemy of a sweet love life, no enemy of deep warmth, (...) briefly, no enemy of a real interest”. (Stirner, *Stirners Recensenten*, 92).

Justine"), this seems to be a mere facet of their personality, without it leading, necessarily, to anything more complex, or a philosophical treatise.

A meaningful example of the second level is that passage from Juliette, where she, after having set a fire in the dwelling of a poor family, is sexually satisfied by her female companion in her totally excited state (cf. *Histoire de Juliette*, tome I, 396 and following). Other protagonists also connect sexual pleasure with crime.

The third level is marked by the revolt against social rules, which are considered a restriction of their nature by the protagonists. The pursuit of transgression is closely linked with the individual's aspirations to freedom, herein defending his or her individuality and creating a framework for its development.

For a philosophical reading of Sade, only the third level seems to be of relevance. In itself, crime as such is non-existent for Sade as well as for Stirner. If the morality and law are recognized as fixed ideas by the individual, "crime" in the classical sense can no longer continue to exist. Like morality, it will then be nothing more than a chimera. In the course of the "*La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*", Dolmance explains crime to his pupil Eugénie as follows: "Il n'est de crime à rien, chère fille, à quoi que ce soit au monde" (Sade, *Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, 466).⁹ The basis for this idea is provided in Sade's concept of nature. Nature is apathetic, she knows neither good nor evil – and needs things which are qualified as both "good" and "evil" in order to exist. Against this background, the existence of the notion of crime is obsolete to the libertines. Where there is no distinction between good and evil, there is also no basis upon which to define crime. Both the "Good" and the "Evil" serve the will of nature, because it requires both

⁹See also: Sade, *Nouvelle Justine*, tome II, 168.

to the same extent. This serves, amongst others, the libertine Dubois as a justification for her actions (see *Nouvelle Justine*, tome I, 130).

Sade explains the existence of crimes by the existence of socially created laws, which he distinguishes from the laws of nature. Without laws there would be no crime. As a spokesman for this consideration, there is the monk Saint Sylvestre: “La plupart des élans de la nature étant funestes à la société, il est tout simple qu'elle en ait fait des crimes : mais les lois sociales ont tous les hommes pour objet, et celles de la nature sont individuelles et par conséquent préférables: car la loi faite par les hommes, pour tous les hommes”, (*Nouvelle Justine*, tome I, 336). And in the "*Histoire de Juliette*", Sade explains: “c'est la multitude des lois qui fait celle des crimes”, (*Histoire de Juliette*, tome II, 138).

Comparison of the idea of crime

In addition, and in the first place, laws are an expression of the idea of a “universal”, i.e. in Stirnerian, of a craze. He calls them, equivalent to Stirner, “Chimeras”. In the “*Philosophie dans le Boudoir*”, he explains: “Parce que les lois ne sont pas faites pour le particulier, mais pour le general, ce qui les met dans une perpétuelle contradiction avec l’intérêt personnel, attend que l’intérêt personnel l’est toujours avec l’intérêt général” (Sade, *Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, 470)¹⁰. Laws cannot be individually aligned, but always have a universal claim to follow. They are above the individual – and cannot be removed by the individuals themselves. Thus, they are, in Stirner’s terms, holy. Stirner reflects on this in “The egoist and its own”: “Only against a sacred thing are there criminals; you against me can never be a criminal, but only an opponent”,

¹⁰ "In the same way, he discredits morality as «freins populaires» (Sade, *Nouvelle Justine*, tome II, 118).

(Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 267). They are, in Stirner's terms, something "sacred". Stirner reflects on this in "*The egoist and its own*":

“Sacred things exist only for the egoist who does not acknowledge himself, the involuntary egoist, for him who is always looking after his own and yet does not count himself as the highest being, who serves only himself and at the same time always thinks he is serving a higher being, who knows nothing higher than himself and yet is infatuated about something higher; in short, for the egoist who would like not to be an egoist, and abases himself (i.e. combats his egoism), but at the same time abases himself only for the sake of "being exalted," and therefore of gratifying his egoism.“ (Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 46).

