

FEUERBACH ON RELIGION

A CRITIQUE

BY

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DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER
OF PHILOSOPHY IN PHILOSOPHY (M. PHIL.)
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG
2002

THE NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY

May 2002

I, Ms. Grace Darling, hereby declare that, the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/ Institute.

This is being submitted to the North Eastern Hill University for the degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) in Philosophy.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It will be difficult to name all the persons who had helped me in writing this humble dissertation. But, I will be failing in my part if I do not mention the following:

I express my heartfelt thanks to my Supervisor Prof. C.R. Agera, Head of the Department of Philosophy, N.E.H.U. for inspiring me to do a research on the philosopher to whose thoughts I was first introduced by him during a course on Freud and Religion. I am grateful for all his selfless help and fatherly treatment all through this work.

I am also indebted to all my teachers from the Department of Philosophy: Prof. Mrinal Miri, Prof. (Mrs). Sujata Miri, Prof. N. Malla, Dr. M. M. Agarwal, Prof. Jagat Pal, Prof. S. C. Daniel, Dr. Richard Tongper, Shri. Xavier Mao, Dr. Lenka. My intellectual pursuit is largely shaped by their teaching with love and sincerity. I cannot ignore the goodness of the non-teaching staff of the Department of Philosophy. They were always ready with their kind help, in times of need, in particular.

I am also grateful to the librarians of N.E.H.U. who were always kind, dutiful and welcoming.

*Credit is also due to the Sacred Heart theological College library, Mawlai, and, in particular, to Rev. Fr. Nicholas Guangdiat Panmei who readily helped me generously in getting the most needed Feuerbachian text, *The Essence of Christianity*, and many more, too.*

I am also indebted to Mrs. Apuana Panmei and Lokho Abba for their remarkable service in various ways, particularly, in getting more materials than I could master; and for their moral support. Credit is also due to all my classmates, and hostel in-mates: elder sister Apeni Kithan, Adino, Zhanuo, Dorcas, Esther, Nakhuru, Aren, Anung, Aien, Chopfoza and others. I am also thankful to the former D.S.W., N.E.H.U., Dr. Kharbuli, and the present D.S.W., N.E.H.U., Dr. Eugene D. Thomas, for their remarkable help in allotting me a hostel seat to carry out my work. I cannot forget my Warden, Dr. Lucy Zehol, for helping and guiding me in times of need.

I am also very much indebted to S.Hajong, Abemo Odyuo Jamedi Longkumar, Upal, Premjit Basumatary and others who had helped me tremendously in typing, correcting and editing the work day and night tirelessly.

Without the great help of C.R.Das and Dhiren who had helped me generously with the printing, the work would not have been feasible.

I also express my thanks also to the North-Eastern Hill University for giving me the privilege to study both for my Master and M.Phil. Degree.

At this juncture I cannot forget my Aunty Aram pamei who always had been a source of encouragement to me. I also cannot forget my Local Guardian Rev. Gaila and his family. My special acknowledgements also go to the Pastor Rev. Malsawma and all the Shillong Baptist Church members, who, I know, were always with me through their prayers.

With my deepest sense of gratitude, I thank my parents Mr. Panmei Kiugomang and Mrs. Aneiliu for their unceasing love and support. It is they who may be said to have sown in me the seeds of passionate interest in religious matters since my childhood.

I hope and pray that the Lord Almighty will surely bless each and every one of them in His own special way.

Above all, I thank the almighty Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus for everything He is to me.

24/04/02

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FEUERBACH'S LIFE: A BRIEF SKETCH

Andreas Ludwig Feuerbach was born in Landshut, Bavaria in 1804. He studied theology at Heidelberg and Berlin. In 1825, under the influence of Hegel, he transferred himself to the faculty of Philosophy. He received his doctorate in 1828 at Erlangen. He published a book on Religion in 1830 without however revealing his identity. The book, when translated, created a minor scandal to the orthodoxy of the day. For in it, Christianity was interpreted as an egoistic and inhumane religion. When his authorship came to be known he was dismissed from the faculty in which he was teaching. In 1836 he retired to Bruckberg, where lived on a modest pension from the Bavarian government, income from his writings, and revenue provided by his wife's interest in a pottery factory.

Many of Feuerbach's most important early writings on religion and philosophy first appeared between 1836 and 1843 in collaboration with Arnold Ruge. But he broke with Ruge later, when Ruge began collaboration with Karl Marx. He reappeared briefly in academic life in 1848, which did not last another year.

Feuerbach once more retired to Bruckberg with the defeat of liberalism in Germany, in which, he was looked upon by his students as a symbol of liberal thought. There, he devoted himself to the study of natural sciences, the composition of a monumental *Theogonie* (Leipzig, 1857), voluminous correspondence with friends and admirers all over Europe. His wife's porcelain factory failed. This was the disaster of his life. He and his family had to move to

Nuremberg in 1860, and his life was seriously uprooted. His factory went fully bankrupt in Bruckberg and, since then, at the age of fifty-six, he found himself penurious. He found himself without a source of income forced to live on the generosity of his friends. In 1867 he suffered the first of a number of strokes that finally killed him in 1872. He was buried at Johannisfriedhof in Nuremberg.

A good number of works, authored by Feuerbach, which appeared at different times, are listed here below:

1. *Reason: Its Unity, Universality, and Infinity* (1828).
2. *Thoughts on Deaths and Immortality* (1830).
3. *The History of Modern Philosophy, From Bacon to Spinoza* (1833).
4. *Exposition, Development and Critique of Libnitzian Philosophy* (1836).
5. *Pierre Bayle: A Contribution to the History of Philosophy and Humanity* (1838).
6. *Critique of Hegelian Philosophy* (1839).
7. *The Essence of Christianity* (1845-1846).
8. *Preliminary Theses for the Reform of Philosophy* (1842-1843).
9. *Foundations of the Philosophy of the Future* (1842-1843).
10. *The Essence of Religion* (1845-1846).
11. *The Question of Immortality from the Standpoint of Anthropology*
(1845-1846).
12. *Ten-volumes of collected works* (1846).
13. *Lectures on the Essence of Religion* (1851).
14. *Theogonie* (1857).
15. *Spiritualism and Materialism* (1872).

16. *On Ethics: Eudaimonism* (1872).

Every one of these was masterpieces in the nineteenth century. The first one earned him a doctorate, but the *Essence of Christianity* immortalized him.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Andreas Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) shook the foundations of the age-old beliefs of religion, especially of Christianity, when he published in 1841 his celebrated work, *The Essence of Christianity*. The work deeply offended the religious sentiments of the believers and their philosopher- and theologian-spokesman, and was immediately greeted with derision and contempt. To say the least, it was outrageous to the faith of Christianity. But in the ensuing controversy that raged, touching upon the doctrinal matters, what is often forgotten is Feuerbach's unique contribution to the study of the nature of man. Much before the Existentialists appeared on the European scene, his was the lone voice trying to proclaim the uniqueness of man as man. In the process of reconstructing a philosophical anthropology, he may have moved to the extreme position of doing away with religion, especially, with the notion of God itself. If in the event it warranted a rejection of his master's Idealism, he did not hesitate to call it quits with Hegel.

At the root of his philosophy is to be found his philosophical anthropology. Man is a thinking being with the endowment of the power of imagination. It is the power of imagination that moves him to relate himself to man and God alike. But, there is a difference, here. In relating himself to man, he essentially realises himself. But in relating himself to God, he alienates himself from his own essence. Can man recover his alienated essence ? - was the question that he addressed himself to. He threw in his challenging

thesis that God is a creation of human imagination. Nevertheless, this creation has a foundation in man's own nature. God is the objectified subjective nature, projected out, personalised and divinised into the 'supernature' of God. God then is the objectified image of perfected man the subject. Hence, his God is created out of man's own image. Thus Feuerbach reverses the Biblical dogma, "God created man and woman in his own image" (*Genesis* 1:27).

Feuerbach's philosophy, with the primacy ascribed to the power of human imagination, coupled with empiricism and naturalism at a time when Hegelianism was the preferred philosophy of the continent, threatened to reverse the traditionally accepted ontology and cosmology of Christianity. While the starting point of Christianity lies in the sovereignty of God, Feuerbach attempted to re-establish the sovereignty of man. The scientism of the early nineteenth century lent an admirable support to his enterprise. He had become the philosopher-spokesman for science. He seems to be rejoicing over the achievements of science, making its impact then on human life and its enterprises in every field. Biology, and Chemistry, on particular, with its production of the uric acid synthetically, proved to be corrosive to the religions, more particularly, to the Christian worldview. It questioned seriously the qualitative distinction between matter and life. Spritualistic philosophies began to crumble. All these converged into the new proofs against the existence of a personal and creator God, who was the author of life, 'soul' and the world.

Thus, Feuerbach's philosophy served as a perennial warning to all forms of religious and their practices, particularly, of the Judeo-Christian persuasion, as being groundless. In the end, in its extreme form; it ended up with an uncompromising negation of God and religion.

The study undertaken in this dissertation is a critical study of Feuerbach's reflections on religion. The specific thesis of his work on religion is clearly stated in his monumental work, *The Essence of Christianity*. I shall sum up some of the principle tenets, which, in my considered opinion, have a direct bearing on his understanding of religion. Needless to say, I have left out a host of minor details.

1. FEUERBACH'S UNDERSTANDING OF MAN AND RELIGION IN BRIEF

(a). The Essential Nature of Man

Feuerbach points out that religion has its basis in the essential difference between man and the brute. The former has religion, the latter has not one. But the existential difference between man and the brute is a simple one; it is also the most popular difference between the brute and man: It consists in the kind of consciousness that they possess. Man's consciousness is not limited to his appetitional drives, as is the case with the brute. It is rather one honed by a degree of rationality and an 'unlimited power of imagination'. To him, consciousness in the strict sense, is present only in human being, to whom his essential nature is an object of thought.

According to Feuerbach, the brute has only a simple life, whereas man, a twofold life. In the brute, the inner life is one with the outer. Man, on the

contrary, has both an inner and an outer life. Man thinks, that is, he converses with himself. The brute can exercise no function, which has relation to itself, or its species; it cannot act without another individual, external to itself. But man can perform the function of thought and speech, which strictly imply such a relation to himself, to his own nature, to his own species, apart from another individual. Man is in himself at once both an "I" and a "Thou", and he can put himself in the place of another. Because of this, to man, his species, his essential nature, and not merely his individuality, is an object of thought.

To will, to love, to think, are the highest powers of man. They represent the absolute nature of man as man, and the basis of his existence is thinking, loving and willing existence. That alone is true, perfect and divine, which exists for its own sake. Thinking, willing and loving are not the powers which man possess, for he is nothing without these, they are rather the constituent elements of his nature. They are the essence of man himself. All the attributes of the divine nature are nothing other than the attributes of human nature rid of all its imperfections. God then is the same as the perfected human nature.

