

# The Story of My Life

## GA 28

### Chapter XXVII

The thought then hovered before me that the turn of the century must bring a new spiritual light to humanity. It seemed to me that the exclusion of human thinking and willing from the spirit had reached a climax. A revolutionary change in the process of human evolution seemed to me a matter of necessity.

Many were talking in this way. But they did not see that man will seek to direct his eyes toward a world of real spirit as he directs them through the senses toward nature. They only supposed that the subjective spiritual temper of the soul would undergo a revolution. That a real, new objective world could be revealed – such a thought lay beyond the range of vision of that time.

With the experiences that came to me from my perspective of the future and from the impressions received from the world about me, I was forced to turn the eyes of my mind more and more to the development which marked the nineteenth century.

I saw how, with the time of Goethe and Hegel, everything disappeared which knowingly takes up conceptions of a spiritual world into human forms of thought. Thenceforth knowledge must not be “confused” by conceptions from the spiritual world. These conceptions are assigned to the sphere of faith and “mystical” experience.

In Hegel I perceived the greatest thinker of the new age. But he was just that – only a thinker. To him the world of spirit was in thinking. Even while I admired immeasurably the way in which he gave form to all his thinking, yet I perceived that he had no feeling for the world of spirit which I beheld and which is revealed behind thinking only when thinking is empowered to become an experience whose body, in a certain measure, is thought, and which takes up into itself as soul the Spirit of the world.

Since in Hegelianism everything spiritual has become thought, Hegel represented to me the person who brought the ultimate twilight of the ancient spiritual light into a period in which the spirit became hidden in darkness from human knowledge.

All this appeared thus before me whether I looked into the spiritual world or looked back in the physical world upon the century drawing to an end. But now there came forth in this century a figure which I could not trace on into the spiritual world – Max Stirner.

Hegel was wholly the man of thought, who in his inner unfolding strives after a thinking which goes ever deeper, and in going deeper extends to farther horizons. This thinking, in its deepening and broadening, becomes at last one with the thinking of the World-Spirit which includes the whole world-content. And Stirner was all that man unfolds from himself, bringing this wholly from his individual personal will. What exists in humanity lies only in the juxtaposition of single personalities.

I dared not just at that time fall into one-sidedness. As I stood completely within Hegelianism experiencing this in my soul as my own inner experience, so must I also wholly submerge myself inwardly in this opposite.

Against the one-sidedness of endowing the World-Spirit merely with knowledge must, indeed, the opposite appear, the assertion of man merely as a will-being.

Had the situation been such that this opposition had simply appeared in me as an experience of my own mind in its evolution, I would never have permitted anything of this to enter into my writing or lecturing. I have always observed this rule with regard to such mental experiences. But this particular contradiction – Hegel and Stirner – belonged to the century. Through this the century expressed itself.

And, indeed, it is true that philosophers are not to be principally considered in relation to their influence on their times. Certainly one can mention very strong influences proceeding from Hegel. But this is not the main thing. Philosophers show in the content of their thinking the spirit of their age as a thermometer shows the warmth of a place. In the philosophers that becomes conscious which lives unconsciously in the age.

And so the nineteenth century in its two extremes lived through the impulses expressing themselves through Hegel and Stirner: impersonal thinking which most delights to yield itself to a contemplation of the world in which man with his inner creative powers has no part; and wholly personal will with little feeling for the harmonious co-operation of men. To be sure, all possible “social ideals” appear, but they have no power to influence reality. This more and more takes on the form of what can come about when the wills of individuals work side by side.

Hegel would have the thought of the moral take objective form more and more in the associated life of men; Stirner feels that the “individuals” (single persons) are harmed by everything which thus gives harmonious form to the life of men.

My own consideration of Stirner was connected at that time with a friendship which had a decisive effect upon very much in what we are here considering. This was my friendship with the important Stirner scholar and editor J. H. Mackay. It was while still in Weimar that I was brought in contact by Gabrielle Reuter with this personality, to me likewise altogether congenial. He had occupied himself with those chapters in my *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* which deal with ethical individualism. He found a harmony between my discussions and his own social views.

At first it was the personal impression I received from; J. H. Mackay that filled my soul when in company with him. He bore the “world” in him. In his whole inner and outer bearing there spoke world-experience. He had spent some time in both England and America. All this was suffused with a boundless amiability. I conceived a great affection for him.

When, therefore, J. H. Mackay came to reside permanently at Berlin, there developed a delightful friendship between us. This also, unfortunately, has been destroyed by life and especially by my public discussion of anthroposophy.