Both thinkers are united in the belief that the law per se includes a restriction of the individual. Hence, they see in the “breach of the law” a legitimate indignation of the individual, who, in this step, defends himself against the supremacy of the universal; i.e. concretely, that the "singularity" (Stirner) or the "nature of the individual" (Sade) is limited by a super-individual instance. The types of crimes that they take into consideration herein are irrelevant. To them, it is not about the phenomenology of the crimes, but about the concept itself. Crime as an act is in this sense of the conflict between the interests of the individual and those of the higher instance, however inclined. Here, equivalent to Stirner, he places emphasis on “revolt” instead of “revolution”. The German playwright Peter Weiss picked up this idea in his play “Marat/Sade” in the comparison with Jean-Paul Marat. Sade explains to Marat: “these prisons of the interior are worse than the lowest stone dungeons; and as long as they are not opened, your rebellion is only a prison revolt” (Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 123).

Just as the two thinkers relativize crime and pull the rug from under the idea of universally applicable laws, so they do with morality. In Sade, this is done at different levels. On the one hand, he relativizes any claim to the universality of morality by comparing it with the

moral values of other times and on other continents (cf. *Nouvelle Justine*, tome I, 98, 143; *Histoire de Juliette*, tome I, 70, 572); on the other hand, by negating the very foundation of religion in his deconstruction of it (cf. Schuhmann, *Radikale Individualität*, 232-242). Ultimately, he founded an individual ethics on the ruins of (Judaeo-Christian) morality. If he smashes the metaphysical basis, only the individual remains as the last basis. This atomized individual is constituted, in turn, in his early work – especially in "*Les Cent vingt journées de Sodome*" – by considerations emanating from an absolute determination of nature reminiscent of La Mettrie, as explained by the Duc de Blangis at the beginning of Sade's novel fragment "Cent vingt journées de Sodome": "Je ne suis dans ses mains qu'une machine qu'elle meut à son gré, il n'est pas un de mes crimes qui ne la serve", (Sade, *Cent vingt journées de Sodome*, 9). Here, the aforementioned apathy of nature, which is also expressed in the confrontation of the life paths of the sisters Justine and Juliette, forms an important basis. Both sisters are in the same situation at the beginning of the story and opt for their respective life paths out of their inner nature. The negation of the distinction between "good" and "evil" also plays an essential part. In this aspect, Stirner is consistent with him. He illustrates this with the example of the Roman Emperor Nero, whom, instead of associating him with the category of evil, he merely writes off as "possessed". "A Nero is a 'bad' man only in the eyes of the 'good'; in mine he is nothing but a possessed man, as are the good too", (Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 68). Sadean libertines share this view, because they reject this distinction as well. Sade's libertines reflect on this, however, and, with the exception of Juliette, yet also are largely obsessed with "evil". To them, the act of evil seems an expression of individual freedom.

In his state-theoretical digression "Français encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains" Sade illustrates the incompatibility of a universal morality with the specificity of the individual with the example of (military) uniforms:

“Que l’humanité, la fraternité, la bienfaisance nous prescrivent d’après cela nos devoirs que d’autres y rencontrent réciproques, et remplissons-les individuellement avec le simple degré d’énergie que nous a sur ce point donné la nature, sans blâmer et surtout sans punir ceux qui, plus froids ou plus atrabillaires, n’éprouvent pas dans ces liens, néanmoins si touchants, toutes les douceurs que d’autres y rencontrent; car, on en conviendra, ce serait ici une absurdité palpable que de vouloir prescrire des lois universelles; ce procédé serait aussi ridicule que celui d’un général d’armée qui voudrait que tous ses soldats fussent vêtus d’un habit fait sur la même mesure; c’est un injustice effrayante que d’exiger que des hommes de caractères inégaux se plient à des lois égales: ce qui va à l’un ne va point à l’autre” (Sade, *Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, 492).

Conscious of this, Sade justifies the need for an individual ethics. This appears to be based on a caricatural appropriation of the “law of the strongest” at first glance, restricted only to the absolute desire to maximize the pleasure of the individual coupled with a total disregard to his or her environment. Such a reading in my opinion contradicts the Sadean impetus and the character of his libertine work. In the representation of such an ethics of action, Sade is less a propagandist than an analyst and, at times, also its critic, when it comes to its reversion to a despotic system. This is his legacy, which makes him the “enlightener of the Enlightenment” in the sense of both Theodor W. Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s thought. His political writings, as well – “François encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains” and “Aline et Valcour” – suggest that he wants a social framework in which there is room for such an ethics of the individual. With regard to the justification of ethics he is however far less radical and consistent than Stirner. It is also in this facet that he is less radical and consistent than Stirner. If the concrete individual is the measure of all things, it does not need any such legitimizing pattern as Sade provides to justify his behaviour. The Sadean libertines follow their own nature, i.e. they act according to their “natural” installations and needs. Herein, the beginnings of his concept of individuality, based on the nature-related peculiarity of the individual, can be found. Similar to Stirner, Sade joins this idea