(b). The Essence of Religion Considered Generally

Feuerbach states that, in the perceptions of the senses, consciousness of the object is distinguishable from the consciousness of self. But, in religion, consciousness of the object and self-consciousness coincide. The object of the senses is out of man, but the religious object is within him, and therefore it does not forsake him as his self-consciousness or his conscience. It is the most intimate, the closest object. The religious object of any subject is nothing

other than the subject's own nature taken objectively. For him, man and God are identical in the sense that consciousness of God is at once self-consciousness and knowledge of God is at once self-knowledge.

Feuerbach considered religion to be man's earliest, if also indirect, form of self-knowledge. Hence, it is nothing surprising that religion everywhere has preceded philosophy in the history of human race; so also in the history of the individual. Religion, at least, the Christian religion, is the relation of man to himself, to his own nature, the subjective nature, but viewed as a nature apart from his own nature. The divine being is nothing else than the human nature, at once purified and freed from the limits of the individual man, contemplated and reversed as "the other" a totally distinct being. All the attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of the perfected human nature. It is only the "irreligious", who wish to know nothing more of God by alleging religious horror in limiting God by positive predicates. Dread of limitation is the dread of mind. But the truly religious wants to know God, because it is the enhancement of self-knowledge. For him, the necessity of the subject lies only in the necessity of the predicate, and man uses any number of human predicates of his God, for this is the only way that he, as subject, becomes a human subject. The certainty and reality of man's existence lie only in the certainty and reality of human attributes. The negation of the predicate is the negation of the subject, and the assertion of the reality of the predicates is the sole guarantee of his existence. Herein, lies the justification for all theology, which, at its depth, is only a human anthropology. This needs a closer analysis.

2.THE TRUE, OR ANTHROPOLOGICAL, ESSENCE OF RELIGION

A. (i). God as a Being of Understanding

Feuerbach, in his *Essence of Christianity*, when explaining his work on the true, or anthropological, essence of religion says,

Religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the anti-thesis of himself. God is not what man is-man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man is the finite being; God is the perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God Almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes: God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations.¹

Feuerbach thinks that it is in this differencing of God and man that religion begins, in which it is man's own nature sublimated.

God is the need of the human intelligence, a necessary thought, the highest degree of thinking power. The reason cannot rest in sensuous things.²

It can find contentment only when it penetrates to the highest, first necessary being, which can be the object to the reason alone. All metaphysical predicates of God are real predicates only when they are recognised as belonging to thought, to intelligence, to the understanding. Thus, to Feuerbach, God is dependent on reason, and not reason on God. The highest power of reason stands above the divine omnipotence. The understanding, or the reason, is the necessary being.

¹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957.,p.33.

² *ibid*, p.36.

Existence would be nothing, would be equivalent to non-existence, if there were to be no reason and no consciousness. Distinction between existence and non-existence is first found by consciousness. The value of existence, the value of consciousness, is first revealed in consciousness. He concludes that reason, which is an object to itself, is the highest, the final being; it has power over itself. That which has power over itself is almighty.

(ii). God as a Moral Being, or Law

God is seen to be a moral being, or the law. In religion, man seeks his contentment. Religion is his highest good. But, if man is to find contentment in God, he must find himself in God. A God, who expresses only the nature of understanding, does not satisfy religion. Such a God cannot be the God of religion. The understanding is interested not only in man, but, in the things out of man, in universal nature. The intellectual man forgets even himself in the contemplation of nature. For Feuerbach, the understanding is the absolute indifference and identity of all things and beings. He believes that it is not the Christianity, not the religious enthusiasm, that deserves to be praised but the enthusiasm of the understanding. Celebrating the victory of science as a triumph of understanding, he asks us to thank botany, mineralogy, zoology, physics and astronomy. Understanding assigns to God a moral perfection. But God as a morally perfect being is nothing else than the realised idea, the fulfilled law of morality, the moral nature of man posited as the absolute being. He is man's own nature, since the moral God requires man to be himself.

Therefore, God says, "Be ye holy for I am holy",³ Feuerbach quotes the Biblical saying quite judiciously for his own cause.

The understanding judges only according to the stringency of the law. The heart is considerate, lenient, relenting, and the heart accommodates itself. But no man is sufficient for the law, which moral perfection sets for us. For that same reason, neither is the law sufficient for man, for the heart. The law therefore condemns; the heart however, has compassion even on the sinners. The law considers me only as an abstract being; love, however, as a real being. Love gives me the consciousness that I am a man, but the law gives man the consciousness that he is a sinner that he is worthless. Love is the middle term, the substantial bond, which is the reconciliation between the perfect and the imperfect, the sinless and the sinful being, the universal and the individual, the divine and the human. It is love that strengthens the weak and weakens the strong, that lowers the high and raises the lowly, that idealises matter and materialises the spirit. It is love that unifies God and man, spirit and nature. God is regarded as a sin-pardoning being, and more than a moral being. For Feuerbach, love is nothing but the essence of the heart of man.

B. THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION

(i). The Mystery of the Incarnation

Feuerbach thinks that the Christian mystery of incarnation is the mystery of God as love, therefore, a being of the heart. Man reconciles

³ *The Holy Bible*, Leviticus 11:45

himself with God, or rather with his own nature, as represented in the moral law by the consciousness of love. It is the contemplation of God as human that gives way to the mystery of incarnation. The incarnation is the practical, material manifestation of the human nature. The cause of the incarnation is nothing other than the need, the want of man, which still exists, in the religious sentiment. God became man out of mercy for human want. Human misery is said to touch the divine heart, and therefore incarnation is a tear of the divine compassion. It is the visible advent of a being, having within itself the human feelings, and therefore, essentially human.

In fact, the idea of the incarnation is nothing more than the human form of a god. In his nature, in the profundity of his soul, God is a merciful God, a thoroughly human God. The mysterious and the incomprehensibility of the divine nature spoken of by the theologian is contradictory to the proposition that "God is or becomes a man". The contradiction arises only from the mingling, or confusion, of the abstract idea or definitions of the universal, unlimited, metaphysical being with the loving idea of the religious God. This confusion is considered to be the greatest hindrance to the correct knowledge of religion. The allegation, that the incarnation is a purely empirical fact, which could be made known only by means of a revelation in the theological sense, betrays the most crass religious materialism; for the incarnation is a conclusion which rests on a very comprehensible premise. Thus, we see, Feuerbach effectively reduces the Christian mystery of incarnation to a need embedded in human nature.

(ii). The Mystery of the Suffering God

Feuerbach sees in the incarnation and the suffering Christ the essential condition of the incarnate. This condition represents the predicament of the human God, namely Christ. It is a predicament of suffering, or passion. God, as the transcendent God, is the sum of all human perfection. But God, as the incarnate Christ, is the sum of all human misery. The heart knows no more excellent being than itself, then a God whose nature is of the heart. And, out of the heart, an inward impulse to do good, to live and to die for man, with the divine instinct of benevolence which desires to make all happy, emerges an inward necessity revealing itself through the heart. Thus has sprung what is best and true in Christianity; its essence has been purified from theological dogmas and contradictions. Moral, voluntary suffering, the suffering of love, the power of sacrificing self for the good of others, is represented by the passion of Christ. For Feuerbach, the history of Christianity is the history of the passion of humanity. Tears of repentance and yearning are the light-reflecting drops, which mirror the nature of the heart.

The nature of the suffering God is the nature of the heart. As a being without suffering is a being without a heart, the heart is the source, the centre of all suffering. Drawing upon this truth, Feuerbach came to the conclusion that the mystery of the suffering God is the mystery of feeling, sensibility; a suffering God is a feeling, sensitive God. Thus, religion is human nature reflected, mirrored in itself, and hence, God is the mirror of man. For man, God is the common-place book in which man registers his highest feelings and thought. It is the genealogical tree on which are entered the names that

are dearest and most sacred to him. God is a symbol of an indiscriminating good nature, to gather together and, then, to preserve tenaciously all that we have cherished. Man places before himself a God, which is nothing else, but an aim, a purpose, which is the conscious voluntary impulse of life. It is the focus of self-knowledge, the unity of the spiritual in the individual man. God thus becomes the product of human nature projected out.

(iii). The Mystery of the Trinity and the Mother of God

Man's consciousness of himself is his totality in also the consciousness of the Trinity. The trinity knits together the qualities, or powers, which were before regarded separately, into a unity. His Consciousness reduces the universal being of the understanding, that is God as God, to a special being. The so-called images by which the Trinity has been sought to be illustrated and made comprehensible, are principally: mind, understanding, memory, will, and love. Religion is man's consciousness in which the identity of self-consciousness exists only as the pregnant, complete unity of I and Thou.

At least the Christian religion is an abstraction from the world, which is essentially inward. The religious man is seen to live a life withdrawn from this world, hidden in God, void of worldly joy. God is seen to be a simple being, absolutely alone, a solitary, and self-sufficing being. To be able to be solitary is a sign of character and thinking power. Solitude is the need of the thinker, but society is the need of the heart. As we cannot love alone, but need a duality or community so is with religion. In the still solitude of the divine being is placed another, a second one, which is different from God as to personality

but identical with him in essence. Thus arises God the Son, in distinction from God the Father. God the Father is "I", God the Son is "Thou". Here the "I" is the understanding, the "Thou" love. But love with understanding and understanding with love is mind, and mind is the totality of man as such, the total man. The third person in the Trinity is seen to be expressing nothing more than the love of the two divine persons towards each other. It is the unity of the Son and the Father, the idea of the community, strangely enough regarded, in its turn, as a special personal being.

In completing the bond of love in the divine family between the Father and Son, a third person was received into the trinity as the personal of the holy Spirit. But this proved to be too vague and precarious for it, despite the obvious poetic personification of the mutual love of the Father and the Son, serving as the third complementary being. On the contrary, the idea of the Virgin Mary fits in perfectly with the relation of the Trinity, since she is said to have conceived without man the Son whom the Father "begets" without woman. Feuerbach perceived that, if not in *concreto* and explicitly, yet in *abstracto* and implicitly, the feminine principle is already in the Son. The love of the Son to the virgin Mother is the first love of the masculine being for the feminine. The idea of the Mother is associated with the idea of the Son of God. The same heart that needed the one needed the other also. The Mother is indispensable to the Son, and the heart of the Son is the heart of the Mother. The incomparable love, the highest and deepest love is the Mother's love. Thus, for Feuerbach, the notion of God springs out of the feeling of a want. The disconsolate feeling of a void, of loneliness, generates a God, in

whom there is a society, a union of beings fervently loving each other. Once again, Feuerbach could explain away purely psychologically a fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

(iv) . The Mystery of the Logos and the Divine Image

The real God of any religion is the so-called Mediator, because he alone is the immediate object of any religion. The God in the background of a Mediator is only an abstract, inert, conception.