In this instance I must only describe quite objectively how the work of J. H. Mackay seemed to me at that time, and still seems, and what effect it had upon me. For I am aware that he would express himself quite differently about it.

Profoundly hateful to this man was everything in human social life which is force, *Archie*. The greatest failure, he felt, was the introduction of force into social control. In “communistic anarchy” he saw a social idea in the highest degree objectionable because this proposed to bring about a better state of humanity through the employment of force.

Now it was a risky thing for J. H. Mackay to battle against this idea and the agitation based upon it while choosing for his own social thought the same name which his opponents had, only with another adjective preceding it. “Individualistic anarchy” was his name for what he himself represented, and that, too, as the very opposite of what was then called “anarchy.” This naturally led the public to form nothing but biased view concerning Mackay's ideas. He was in accord with the American, B. Tucker, who stood for the same conception. Tucker visited Mackay at Berlin, and in this way I came to know him.

Mackay is also a poet of his conception of life. He wrote a novel *Die Anarchisten*.<sup>1</sup> I read this after I had become acquainted with the author. This is a noble work based upon faith in the individual man. It describes penetratingly and with great vividness the social condition of the poorest of the poor. But it also sets forth how out of the world's misery those men will find a way to improvement who, being wholly devoted to the good forces, so bring these forces to their unfolding that they become effective in the free association of men rendering compulsion unnecessary. Mackay had the noble confidence that men could of themselves create a harmonious order of life. He considered, however, that this would be possible only after a long time, when by spiritual ways a requisite revolution should have been completed within men. He therefore demanded for the present that those individuals who were far enough advanced should propagate the idea of this spiritual way. A social idea, therefore, which would employ only spiritual means.

Destiny had now given such a turn to my experience with J. H. Mackay and Stirner that here also I had to submerge myself in a thought-world which became to me a spiritual testing. My ethical individualism I felt to be a pure inner experience of man. It was by no means my intention when I formulated this to make it the basis of a philosophy of politics. Now at this time, about 1898, a sort of abyss had to be opened in my mind in regard to this purely ethical individualism. It had to be changed from something purely human and inward to something external. The esoteric must be shifted to the exoteric.

Then, in the beginning of the new century, when I had succeeded in stating my experience of the spiritual in *Die Mystik im Aufgange*<sup>2</sup> and *Christianity as Mystical Fact*, ethical individualism again stood after the test in its rightful place.

Yet the testing took such a course that the outward expression played no part in full consciousness. It took its course just below this full consciousness, and because of this very proximity it could influence the forms of expression in which, during the last years of the past century, I spoke regarding things social. Certain discussions of that time, however, which seem all too radical must be compared with others in order to arrive at a correct conception.

One who sees into the spiritual world always finds his own being externalized when he ought to express opinions and conceptions. He enters the spiritual world, not in abstractions, but in living perceptions. Nature likewise, which is the sensible copy of the spiritual, does not represent opinions and conceptions, but places these before the world in their forming and becoming.

A state of inner movement, which drove into billows and waves all the forces of my soul, was at that time my inner experience.

My external private life became one of absolute satisfaction by reason of the fact that the Eunicke family was drawn to Berlin and I could live with them under the best of care after having experienced for a short time the utter misery of living in a home of my own. My friendship with Frau Eunicke was soon thereafter transformed into a civil marriage. Only this shall be said concerning this private affair. Of my private life I do not wish to introduce anything into this biography except what concerns my process of development. Living in the Eunicke home enabled me to have an undisturbed basis for a life of inner and outer movement. Otherwise, private relationships do not belong to the public. It is not concerned in these.

Indeed, my spiritual development is, in reality, utterly independent of all private relationships. I am conscious of the fact that this would have been quite the same had the shaping of my private life been entirely different.

Amid all the movement in my life at that time came now the continual anxiety concerning the possibility of an existence for the Magazine. In spite of all the difficulties I faced, it would have gained a circulation if there had been available to me the material means. But a periodical which at the utmost could afford only sufficient compensation to give me the bare necessities of a material existence, and for which nothing whatever could be done to make it known, could not thrive upon the limited circulation it had when I took it over.

So long as I edited the Magazine it was a constant source of anxiety to me.

1. *The Anarchist.*
2. *Mysticism at the Beginning of the Modern Spiritual Life.*

---

*This material is made available through the Rudolf Steiner Archive, [rsarchive.org](https://rsarchive.org), a project of the community funded nonprofit, Steiner Online Library. Please consider making a tax deductible [donation](#) to support our work.*