with the idea of egoism. The egoism is for the two thinkers the base of their philosophy which is in an opposition to the concept of morality. In this context, the libertine Moldane denigrates the concept of morality to Justine: “Voilà, me dit Moldane, comme tu saisis mal le véritable sens du mot morale. La vraie morale, mon ami, ne saurait s’écarter de la nature; c’est dans la nature qu’est le seul principe de tous les préceptes moraux: or, comme c’est elle qui nous inspire tous nos écarts, il ne saurait y en avoir un seul d’immoral” (Sade, *Nouvelle Justine*, tome I, 445).

This is particularly evident in the rules of a Sadean secret society, in which it is said: “Les principes de la simple nature remplaceront ceux de la morale et de la religion dans les écoles publiques” (Sade, *Nouvelle Justine*, tome II, 309).

The concept of nature used by Sade here may also be grasped by means of Stirner’s notion of ownness. The libertines – like Stirner’s “owner” – declare themselves the measure of all things – and accept no collective instance. To both writers, the individual’s power (power in the term of potential) is sufficient legitimization for their actions (see above). Also to the owner, there is no other level of legitimization than individual power.

In this, like Stirner, Sade writes off morality as a chimera (Cf. *Nouvelle Justine*, tome II, 109). However, according to both thinkers, this idea is the basis for the creation of a social order that does not suppress the individual. Sade relies, in this respect, on a transformation, as postulated by himself, of the state of natural man on a social level – and, therein, distinguishes himself very clearly from the classical contract theorists (see also Timo Airaksinen, *Of glamour, sex and Sade*).

In consequence, Sade also demands in his state-theoretical discourse “Français encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains”, that the French introduce, after the freedom of thought, also the freedom of action. (cf. Sade, *Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, 490). Herein, it becomes clear that he is seeking a regulative framework within which one may live in this natural state. A

similar thought is perceptible in Stirner, when he declares: “But am I not still unrestrained from declaring myself the ‘entitler’, the mediator, and the own self?” Then it runs thus:

“My power is my property.

My power gives me property.

My power am I myself, and through it am I my property”, (Stirner, *The Egoist and its own*, 242).

Sade does not take the step – taken so consequentially by Stirner – of thinking the consequences of his own considerations through to the end, i.e., in this case, to an absolute annihilation of anything higher existing above the individual.

Here, Sade is fully aware of the risk of this philosophy threatening to degenerate into immorality. The two libertins Ferdinand and Charlotte thematize this in their discussion of atheism.

“-Un homme sans mœurs est dangereux, dit Ferdinand.

- Oui, quand il a quelque autorité, parce qu’il sent alors le besoin d’en abuser; jamais quand il est esclave. Qu’importe qu’un homme croie ou non qu’il y ait du mal à me tuer, lorsque je l’entraverai au point de lui en ôter tous les moyens? Et quand la dépravation de ses mœurs l’amollira, il rampera bien mieux encore sous les fers dont je l’accablerai”, (Sade, *Histoire de Juliette*, tome II, 374).

Even if that passage is not very deep and meaningful, it shows that Sade has reflected this aspect also. The embodiment of such immorality is found, among others, in the character Bressac, in the “Nouvelle Justine”. He explains to Justine: “O Justine! Mon unique moral consiste à faire absolument tout ce qui me plaît, à ne jamais rien refuser à mes desirs”, (Sade, *Nouvelle Justine*, tome I, 195).

To Stirner, this question of immorality is, however, irrelevant. He thinks through egocentrism more consistently than Sade and thus does not risk the predicament of having to worry about it. His consummate egocentrism renders any justification obsolete. Moreover, his

underlying idea of man is much less pessimistic than Sade's, which was of course influenced by the impression of the bloodshed and the infighting during the French Revolution. For him, the feeling of love does not preclude egocentricity, provided that it is based on the selfish interests of the individual. His considerations show a reflected individual who, in the terms of the guiding principle of the Oracle of Delphi knows itself, i.e. also limits itself. Colossal violations of the rules of society in the sense of Sade do not appear with him. Sade's Libertines may appear in this aspect, as already noted by the German scientist Albert Eulenburg, as Baroque-style caricatures of Stirner's "Eigner".