Man, as an emotional and sensuous being, is governed and made happy by images, by sensible representations. Mind presenting itself as at once type-creating, emotional and sensuous, is the imagination. The second person in God, who is truth in the first person in religion, is the nature of the imagination made objective. The Son therefore is expressly called the Image of God. His essence is that he is an image, which is the representation of God. The Son is the satisfaction of the mental need for mental images. He is also the imaginative activity in man in which it is objectified as an absolute divine. Feuerbach says that man made for himself an image of God, that is to say, he converts the abstract being of the reason, the being of the thinking power, which the Greeks had known as the logos, into an object of sense or imagination. The Son is the reflected splendour of the imagination, the image dearest to the heart. But, for the very reason that he is only an object of the imagination, he is only the nature of the imagination made objective.

The second Person is another definition connected with the nature of the image. To Christian religion, it is also the "Word of God". Feuerbach

conceived of the word as an abstract image, the imaginary things; it is the imagined thought. Words are the results of imagination. The power of speech is a poetic talent. Brutes do not speak, because they have no poetic faculty. Thought expresses itself only by images. The power by which the thought expresses itself is the imagination. The imagination expressing itself is speech. The power of words is the power of the imagination. To the ancients, as the children of imagination, the word was a being, a mysterious, magical powerful being. Feuerbach concluded that words have the effect of a narcotic on man. Word imprisons man under the power of imagination. History of humanity is a witness to how Words possess a revolutionising force; they have governed mankind. Words are held sacred, while the things of reason and truth are decried, often.

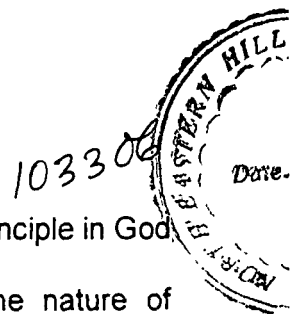
Man does not have only an instinct, an internal necessity, which impels him to think, to perceive, and to imagine, but he has also the impulse to speak, to utter and to impart his thoughts. The power of words is a divine power, it is the impulse of the divine. The word is imaged, revealed; it radiates lustrous enlightening thought. Words are not really less rich, less pregnant than music, though music often seems to say more and appear deeper and richer than words. The word has the power to redeem, to reconcile, to bless, in short, to make free. To speak is an act of freedom and the word is freedom. Hence, Feuerbach opines that word is invested with that prepossession which is an illusion. Religion takes the appearance of the human word for its essence, and hence it necessarily conceives the true nature of the word to be a special being, distinct from the human word. The word of God is the divinity

of the word, as it becomes an object to man within the sphere of religion, which is the true nature of the human word. Man knows no higher spiritually operative power and expression of power than the power of God, and, for man, God is the sum of all reality. All that man feels or knows are regarded as God. Therefore it is an illusion. One can does see how Feuerbach makes use of the dogmatic premises of Christianity to draw his own conclusions, not necessarily endorsed by Christianity.

(v). The Mystery of the Cosmogonical Principle in God

Feuerbach explained the mystery of the cosmogonical principle in God as the opposition between the nature of abstraction and the nature of perception. It is the opposition of the noumenal, or invisible, divine nature and the phenomenal, or visible, nature of the world. But what connects abstraction with perception is the imagination. Consequently, the transition from God to the word by means of the second. Person is only the form in which religion makes itself objective. It is a transition from abstraction to perception by means of the imagination. It is the imagination alone by which man neutralises the opposition between God and the world. All religious cosmogonies are products of imagination.

The cosmogonical process is nothing else but the mystic paraphrase of a psychological process. It makes for the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness made objective. The truth of this unity lies at the nature of man in bringing out the identity of his self-consciousness with his consciousness of "another"; likewise the identity of another, who is not identical, with himself.



However, Christian philosophers and theologians insisted on the creation of the world out of nothing. They were unable to altogether evade the old axiom, "Nothing comes from nothing", that expresses a law of thought. The world has a basis in itself, as has everything in the world, which has a claim to the name of a species. A difference, or specificity, by which something has a given being as what it is, is always in the ordinary sense inexplicable, undeducible. Through itself, it has its cause in itself. The distinction between the world and God, as the creator, is only a formal one. It lies as necessarily in the reason as identity. Difference however, is an essential principle of thought. The world arises only from a distinction of another kind, the external distinction from an internal one, the static distinction from a dynamic one. The cosmogonical principle in God reduced to the distinction of a being from and in itself, is nothing other than the act of a thought in its simplest forms made objective.

(vi). The Mystery of Providence, and Creation out of Nothing

Feuerbach is of the view that creation is the spoken word of God. The creative cosmogonic fiat is the tacit word, identical with the thought. As speaking is an act of the will, so is creation a product of the will. Creation is the will of the imagination, which is of the absolutely subjective, unlimited will. The will that it should exist, is, at the same time, the will that is at least possible to exist. In other words, it is the will that need not exist. The existence of the world is therefore a momentary, arbitrary, unreliable and unreal existence.

Creation out of nothing, Feuerbach agrees, is the highest expression of omnipotence, but omnipotence is nothing else than subjectivity exempting itself from all objective conditions and limitations of everything conceivable as possible. It is nothing other than the power of the imagination, the power of the self-will. Creation out of nothing, as a work of the almighty will, falls into the same category as the miracle. Indeed, creation is the first miracle, not only in time but also in rank.

Creation out of nothing, further, as identical with miracle, is the proof of providence. Belief in providence is belief in a power, to which all things stand at command to be used according to its pleasure, in opposition to which all the power of reality is nothing. Providence cancels the laws of nature, interrupts the course of necessity, the iron which inevitably binds effect to causes. It is the same unlimited, powerful will that called the world into existence out of nothing. Every miracle is a *creatio ex nihilo*,⁴ in miniature. He who turns water into wine is one who can make wine out of nothing, for the constituents of wine are not found in water. Otherwise the production of wine would not be a miraculous, but a natural act. The only attestation, the only proof, of providence is miracle.⁴ But providence has an essential relation to man. It is for man's sake that there is supercession of the authority and reality of the natural law. Religious providence reveals itself only in miracles, especially in the miracle of the incarnation, the central point of religion. In viewing the providence as essentially related to man, Feuerbach incorporates

⁴ *ibid*, 103

both providence and creation out of nothing to the process of human wish-fulfilment.

(vii). The Mystery of Prayer

Feuerbach says that God is the love that satisfies our wishes, our emotional wants. He is himself the realised wish of the heart, the wish exalted to the certainty of its fulfilment. The essence of religion is remarkably revealed in the simplest act of religion, viz. prayer. It is yet another miracle of religion. It is the miracle that caters deeply to the wish-fulfilment. God is love: The expression means that feeling is the God of man. God is the nature of human feeling, unlimited pure feeling, objectivated. God is the optative of the human heart, transformed into the certain, unrestricted omnipotence of feeling. Prayer is hearing itself, a feeling perceiving itself, the echo of human cry of anguish. Man soothes his sorrow by making it audible to himself, by making it objective. Man lightens the burden, which weighs upon his heart by communicating it to the air, by making his sorrow a general existence. But as nature does not listen to the complaints of man, man turns away from nature, to the supernature, from all visible objects to the invisible subjectivity. He turns within, sheltered and hidden from the inexorable powers, so that he may find audience in himself for his griefs.

In prayer, man addresses God, the "Eternal Thou" in intimate affection. In this he articulately declares that God is in his alter ego. Man confesses to God, as the being nearest to him, his most secret thoughts, the deepest wishes in confidence, and in certainty that they will be fulfilled. Prayer, it is

hoped, alters the course of nature. In as much as it is a miracle, it does, for prayer is the absolute relation of the human heart to its own nature. In prayer, man forgets that there exists a limit to his wishes and is happy in this forgetfulness. Feuerbach understood prayer to be the self-division of man into two beings. It is a dialogue of man with himself, with his own heart. Concentration is often said to be the condition of prayer, but it is more than concentration, for prayer itself is concentration. It is the retirement within himself, in order to recover the relation with one's own being.

The sense of dependence in prayer is seen to be extremely superficial by Feuerbach. The dependence is nothing but the dependence on one's own heart, on one's own feeling. Prayer has its root in the unconditional trust of the heart, untroubled by all thoughts of compulsive needs. In prayer, the infinite nature of God is seen to be sympathetic, tender and loving to man. The acceptance of God's omnipotence by man in prayer is nothing but the goodness, which is thought to make the impossible possible for man. Thus faith expressed in prayer is finally the assertion of the absolute reality of human emotions. God's omnipotence is identical with the essence of human feeling that brooks no opposition of nature's limitations on man. Omnipotence does nothing more than accomplishes the will of the feelings. When man turns to the omnipotence of God in prayer, man simply adores his own heart, regards his own feelings as absolute.

(viii). The Mystery of Faith

Faith is the central point of any religion. It is the unreserved trust in God. But faith, Feuerbach thinks, is nothing other than the confidence in the reality of the subjective, in opposition to the limitations of the laws of nature and reason. The specific object of faith is miracle, indeed, faith and miracle are absolutely inseparable. To faith nothing is impossible, and miracle only gives actuality to this omnipotence of faith. Miracle is but a visible example of what faith can effect. Faith is the belief in the absolute reality of subjectivity.

The essence of faith is the wish of immortality on the part of man. He wishes to be immortal, therefore he is immortal. He wishes for the existence of a being who can do everything which is impossible to nature and reason. His God is such a being, and he exists. Likewise he wishes for a world which corresponds to the desires of the heart, a world of unlimited subjectivity, that of unperturbed feeling, of uninterrupted bliss, and it exists. There may exist an objective world, which is the opposite of the subjective one, and hence this world must pass away, as God or absolute subjectivity must remain. Faith then is a supreme phantasy.

Miracle is an essential constituent of faith, indeed, an essential article of faith. Miracle is a supernaturalistic wish realised. Miracle feeds the hungry, cures the sick, the blind, the deaf and the lame; it rescues man from hopeless situations, even raises the dead. It supremely satisfies human wishes. The power of miracle is therefore the power of the imagination.

(ix). The Mystery of the Resurrection

Man, at least in the state of ordinary well-being, has the wish not to die. This wish is originally identical with the instinct of self-preservation, involving further the wish for the certainty of its fulfilment. But reason can afford no such certainty, and all proofs of immortality are insufficient in the face of the certainty of death. Any immortality requires an immediate personal assurance, a practical demonstration. Resurrection is both an assurance and a demonstration. It can be accepted only post-mortem. Only when someone's death has been previously certified, rising again from the grave can have such personal assurance for immortality.⁵ Thus the resurrection of Christ is seen to be the satisfied desire of man for an immediate certainty of his personal existence after death, or a personal immortality as a sensible, indubitable fact.

Christians, in their undoubting certainty that their personal self-flattering wishes will be fulfilled, converted an open question into a matter of conscience. The denial of resurrection is now equivalent to the high treason of atheism. It becomes an article in the credo. He who denies resurrection denies the resurrection of Christ, and he who denies the resurrection of Christ denies Christ himself, and he who denies Christ denies God. To the Christians, the resurrection of the body is the highest triumph of Christianity.

Feuerbach believes that the more man alienates himself from nature, the more subjective he becomes; the more supernatural he becomes, the more antinatural is his view of things.

⁵ *ibid*, p.135.

(x). The Mystery of the Mediation of Christ, the Redeemer

The fundamental dogmas of Christianity are the realised wishes of the heart, as the essence of Christianity is the essence of human feeling. It is pleasanter to be passive than to act; to be redeemed and made free by another than to free oneself; to make one's salvation dependent on a person than to struggle by one's own to be saved; to know oneself beloved by God than merely to have that simple, natural self-love; to allow oneself to be acted upon by one's own feeling, than to regulate oneself by reason. Feeling changes the active man into the passive, and the passive into the active. This at once makes for the mediation of Christ in Christian religion as the redeemer.

The highest law of feeling is the immediate unity of will and deed, of wishing and reality, in which the law is fulfilled by a mediator, or Redeemer. As the external miracles realise immediately the physical wants and wishes of man, the mediator, as the God-man, in opposition to the moral spontaneity of the natural and the rationalistic man, satisfies immediately the inward moral wants and wishes. Redeemer then is needed for the inner moral purification. Such a mediator has to be at once divine and human.

In Christ, all anxiety of the human soul vanishes, for he is the sighing soul passed into a song of triumph over its complete satisfaction. He is the joyful certainty of feeling that its wishes, hidden in God, have finally truth and reality. The actual victory over death, over all the powers of the world and nature actualises the feeling of human heart. Christ is the resurrection no

longer merely hoped for, but already accomplished here and now. Such a mediator is a personal God.

For longing is the necessity of feeling, and feeling longs for a personal God. In what God is the essence, Christ is the actual appearance. Christ alone is the personal God, who meets the longing for a personal God. He alone is the existence, identical with the nature of feeling. On him alone are heaped all the joys of the imagination, and all the sufferings of the heart. In him alone are feelings and imagination fully exhausted. Christ is seen as the blending of feeling and imagination. Christianity, Feuerbach argues is distinguished from other religion in this that in other religions the heart and imagination are divided, but that in Christianity they perfectly coincide. The power of the imagination is at once the power of the heart, in which imagination is the victorious, triumphant heart. With the Orientals, with the Greeks, on the contrary, imagination is troubled by the wants of the heart. It revelled in the enjoyment of earthly splendour and glory. But in Christianity, it descended from the palace of the gods into the abode of poverty, where it humbled itself under the sway of the heart.

(xi). The Christian Heaven, or Personal Immortality

The heavenly life, or the personal immortality, is an eschatological doctrine of Christianity. It was with Christianity that personal immortality first gained acceptance. The belief in the immortality of man is the belief in the divinity of man, and the belief in God is the belief in the pure personality

released from all finitude. The distinction made between the immortal soul and God is either sophistical or imaginative. The immortal soul is God.

Living in images and symbols is the essence of religion. The future life is present in the mirror of the human imagination. The future life as a contemplated life through the imagination, purified from all gross matter; it is positively a beatitudes intensified. God is only the nature of man purified from all limitations and evils. So, the future life is nothing other than the present life rid of all limitations and evil.

Faith in the future life is identical with the faith in the truth of imagination, as faith in God is faith in the truth and infinity of human feeling. But the sum of the future life is happiness, the everlasting bliss of personality, which is here limited and circumscribed by nature. Faith in the future life is therefore faith in the freedom of the subjective's from the limits of nature. It is faith in eternity and infinitude of personality. Therefore, it is faith of man in himself. Feuerbach claimed that in the concept of heaven the most essential task is fulfilled. He writes,

We have reduced the supramundane, supranatural, and suprahuman nature of God to the elements of human nature as its fundamental elements. Our process of analysis has brought us again to the position with which we set out. The beginning, the middle and the end of religion is Man.⁶

⁶ *ibid*,p.184

Having attacked thus far the specific Christian doctrines, Feuerbach goes on to generalise his thesis as applicable to religion in general. I will be selective, here, again.

C. FEUERBACH'S VIEW OF CONTRADICTION IN THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION.

(i). The Essential Standpoint of Religion

Feuerbach opined that the essential standpoint of religion is the practical, or the subjective, and that the end of religion is the welfare, the salvation and the ultimate felicity of man. The Christian religion is specially distinguished for its preoccupation with the salvation of man. But this salvation is not temporal or earthly prosperity and well-being. On the contrary, the most genuine Christians have declared that the earthly good draws man away from God. It is adversity; suffering and afflictions that lead him back to God. Hence they alone suited to Christians.

Religion further attaches to its doctrinal complex the concepts of curse and blessing, damnation and salvation. The concept 'blessed is he who believeth, cursed is who believeth not' appeals not to reason but to feeling, to the desire of happiness, to the passions of hope and fear. There is a compelling belief in the proposition, "I am lost if I do not believe" The fear of hell urges one to believe. Even when man's belief is supposed to be in its origin free, fear inevitably creeps into it. Accordingly the highest crime in religion is disbelief, a doubt in God's existence. It is no more a theoretical

matter, but a matter of conscience; no more a matter of intellect, but of the heart.

The scientific knowledge of the essence of religion also includes the knowledge of the devil, the Satan, the demons. Grace and its works are the antithesis of the devil and his works. Grace is characterized by its arbitrariness. The believer rejoices that at one time he is visited by grace; he complains at other times that grace has forsaken him. The moments, when he is forsaken by the divine grace, are the moments devoid of emotion and inspiration. The devil is the negative springing from man's nature, but not from the will. God, on the contrary, is the positive springing, the good coming his own nature. The devil is the involuntary, inexplicable wickedness, while God is the voluntary, explicable goodness. Even if the quality of God and the devil is different, or opposite, the source of both is the one and the same nature.

The religious spirit accepts that God alone is the cause of all positive effects, the sole ground for all happenings. The affirmative of religion is virtually a negative, since it solves all problems with the same answers: Everything is attributed to the will, or design, of God. God therefore, is the idea, which fills in the lack of the theoretical knowledge on anything. The idea of God is the explanation of the inexplicable.

As a matter of fact, such explanation amounts to nothing, but all doubts repressed by ignorance. All things that impress the intellect disappear before religion, lose their individuality in the eyes of divine power. Darkness is the mother of religion, sums up Feuerbach.

(ii). Contradiction in the Existence of God

Religion is the relation of man to his own nature. Man gives recognition to his own nature as another separate being, contra-distinguishing it from his own. Religion therefore is contradictory to reason and morality. Yet, the nearer the religion stands to its origin, the truer, the more genuine it becomes, because then, its true nature is less disguised. At the origin of religion, there is no qualitative distinction between God and man. God's existence then does not need any proof; it is the evidence of the self. The proofs of the existence of God, given by the philosophers later, may be pronounced contradictory to essential nature of religion. The contradiction lies only in this that the existence is thought of separately. It then appears as though God is a mere conception of being, a mere idea only. However, conceptions are immediately dissipated: The result of all such proofs is that to God belongs an existence distinct from an ideal one, an existence apart from man, apart from an ideal one, an existence apart from thought, a real self-existence. The ontological argument is skewed towards the self-existence of God, because nobody doubts his own existence.

Feuerbach observes that the theologian's contention that God really exists and yet does not exist like other beings is full of contradiction; that he is characterized by "spiritual existence" Feuerbach observes that spiritual existence is only an existence in thought, in feeling, in belief, so that his existence is a medium between sensational existence and 'conceptual' existence, a medium full of contradiction. Consequently an existence at once sensational and not 'conceptual' is a vague existence in general. But such

an 'existence in general' is self-contradictory. For, to existence belongs full, definite reality. This cannot be said of God's existence. On the other hand, atheism is equally contradictory. Atheism is supposedly the negation of God, all moral foundations and bonds. If the concept of God is not there then all distinction between good and bad, virtue and vice, is abolished. Thus the distinction between good and bad, vice and virtue lies only in the existence of God. The reality of virtue lies not in itself. Only the imagination solves the contradiction of God's existence, which is at once sensational and not-sensational.

(iii). Revelation of God Explained Away

The idea of the revelation is often a constituent of a religion. This is especially true of Christianity. The authentic testimony that God exists is revelation. Proofs drawn from reason, it is argued are merely subjective. The objective, the only true proof for the existence of God, is his revelation. The certainty of the existence of God is involved in the certainty of revelation. Such a conception of revelation in religion, in a sense, is legitimate, because religion is after all a dream, in which our conceptions and emotions appear to us as separate existences, beings out of ourselves. The religious mind is the faculty, not of discerning other things than itself, but of seeing its own conceptions out of itself as distinct beings. If theology is ultimately reduced to anthropology all knowledge of God is identical with the knowledge of man.

Belief in revelation is a child-like belief, and is respectable as long as it is child-like. But the child is determined from outside. Revelation has for its

object the teaching that only by God's help man attains what he cannot by himself. Hence, revelation has been called the education of the human race. But this is an education for dreaming, and not for reality. Man by means of imagination, involuntarily contemplates his inner nature. He represents it out of himself. The beneficial moral effects of the belief in revelation lies in the nature of man through the irresistible power of imagination and contemplation.

(iv). The Contradiction of the Nature of God in General

According to Feuerbach, God is the human and, yet, regarded as another, a superhuman being. Thus God becomes the universal and abstract being, merely the idea of being. Yet, religions have found it necessary to conceive of him as equally personal and individual being. The contradiction is evident in that God is personal without ceasing to be impersonal, or universal being. Again, humanity is made a predicate of God, but at the same time, God must be non-human and extra-human. A God who is not essentially distinguished from us is no God. Thus the nature of God is riddled with contradictions. The only way to resolve them is to acknowledge that the essence of religion is the immediate, involuntary, unconscious contemplation of human nature as another, a distinct nature. The projected image of human nature is at once thoroughly human and super-human. Such a nature can become an object of reflection for theology; it can become an inexhaustible mine of illusions, contradictions, sophisms and even well-meaning falsehoods.