The idea of the concrete individual is a problem immanent in the philosophy of the two thinkers. To Stirner, the individual is ineffable. When utilizing the religious metaphor of names not being fit to designate God, in consequence, the individual is not nameable, either. In contrast, in Sade, the individual is a mechanically active being determined by nature partially in the tradition of La Mettrie's materialism. His protagonist Madame Delbène reflect about it in "*Histoire de Juliette*" (cf: Sade, *Histoire de Juliette*, tome I, 55), but only the protagonist Juliette overcome this materialism. The Sadean libertines express their individuality by actually performing evil.

Thus, the construction of the individual also differentiates both thinkers. Stirner's egoist, or owner, displays a "cold", reflected personality, while the "usual" Sadean libertine possesses a rational, but still passionate character determined by nature. With regard to Stirner most of the Sadean libertines are only possessed, because they are slaves of their pure impulses. With the depiction of Juliette, who breaks out from this pattern and whom researchers often connect to the Nietzschean concept of the superman (see for example Carter, *The Sadean woman*; Hermans, *Das sadistische Universum*), Sade already approaches to some extent that reflected individuality, as represented in Stirner in the form of the owner. Juliette is no longer subsumable under the

metaphor of “l’homme machine”. She comes closer than the other libertines to the ideal of Stirner, which is expressed in the words: “I receive with thanks what the centuries of culture have acquired for me; I am not willing to throw away and give up anything of it: I have not lived in vain. The experience that I have *power* over my nature, and need not be the slave of my appetites, shall not be lost to me; the experience that I can subdue the world by culture's means is too dear-bought for me to be able to forget it. But I want still more.” (Stirner, *The egoist and its own*, 445-446).

Summary

The overlap in the thought of both philosophers and even the obvious approach to Stirner’s concepts in the form of Juliette – which, alas, could only be hinted at this point – emphasize this essay’s opening claim that reading Sade from a Stirnerian perspective is worthwhile. The depictions of crime, immorality and a radical individualism in the works of Sade which have resulted in controversies and criticism time and again take on a new significance through a Stirnerian lens. Such a reading allows for the philosophical level that, after all, shapes the thinking of Sade; to be uncovered behind the scenes of pornographic and monstrous discourse. It opens access to his individualistic philosophy and, hence, for a serious engagement with it. Starting from a common basis in the specific individual that they construct differently, both thinkers reject any form of a communality existing above the individual. This negation happens via a redundant reflection of that and through the act of outrage, which is reflected in the crime. The crime is thus also an expression of the classic conflict between individual and collective. In the crimes, the individuals constitute themselves, defending their individuality against the idea of something higher outside of the individual. Therein, Sade’s work is characterized by its procedural nature – as already noted by Simone de Beauvoir in her essay “*Faut-il brûler Sade?*”,

while, in his work, Stirner already proves a reflected author who has lived through this process to the end.

In relation to the investigated facets, the concept of crime on its philosophical level may be grasped as an expression of the conflicted relationship of the individual to a social whole claiming a universal right, in which Sade is compliant with Stirner. Albert Camus had already addressed this aspect in “L’homme révolté”, but in this interpretation that level can be fully considered. Crime is not only an expression of individual revolt but, more concretely, of a defense of individuality against a claim to universality, which threatens to stifle it. Confronted with Stirner’s ideas, those facets of moral critique and individualistic ethics closely related to the reflections on crime also take a new turn. The interpretation of non-specific convictions (morality, religion) and institutions (State law) as chimeras or fixed ideas is underlined here and legitimizes the action ethics of the libertines. Matched with Stirner’s philosophy, the problems that, partially, have received only vague consideration from Sade at last receive their appropriate name as fixed ideas. Hence, the unease about the limiting restriction of the individual represented by Sade’s literature may be clad in philosophical terms with the aid of Stirner. Therefore, Sadean literature, as well, can be seen as a model, in my opinion, on the basis of which Stirner’s philosophy may be mapped. What unites both thinkers is that they represent a philosophy of radical individualism, i.e. an individualism radically thought through to the end, in a way that has not yet been surpassed. This shows the limits of the Stirnerian concept and highlights the potential dangers of an individualism that is taken to extremes.

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