A peculiar characteristic of the Christian sophistry is the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of the divine nature. The secret of this doctrine consists in

transforming a known quality into an unknown quality, a natural quality into a super-natural quality, so as to produce the appearance, the illusion, that the divine nature is different from the human, that it is incomprehensible. This it does by way of imagination. Imagination is the original organ of religion. What man feels as a limitation, he does away with his imagination; it furnishes free space for the play of feelings.

The Christian religion, Feuerbach believes, violates, in its essence, all principles of culture for it triumphs over the limitations and difficulties of earthly life through the imagination. Culture rests in the human capacity to act, make and overcome the limitations of nature. But Christian religion is antithetical to culture. God is all that the heart needs and desires. The idea of activity, of making, of creation, is in itself a divine idea; it is unhesitatingly applied to God. It cannot be arrogated to man. On the contrary, only in activity, man should feel himself free, unlimited, happy. But, man rests contents in passivity, limitations, unhappiness and oppression.

Feuerbach is of the view that every particular thing arises in a natural way, it is something determinate, and as such it has a determinate cause. For him, it was not God, but carbon, that produced the diamond; a given salt owes its origin not to God, but to the combination of a particular acid with a particular base. Feuerbach thinks that religion has no physical conception of the world. It has no interest in a natural explanation. In nature everything has its origin, that can, in principle, be known. Origin is a theoretical, natural and philosophical idea. The question, 'How did God create?' is already an indirect doubt about the creatorship of God. It was this question which brought man to

atheism, materialism or naturalism. To him who asks it, the world is already an object of theory, of physical science. It is this mode of viewing the world, which contradicts the idea of the unconditioned, immaterial activity. The contradiction leads to the negation of the fundamental idea of creation.

D. AN APPRAISAL

It is evident that Feuerbach attempts at length to reduce the essence of religion, in general, and of Christianity, in particular to illusion. The attempt has led him to an uncompromising atheism. However, many important questions arise: Can Feuerbach philosophically sustain the ground for his atheism? Can we subscribe to a purely scientific, materialistic, worldview without any reference to human transcendence? Are the concepts of God and religion entertained and practiced merely for the sake of psychological sustenance and social cohesion, especially for the sustenance of the structures of human societies? Is there anything more in the idea of God that human beings cannot do without it? It would appear to me that the more Feuerbach has attempted his reduction, the more vulnerable his thesis becomes. It is obvious that it is open to criticism, in spite of his brilliant analysis of religion. He attacked almost all the basic doctrines of Christianity by giving no other reason than the suggestion that God is a product of human projection of its own subjective nature; that religion therefore is an illusion. The dynamism of this projection consists in the self-division of human nature into an "I" and a "Thou" made possible through the power of imagination. It represents a wish-fulfilment, found in the nature of man. His basic argument

for the rejection of religion is that it is baseless, as it is grounded on imagination. But his thesis is not without serious drawbacks.

Feuerbach rejects religion on the strength of his philosophical anthropology, that conceives of the essence of human nature as bifurcated into an 'I and Thou', placing human fantasy or imagination as the root cause of religion. The attempt, to say the least, is self-defeating. Even if imagination were to be accepted as the root cause of the essence of religion, it does not follow that religion is illusory, in as much as imagination itself is not absolutely illusory. Kant was on a firmer ground, when he observed imagination to be the common root of both sensibility and reason. Imagination itself is not philosophically absurd. It is rather the highest form in which both reason and sensibility spring forth. Parmenides, too, talked of nous, which did much the same function of imagination, the root cause of both reason and sensibility. Feuerbach's explanation follows closely a deterministic epistemology. Can we subscribe to a purely scientific, materialistic world view without any reference to human transcendence, even if a spirituality were to be abrogated? If the later were not to be abrogated for sound philosophical reasons, what historical evidences are likely to militate against the Feuerbachian thesis that religion is an illusion? Ethnologists have witnessed to the fact that the most archaic forms of societies, which lacked a basic technological civilization and a sense of grain-based agriculture, did practise a form of religiosity and entertain a sense of transcendence of human life. Is it merely for a psychological satisfaction? Was it purely for a social cohesion and the sustenance of the

structures of human societies, with no relation whatsoever to human ontology?

It can also be questioned how Feuerbach resolved the essence of religion into the essence of man. A philosopher who swears by naturalism and materialism, that Feuerbach is, cannot be expected to abstract the human nature, and abstractly bifurcate into two. He has to treat, for the sake of consistency of his method and material, man as a concrete existent individual. He seems to borrow from his idealistic tradition when it suits him, and then reject it, when it does not, in the name of his positivism.

Heinrich Scholz thinks that there should be, and indeed there is, a religion beyond discrepant creeds, a religion at the peak of humanity, which is of high value, rationally sustainable. That religion as such cannot be explained away merely by the material needs of man. While the particular doctrines of a religion can be questioned in a number of ways, as Feuerbach may have done, the religion of humanity is beyond questioning. Further, Stirner seriously laid his finger on Feuerbach's weakness, questioning whether Feuerbach's man is actually the real man.

Can there be any other significance in the practice of religion than the one given by Feuerbach. After all people have been practising it in all cultures, however primordial, that we have known? Does this suggest that there could be something that it never be deleted from the human mind? Can we discover in the psychological anthropology of Feuerbach an aspect of human nature that missed his observation, viz. transcendence of human life?

CHAPTER 2

FEUERBACH'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The philosophical basis for Feuerbach's atheism may be located in his philosophical anthropology. He strongly claimed that man, and not God, is the centre of religion. Now, man is a being endowed with the power of imagination. Through this power of imagination he fabricates a God. Hence, god is secondary in the religion of man. But the fabrication has a basis in man's emotional material nature. Feuerbach states,

I am a real, a sensuous, a material being; yes, the body in its totality is my Ego my being itself.¹

Such materialistic understanding of human nature cannot but reduce a theology, if any, to an 'anthropology', a science of man. Indeed, Feuerbach went on to identify God as the objectivated essence of man, 'a unity of I and Thou', rejecting at once any trace of a spiritual or metaphysical transcendence.

The idea of God is the epitome of all realities or perfections, all drawn from man, devised for the benefit of the limited individuals: I am weak but my God is strong; I am temporal but my God is eternal. In religion, man attempts to free himself from the limitations of life and, in the process, ends up alienating himself from himself. The power through which the abstraction takes place is man's imaginative faculty distinct from any that an animal may

¹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, Trans. by George Eliot. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957. p. xii

possess. God as a morally perfect being is the human ideal, sought to be realized. Hence, for Feuerbach, religion is a projection, an absurdity, a nullity, a pure illusion. Man, not God, is the most real being. His stated aim is a recovery of man from his abstracted essence, a transformation of the friends of God into the friends of man, believers into thinkers, worshippers into workers, candidates for the other world into students of this world. Traditional religion has metamorphosed human beings into half animals and half angels.² Man needs to be made into the whole man. Consistent with this anthropology his epistemology closely followed a naturalistic, mechanistic explanation of the world. Naturally science becomes the only valid method of knowledge. Because he is interested in the concrete man, the material man, he rejects the Hegelian march of the Pure Ego, the abstract spirit, the Mind, manifesting itself in man for self-knowledge. Idealistic epistemology is ruled out. He falls back on the epistemological pre-suppositions of the Greek atomist, the bedrock of modern science, on the contrary. Little wonder then that he strongly espoused the cause of science as the only legitimate method of knowledge.

The only religion which Feuerbach examines seriously is Christianity, the world religion of the occident, based upon monotheism. He asserts that the Christian God is only a fantasy reflection, a mirror of image of man himself. God is the product of a tedious process of abstraction, the concentrated quintessence of the numerous earlier 'tribal' and 'national' gods. Hence his thesis can be applied to other religions, not directly, but by amplifications.

² *ibid.* , p. xi

Feuerbach's task was to make man real and genuinely human. This way he thought that he could wrest back the human nature usurped by God. Conversely, his god becomes humanized. In the process, he dissolves theology into anthropology. He talked of the task of leading philosophy from the realm of 'departed souls' back into the realm of 'living souls', pulling it down from the divine blessedness which knows neither human wants nor human misery to the realm of human thought that faces boldly the human limitations. For this purpose, he needs nothing more than a human understanding and human speech.³ Man has projected himself into God or fetish making himself a slave to his own creation. Slave nature is an alienated nature. In religion, we have the secret, or paradigm, of the process of alienation. Alienation, for Feuerbach is a form of intellectual error, a fantasy, which could however be cured by showing how it arose in the first place, and what its real content was. Religion, indeed, is not only the intellectual model of all other alienation-fantasies, it was also their necessary material support.

Feuerbach is of the view that what distinguishes man from animal is not just consciousness, as it was so long thought in philosophy, but the fact that he is a universal being:

Man is not a particular being like the animal, but a universal being, therefore not limited and unfree, but unhemmed-in and free, for universality, lack of limitation, freedom are indivisible. And this freedom does not exist in a particular capacity, in the will, just as the universality does not lie in a particular capacity of the power to think, in reason; this freedom, this universality stretches over the whole being of man, where a sense raises itself above the limitation of particularity and above being tied to need, it raises itself to independent and theoretical significance and dignity; the universal sense is understanding, universal sensualism is intellectualism. Even the lowest senses, smell and

³ *ibid.*, pp. 74-79

taste, raise themselves in man to the level of intellectual scientific act.⁴

It is obvious that Feuerbach wants to weave in human nature reason and sensualism inextricably together.

'The Essential Nature of Man' is the title of his first chapter in his *Essence of Christianity*. Feuerbach therein expresses that man is distinguished from animals by having a religion. But religion, in its positive content, is conscious of infinity, and this consciousness is consciousness of man's own infinity. Man is different from animals by his infinity, his universality. For Feuerbach, a consciousness so limited to sensualism, and so fallible, on account of that limitation, cannot be a consciousness-pure of the idealistic brand, but an instinct, that can and must be studied scientifically. What distinguishes then man from animal is not reason but the peculiar instinct.

The proper humanity of man constitutes the specific distinction of consciousness in reason, will and affection. Therefore, the nature of a complete man is seen together in the power of thought, the power of will and the power of affection. The power of thought is the light of the intellect, the power of will is the energy of character, and the power of affection is love. For him, the absolute perfection of the being of man is reason, will and love. To think, to will, to love, are the highest powers; they are the absolute nature of man as man, and the basis of his existence. True existence is thinking, willing

⁴ Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970. pp. 115-116

and loving existence.⁵ In virtue of these, man may be said to be self-existent, that alone is true, perfect, divine which exists for its own sake. The constituent of man's nature is reason, will and affection, without which he is nothing; he is what he is only on account of them. Feuerbach calls their combined energy as the power of imagination. Imagination is quite technical to him.

Feuerbach insists that man is a 'species-being', in the sense that a man contains within himself both the "I" and the "Thou". He believes that the essential, or typical, human properties of reason, will and love cannot be understood, or accounted for, in terms of his single individuality. They all required a minimum of two, an "I" and a "Thou". This is best exemplified in love. Love is a relation between people, especially between sexes, it cannot be made into the human characteristic of a single solitary individual. The product of thinking is thought. For Feuerbach, thought, too, is dependent upon language, which again, represents a relation between people, based on common agreement and common perceptions, as comparable to the 'impossibility of private language',⁶ of Wittgenstein. Man shapes himself and understands himself in his relation to other man. Alienation results precisely in the relation that man bears to the other. But the social alienation is only a reflection of the religious alienation. For the primal alienation of man into "I" and "Thou" is resultant upon the bifurcation of human nature into a subject and object within itself. Through his imagination man has the power to separate himself as man and God. Man is the subjective nature, god is the

⁵ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 3

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe, New York: Macmillan, 1953

self-same nature objectivated, projected, personalized, divinised and worshipped.

Reason or understanding, will and love are the characters that are essential to man and yet, transcend man as an individual. They are characteristic of the species and, as such, they turn each man's attention beyond himself to perfections to which no individual man can lay claims. Thus man has the perception of an ideal man devoid of all limitations, a perfected human nature beyond each man. Man is won over by understanding, love and strength of will. Out of these characters man, as if it were a species need of the species-man, fashions his God who is of infinite knowledge, infinite will and infinite love. It is in God that man reposes his own understanding, will and love to be assured of his own greatness and freedom from all limitations. Man's own perfection is freed of the lusts, and sufferings of the heart. It enables man to rise above the imperfections, and even to get into a conflict with them. The human understanding, volition and affection, freed from individual constrictions and sufferings take on the form of the infinite spirit. Thus is the humanized God, born. To the theologians he is at once perfect understanding, love and affection, and to the philosophers, the Reason, Will and Feeling.

Feuerbach seeks to bring out the empirical, human content of various religious conceptions through his philosophical anthropology, in which the power of human imagination holds an absolute sway. Imagination indeed is the essence of the nature of man. Thus, the act of creation is a celebration of

the powers of human will, not of the rational will but of the imaginative will.⁷ This is totally indifferent to physical means and the causal laws in the explanation of the world. In so far as creation is portrayed as an act of the imaginative will, indifferent to causality, it only supports a fantasy-gratification of man's desire to master nature and to escape all causal necessities. In the same way, God, as Logos, is a celebration of the powers of the (human) word, which is in man and, yet, above man. The word is the power, which creates revolutions, which is alive even after individual men are dead. Salvation is a religious extension of what the word can effect. All the religious mysteries of salvation, creation etc. are miracles that suspend the constriction of the natural and physical laws. For Feuerbach they are all a celebration of the power of human fantasy making man deny the independent reality of nature and the natural laws. The necessity imposed by them on man is unpleasant to man, hence man indulged in what may be said to be a wish-fulfilment phantasy, thanks to his power of imagination.

For Feuerbach, the ordinary and daily human needs are concretely expressed in religion, in forms generated by the sensuous imagination. The secret of philosophy is theology, for philosophy is abstract theology; and, in turn, the secret of theology, is anthropology, for theology is an esoteric and mythical account of the human. Once the secret is out, the human intent and content of abstract metaphysical thought are revealed. Feuerbach's critique of philosophy is carried out by way of his critique of religion, or of religious consciousness. He believed that philosophy must be absorbed in religion, since periods of humanity are distinguished by religion. The God of the

⁷ Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 50

theologians, or the being or substance of the metaphysicians, is nothing but the human consciousness of its own nature, or human self-consciousness formulated in an alienated and hypostatized way. God and being are the image of the universality of human species consciousness and species sensibility. The human senses themselves and human feelings as well, tend toward universality. The conception of an infinite and universal God, or an infinite and universal nature, is of the universal and infinite capacities of human thinking, sensing and feeling. It is of this essence of a species nature, or of a social nature, that is behind the secret of this universalizing tendency of a human nature.

Philosophers in the past tried to trace the philosophical formulations of the mind-body dualism to their source in religious thought. In trying to trace the original bifurcation of spirit and flesh, body and soul, to its sources, they went beneath the level of articulated conceptual expression and tried to find them in Christian religion through intellect alone. In doing so, they began to ask the question, "What are the sources and the nature of human consciousness that lead man to bifurcate man and body, flesh and spirit?" Again, "What is it in the nature of human existence that gives rise to the reflection of this dualism in conscious thought?" In other words, philosophers asked, what are the natural, that is, to say, 'anthropological' facts of which mind-body dualism is the conceptual expression? What is the real dualism that this conceptualised dualism represents? The answer that Feuerbach gave regarding this real dualism is that it has an 'anthropological' source. It is derived from man's incomplete knowledge of his own species nature, and of the 'natural bond' between his nature and physical nature.

In short, for Feuerbach, dualism in its conceptual form is the expression of the degree of man's ignorance of his own nature and the nature at large. Man in ignorance did not understand the relation between his organic existence in the world and his sensing, feeling and thinking. The representation of this misunderstood relation takes on the outward form of a relation among discrete entities. In the first place, as personified entities as 'other' (or thou), superhuman or divine, persons; and, in the second place, as abstract entities, substances, faculties or powers. For Feuerbach, mind-body dualism has a ground in the nature of the consciousness of nature. Relation among these entities are expressed, and resolved mythically as well, in the imagination. He goes on to say that God is the creature of an inner need of man. Thus, the mind-body dualism, of flesh-spirit dualism, is not ontological, but phenomenological. Feuerbach considered it as psychological. For the images of religion are not taken to be thoughts, at least, not in the sense of speculative philosophy of religion; nor are they taken to be things. They are the images, that is to say, theology is not to be treated as a mystical pragmatology, as in the Christian mythology, nor as ontology, as in speculative Philosophy of religion, but rather as psychic pathology.

Feuerbach did not agree with the Cartesian view of dualism but tried to find out why the mind-body dualism is being advocated by philosophers and religious people, or even by the simple people of the past. He found that only matter exists, and this matter, or man by nature, is a feeling, willing and thinking being. The concept of God is an image to him. He analysed theology and expressed God to be the projection of the subjective image into an object. This positive projective of the image of the subject into the predicted object is

nothing but the wish-fulfilment of the subject. Freud is already foreshadower of Feuerbach. It is the wish fulfilment of man, when he identifies God with the essence of man, thereby paying God the highest honour that he can confer. Man wants to live forever, but he is, in his existence, dependent, limited and continually threatened. Man has needs, wishes and also something of the higher ideals. Man loves and fears, desires and denies and abhors. Man knows values and disvalues. God is the common place, where man registers his highest feelings and thoughts, the genealogical album into which he enters the names of the things most dear and sacred to him.⁸ The unity of I and Thou, man and man, is God for him. Feuerbach defined God in a more comprehensive manner: God, the epitome of all realities or perfections is nothing else than a compendious summary devised for the benefit of the limited individual, an epitome of all generic human qualities distributed among men, in the self-realization of the species in the course of world history.

Feuerbach now is in a position to understand alienation. The essence of the human alienates itself, when it bifurcates itself into "I" and "Thou". Alienation results from the projected God who is the human essence, glorified, divinised and transfigured. God is nothing but man's self-awareness, emancipated from all actuality. Human nature, freed from the limitations of life, is God. In the personality of God, man clearly celebrates the supernaturalness, immortality, independence and limitlessness of his own personality. In religion, the unity of "I" and "Thou" equates the distinction between the original, immediate knowledge of God, and the reflected mediate knowledge of man, together with the distinction which philosophy knows as

⁸ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, pp. 63-64

the difference between the *a priori* or the speculative and the *a posteriori*, or the empirical knowledge.

God is considered to be the morally perfect being, the human ideal to be sought and realized. He is the personified law of morality. God is also seen to be the love that satisfies our wishes and our emotional needs, the realized desire of the heart.⁹ God is an unutterable sigh, lying in the depths of the human heart. Thus for Feuerbach, religion is an absurdity, a nullity, a pure illusion, as it is an imagery; it is founded on imagination of the wishes of man, inherent in the essence of man. Therefore, God, the human ideal, sought to be realized, is not the real being, but is existent only in imagination, and therefore, for Feuerbach, it is not God, but man who is the most real being.

Feuerbach's atheism is ably supported by his epistemology, when he studied the essence of man and God through his psychology, in which the alienated essence of man into "I" and "Thou" is encountered. He is of the view that the two opposing forces and natures are separated. In this separation, the finite or limitations of life is ascribed to man, whereas the infinite, omnipotent perfections are ascribed to God. God is seen to be only a being of the human understanding, existent in the realm of the imagery; he is also moral, a being of the moral law. God, the infinitized human nature does all the miracles for the finitized human nature. The mystery of the incarnation is explained to be the wish fulfilment of feeling or love, in which, love is expressed by God as a being of the heart. This is nothing more than the nature of man who is a thinking, feeling and willing material being. Again, mystery of providence, and creation out of nothing, the mystery of faith, the

⁹ *ibid.* , p. xvii

mystery of miracle are all seen by Feuerbach to be only the desire of man for having control over the nature, or having mastery over the nature, in which nothing is impossible for man. The mystery of the resurrection, of the miraculous conception, the Christian heaven, and personal immortality are all the dream of desire woven by man to go on living and loving forever. The resurrection of Christ is, therefore, the satisfied desire of man for an immediate certainty of his personal existence after death, personal immortality as a sensible and indubitable fact.

Feuerbach goes on to say that miracle presents absolutely nothing more than the sorcery of the imagination, which satisfies, without the contradiction of all the wishes of the heart. In the mystery of the suffering God, God is seen to be of the nature of a being of the heart who is compassionate enough to suffer for whatever reason. God is a mystery of feeling, of sensibility, for a being without suffering is a being without a heart.¹⁰ The mystery of the Trinity, as explained away by Feuerbach, is that God springs out of the feeling of a want of a community. What man is in need of, whether this be a definite and conscious, or an unconscious need, that his God fulfils for him. Thus the disconsolate feeling of a void, of loneliness, creates a God, in whom there is society, a union of beings, fervent in loving each other. The Mystery of the *logos*, or the word, is the image, revealed, radiating, lustrous enlightening thought. The power of speech is a poetic talent. Brutes do not speak, because they have no poetic faculty. Word is a result of imagination, in which it is seen in the nature of man.¹¹ Religion provides for the

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 62

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 75

hypostatisation of the human word, thereby necessarily conceiving the true nature of the word to be a special being, distinct from the human word.

The mystery of the cosmogonical principle, of the final ends of the human nature in its destiny, of the noumenal or invisible divine nature, and of the phenomenal or visible nature of the world, are all seen through imagination. They all represent, in a sense, the creation of 'Out of Nothing', each one showing that human power is limited, but in combination with the divine power it is infinite.

Feuerbach saw, in the mystery of prayer, the omnipotence of the heart, of feeling, which breaks through all the limits of the understanding to soar above all the boundaries of nature. It wills that there be nothing else than feeling, nothing that contradicts the heart. Faith alone prays, but faith is nothing else than the belief in the absolute reality of subjectivity.

The mystery of the mediation of Christ is also explained by Feuerbach. Christ's mediation represents the unclosed, open feeling of the heart. In him, all anxiety of the soul vanishes; he is the sighing soul, passed into a song of triumph in complete satisfaction. Christ is the certainty of joyful feeling that human wishes, in God, have truth and reality, the actual victory over death, over all powers of the world and nature, the resurrection no longer merely hoped for, but already accomplished. He is the heart released from all oppressive limits, from all sufferings, the soul in perfect blessedness, the Godhead made visible. Christ meets the longing of the heart for a personal God. He is an existence identical with the nature of feeling. Christ is the blending of feeling and imagination in man. Christ's unlimited power over nature is also seen in commanding the raging nature to be still. But in all

these Feuerbach saw in Christ only the symbol of a perfect human heart that has its longings. It seeks its satisfaction through wish- fulfilment.

How is the dualism between the spirit and matter, man and God, I and Thou, rejected by Feuerbach, viewed by a critical philosopher? Kant here could be the best representative. Kant(1770-1831), the rational thinker confessed that, he was wakened up from his dogmatic slumbers by David Hume. The impact of this awakening turned him from rational theism to philosophical scepticism. Kant retained his personal piety and interest in religion, but strictly on moral grounds. Kant wrote *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1792), and he believed religion strictly within the limits of reason. When Kant talked of reason, he meant practical or moral reason, and not the theoretical, or Philosophical reason, as is seen in his famous *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

The idealistic philosophy of Immanuel Kant exhibited a critical approach to the Bible. Kant accepted Locke's emphasis upon sensation, and also Descarte's, emphasis on reason as the key to knowledge concerning the phenomena of nature. He said in his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) that man could not know either God or the soul. He classified God and the soul as the data of the world of 'noumena'. For him, the sense of moral obligation, or conscience in man (the categorical imperative), should be the starting point for religion and the religious realities. Kant denies that man can know ever the world of the noumena, for there is no place in his system for a historical and objective revelation of God in the Bible. To him, Bible is only a man-made book of history out of his free will and immanent sense of what is right. Morality inherent in himself becomes the source of religion.

Regarding the knowledge of reality, Kant suggested that there is no way that the basic concepts through which we have necessarily to think about the world can be shown to be valid. For the world as a reality beyond experience is independent of all subjective conceptions. The natural world as studied by science is the totality of possible experiences. When the world and the mind are separate in some sense, the concepts used in mind can be known to be *a priori* valid only to the extent that the world is regarded as subject to mind or basic mental categories. The thing-in-itself, or the noumenal world, the *a priori* beyond the phenomenal world, is unknowable.¹² Kantianism ends up as a form of subjectivism, if he were to be asked to throw light on the duality of mind and matter, of God and man, the spiritual and the temporal.

While God, to Kant, is inaccessible to pure reason, but becomes a postulate of the practical reason, becomes a postulate of the practical reason, to Feuerbach, we may note, is objectivated subjective matter of man, who is to be understood purely in terms of matter scientifically. Feuerbach has no element of any transcendentalism, the kind of which is traceable in the critical philosophy of Kant. Indeed, Feuerbach stands on the other extreme of Hegel, when one thinks of the duality of man and god, or of matter and spirit. Let us briefly consider the views of Hegel. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) philosophy of absolute idealism is seen as a result of a synthesis of Platonism and Kantianism in its search for the knowledge of reality. Platonism is a form of objectivism in which the sensible world is found to be ontologically

¹² Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965, p. 173

unsuitable for necessary and universal truths. Kantianism on the other hand, ended up being a transcendental idealism, in as much as the world of reality is beyond the ken of pure reason. Reason can know only the world of phenomenon; the noumenon is transcendent to reason. Hence, if God is accepted; it is a god of deism, a postulate of practical reason, Hegel had to take into account the insights of both Platonism and Kantianism.

Hegel is of the opinion that the Mind and the world really form an identity as one absolute spiritual entity, which transcends the dualism of subject and object. The concepts of thought are thereby necessary objectively valid for reality as a whole, and not only for appearances thereof. Indeed to know these concepts is the same as knowing the structure of reality itself. Reality is rational. For him, there is no world to which rational concepts could fail to apply, because the world in its entirety is a developing product of the essence of absolute Mind or Reason. The world-spirit dualism has now collapsed. The world is a manifestation of infinite Mind or spirit. The understanding of the world is the understanding of the mind developing of itself. While the mind and the world are separate, in some sense, in Kant's critical philosophy, Hegel sees the resolution of the two into just one absolute spirit. Hence his is an absolute idealism. What happens to man? In man, the spirit manifests itself for self-knowledge. Hence human nature is to be understood in terms of the spirit's march towards self-revelation. There is no independent matter, for it is the petrified spirit. It can be aroused to evolve to realize the goals of the spirit. The function of philosophy is to understand the absolute Spirit, Idea, Ego, Mind, - call it, if you wish, God. Truth of reality is wholly knowable.

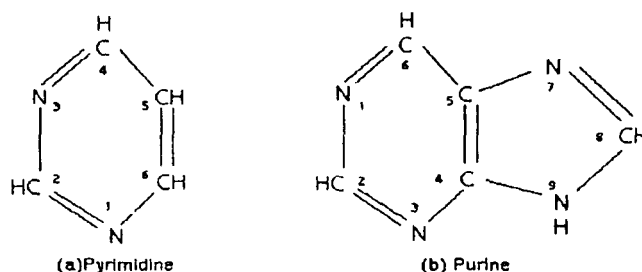
Hegel makes a distinction between understanding and reason. He thinks that the proper philosophical reason can go beyond the limits, set to our knowledge by Kant. For Hegel, the limits of knowledge of reality are reached, when we meet contradictory theses irredeemably opposed and between which we cannot rationally choose. Philosophical reason can find a way of transcending the contradiction in a new synthesis. Hegel does not think of the absolute as the vanishing point, at which all conceptual differentiation is destroyed but it is where all opposing concepts are unified into one all-encompassing entity, which preserves their real opposition, while taking these to a highest phase.

Hegel's absolute logical idealism is a philosophy of the spirits, manifested in the world of matter and human spirit. In his philosophy, object and subject are one. The development of the infinite Mind has reached its culmination through the finite mind. Hegel believed in the possibility, legitimacy and sovereignty of pure thought. Man cannot understand himself more deeply, more exactly, more definitely, than simply as thinking man in the dignity, strength and value of thought. The unity of the divine and human nature is the absolute Mind. He was seeking the divine being in Reason. Needless to say, the primacy here is of the spirit, or Mind. Matter is secondary. The duality is overcome in the evolution of the mind.

Feuerbach did not hesitate to reject his master's Idealism. He tried to explain away the Hegelian spirits, as well as religion, taking a stand on his own philosophical anthropology. The spirit is only a projection of human nature into two separate beings "I" and "Thou". Feuerbach had to assert the primacy of matter, as he thought of himself as the prophet of the newly

emerging scientism of the early nineteenth century. His methodology was bound to be mechanistic and deterministic especially modelled on the truths of Biology and chemistry. This brings me to what he was envisaging as the truth via his specific anthropology, and its application to religious realities and doctrines. And, he was not mistaken in his futuristic philosophy.

James Watson and Francis Crick's discovery of the structure of DNA in 1953 was a momentous event in science. Our present understanding of the storage and utilization of a cell's genetic information is based on the work made possible by this discovery.¹³ The main components of a DNA are sugar, phosphate and bases known as purine (Adenine and Guanine) and pyrimidine (Cytosine, Thymine and Uracil)¹⁴. The parent compounds of the pyrimidine and purine bases of nucleotides and nucleic acids are shown in the following figure.



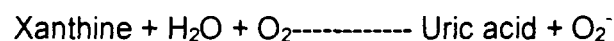
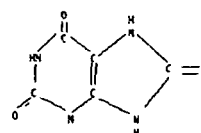
Animals can convert amino nitrogen into uric acid, a relatively insoluble compound that is extracted as a semi-solid mass of uric acid crystals with the faeces. In some vertebrates, including the primates, the Dalmatian dog, birds and some reptiles, the end product of purine degradation is uric acid, whereas

¹³ Albert L. Lehninger, David L. Nelson and Micheal M. Cox, *Principles of Biochemistry*, Delhi: CBS Publishers & Distributors, 1993, p. 331

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.325

in other mammals and reptiles, and also in molluscs, the end product of purine degradation is allantoin. In fishes, allantoin is broken down to allantoid acid and urea. In aquatic invertebrates ammonia is the major nitrogenous end product of purine catabolism. Guanine is the excretory form of purines in spider and pig.

The major purines, Adenine and Guanine, are first converted into xanthine which is then oxidised by the complex flavoprotein Xanthine to uric acid.¹⁵



(Superoxide)

Only about 0.5 gm of uric acid is excreted daily by the normal person, though upto 5gm of free purines are formed daily. The greater part of the free purines is salvaged or recycled. Uric acid is present in blood largely as monosodium urate. Both the free acid and the urate salts are relatively insoluble in water. Uric acid precipitates and crystallizes in the urine, forming kidney stones and causing damage to this organ. Uric acids are also formed in cartilaginous tissues. Uric acid is a purine. The significance of the above study lies in this, that uric acid is a purine, and that purine is one of the most important constituents of nucleotides or nucleic acids (DNA and RNA), which is one of the basic components of the living cell. This great discovery of the twentieth century is facilitated by the primary accorded to matter by the

¹⁵ Albert L. Lehninger, *Biochemistry*, New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 1945. p. 741

philosophers and scientists during 'Feuerbach' times and the subsuming of life processes to the physical and chemical forces inherent in nature.

Prior to James Watson and Francis Crick, the bio-chemical investigation of DNA began with Friedrich Miescher. He carried out the first systematic chemical studies of cell nuclei in 1868, Miescher isolated a phosphorous-containing substance, which he called 'nuclein' from the nuclei of pus cells (leukocytes), obtained from the discarded surgical bandages. He found nuclein to consist of an acidic portion, which we know today as DNA, and a basic portion, protein. Miescher and many others of his times, (indeed Feuerbach's times), suspected that nuclein or nucleic acid was associated in some way with cell inheritance, but the first direct evidence that DNA is the bearer of genetic information came in 1944 through the discovery made by Oswald T. Avery Colin Macleod and McCarty. However, it was known to the scientists of the nineteenth century (Miescher and others) that the inorganic elements like the Nitrogen, Carbon, Hydrogen, Oxygen etc combined or bonded in certain structure forming organic compound called the uric acid; and, as uric acid is a base (purine), Feuerbach celebrated the great discovery that life can emerge from matter. Life and matter need not be seen as two distinct, irreconcilable phenomena, a grave error, in his opinion, that philosophers indulged in for ages. This strengthened his belief in the primacy of matter and in science as the only legitimate method of knowledge. He went on to reject God and religion, especially the Christian doctrine of creation by God out of nothing. Religion and religious entities and doctrines had to be explained away.

There were other scientific discoveries that led him to his conclusion on religion. Thus, another strong ground of Feuerbach's atheism is to be located in the theory of evolution propounded by Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the English Naturalist. He was particularly interested in the evolution of man. Charles Darwin and his successors disseminated the idea that there was no such thing as sin, or that sin is merely the remnant of an animal instinct in man. Darwin was the first to put evolution on what seemed to be a scientific basis otherwise it was seen as a philosophical doctrine, going as far back as to the times of Aristotle.

Before Darwin became a naturalist, he had spent some time in studying medicine and theology. His feelings towards the truth of biological evolution developed after a voyage around the world on the Beagle (between 1831-1836). He was convinced that differences between living animals and fossils on the mainland and those on the islands that he visited could only be accounted for by biological evolution. Alfred Wallace, too, had independently arrived at similar conclusions. When Darwin came to know of it, he hurriedly published his not so well organized material in his book, *Origin of the Species*, in 1859. Darwin put forward in his book the thesis that the struggle for existence kept the population of the various species constant, inspite of the fact that reproduction is geometric and that many more are produced than are essential for the survival through a process of adjustment or adaptation. He also thought such a similarity as that of the body structure between man and animals substantiated his theory. He amplifies his theory, again in *The Descent of Man* (1874), and argued that man was linked with animals by common ancestral types. The evolutionary series of organisms from a few

and simple to increasingly manifold and complex forms followed various stages of evolution from the simple structure less protoplasm to complex structures of life forms, responsive to variegated stimuli. This theory he applied to all organisms, from the lowest to the thinking human brain. Darwin's idea of continuity between man and animal has been summarized as "descent with change", which view is opposed to the Biblical concept of special creation by God with fixity and predetermination. The Biblical worldview thus suffered a further shock due to the theory of evolution. Feuerbach avidly endorsed the theory of evolution.

The materialist in Germany in the nineteenth century considered all the advances of the natural sciences as serving them as new proofs against belief in a creator God. Religion was left with no philosophical props. Empirical sciences made such rapid advances and achieved such spectacular results that philosophers found it difficult to keep pace with them in the formulation of philosophical theories. It became possible to science to overcome considerably the mechanical one-sidedness of the eighteenth century. Moreover, through the discovery of the inter-relation found in nature, on account of the investigation in diversified areas as Mechanics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, etc, science itself transformed from the empirical to theoretical concerns. The integration of the results achieved helped the scientists to construct a system of materialistic knowledge of nature. The last remnants of the incomprehensibility of the organic compounds had been stripped off of its mysteries by the mechanics of gases, in which the newly created organic chemistry, one after the other synthesized them from the inorganic materials. The science of embryology, whose origins date back to

1818, geology, palaeontology and the comparative anatomy of plants and animals provided a new outlook to the natural sciences against the age-old mysterious and inexplicable operative causes. Some notable discoveries were more decisive than others in corroding the religious worldview adhered to so far.

Amongst all the discoveries, the most spectacular was the mechanical equivalent of heat by Robert Meyer, Joule and Colding that dealt a fatal blow to forms of cosmological arguments for the existence of God. The innumerable operatives in nature, which had been considered to be of a mysterious nature as 'forces'; mechanical force, heat, radiation (light and radiant heat), electricity, magnetism, the force of chemical combination and dissociation were then proved to be special forms, modes of existence of one and the same energy, viz. motion. Not only could it be transformed from one form into another, but, even the transformation could be carried out in the laboratory conditions, and applied effectively in industry. The unity of all motion in nature was no longer a philosophical assertion but became a fact of natural science.¹⁶

Another great discovery of the time was in the field of cell-biology. It was the discovery of the organic cell by Schwann and Schleiden. They saw the cell as the unit, out of which the multiplication and differentiation of all organisms, except the lowest, arose and developed. With the discovery of this, the investigation of the organic, living products of nature in the field of

¹⁶ Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, New York: International Publishers, 1974.

comparative anatomy and physiology, as well as embryology, was for the first time put upon a firm foundation.

With all these epoch-making discoveries, a great many processes of nature could now be explained and traced back to natural causes. The one common conclusion in all their discoveries, when brought before the philosophical study, is that they all intended to suggest the origin of life from purely inorganic nature.

In the present context, this may well mean to suggest the preparation of albuminous bodies from the inorganic materials. The functioning system of the universe, or the motion of the heavenly bodies and of rigid terrestrial bodies, is understood to be under the influence of the laws of gravity that was increasingly understood. *The materialist outlook on nature means no more than simply conceiving nature just as it exists without any foreign intervention.* The elements of the mystery and miracle were exercised to make room for scientific explanations.

Feuerbach was a witness and a participant in all the epoch-making advances in natural science. The model inherent in them is deterministic and materialistic. He applied it to his philosophical anthropology as well. Life, including human life, he asserted to be the 'result of the whole nature'. On the sphere of nature, he is avowedly a materialist, but in the human sphere he was willing to grant a degree of spontaneity in virtue of the power of imagination. But imagination itself is largely powered by the instinctual energy, which can be accounted for by the physical laws. A historical movement is basic, if it is rooted in the hearts of man. Heart is the essence of religion; this also explains the power of religion in human life. Religion is the relation

based on the affections, the relation based on the heart between man and on the affections, the relation based on the heart between man and man, which until now sought its truth in the fulfilment of one's phantasies. It finds its truth directly and without any intermediary in the love between the "I" and "Thou". Feuerbach has resolved the essence of religion into the essence of man. When he branded Christianity as an inhumane religion, it could mean the sting of alienation or pain of separation between the "I" and "Thou". Likewise when he branded Christianity as an immoral religion, he only questions the motive behind the moral actions. Moral actions are not determined from an outer agency or force; it is rather man's own nature that commands. The projected, morally perfect nature commands the inner imperfect nature. Religion, along with its morality, is the religion of man, and not of God. Our greatest ethical principles are rooted in what is best for the human nature. Our contemporary naturalistic philosophers have greatly benefited from the reflections of Feuerbach. Opposing directly the statement of Christ, "I am the alpha and the omega" (*Revelation* 1:17), Feuerbach asserts, as if to sum up his anthropological philosophy, "Man is the beginning, the middle and the end of religion".¹⁷

¹⁷ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p.184

CHAPTER 3

CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

What are the contributions as well as the limitations of Feuerbach's thesis? This imperative cannot be ignored. The philosophical impact his reflections on religion made can be seen as greatly contributing towards modern atheism, among many others. A great many philosophers of our contemporary time carry on the philosophical legacy of Feuerbach: Karl Marx, Nietzsche, Troeltsch, Scheler, Sigmund Freud, Berdyaev, Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Erich Fromm and many more. Feuerbach's ideas about religion became the talk of the times, partly because they were outrageous to the orthodox, and partly because they were powerfully stated, to say nothing of their acceptability among the intelligentsia of the times. But they were not without serious limitations as well. They apparently seem to stem from the inherent shortcomings of materialism and its determinism. The materialism of his time was predominantly mechanistic. As the animal was a machine to Descartes, so was man a machine to the materialists of the late eighteenth century. But with the development of natural sciences, along with its self criticism, one was forced to see beyond the rigid physico-chemical laws and the deterministic models of the Darwinian theory of evolution. Materialism, as applicable to human nature, had to be amplified, modified and re-interpreted, giving due credit to the element of spontaneity in human nature. Natural and social sciences had to be heard of their respective claim. It is precisely here that the atheism and materialism advocated by Feuerbach may have serious

drawbacks. Has Feuerbach in his excessive enthusiasm for scientism remained a spokesman for a narrowly conceived positivistic determinism?

A. CONTRIBUTION

Let us begin with his great contributions to philosophy. Feuerbach's unique contribution, we must acknowledge, is a philosophical anthropology. He may be said to have prepared the ground for the existentialist ontology of the human spirit, although he did not have the advantage of meditating on the social upheavals that the Existentialists had. He in his own way proclaimed the uniqueness of man as man. The question he addressed himself to was whether man can recover his alienated essence to its concrete materiality. His essence got alienated in religion into spiritual, divine nature of a God. Again, notable contribution to philosophy by Feuerbach is the recognition of the power of imagination in man,¹ a comprehensive faculty of reason, will and affectivity. Even so, Feuerbach believed that the task of philosophy is to awaken one's thought, and not to let our understanding be a prisoner to the spoken or the written word, however sacrosanct it be. In general, his philosophy is based on the concept that man is the highest being in nature.

In Russia, as early as 1847, members of the Petrashevskii circle of intellectuals were avidly reading Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. They appropriated the anthropological principle of Feuerbach as the culmination of philosophy and foundation of all social progress.² This at once suggests the pervasive influence of his philosophy within a short while.

¹ Ludwig, Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1957.

² Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970. p.16.

For Feuerbach, the question concerning the existence or non-existence of God is identical with the question concerning the existence or non-existence of man as man. Feuerbach's analysis of religion taken in general has two components: One, the content of religion; and it is to be found invariably in human experience. Two, the arrangement and selection of that content; and this is guided by human strivings. It is somewhat like the attempt to overcome a recognized dependence. Man must be restored to his sensual nature, freed from God, who has usurped his real nature.

Feuerbach frequently used the word "sensualism" in a wide, and deliberately imprecise sense, to bring together logically distinct aspects of his doctrine of man. In his theory of knowledge, he is an empiricist, because senses are the means, or the starting point of all knowledge. The secret of immediacy in knowledge is sensualism. Man is primarily a sensual creature much before his reasoning, or thinking developed. In his sensualism man is a mere passive receptacle. He writes in the preface to his *Essence of Christianity*,

I unconditionally repudiate absolute, immaterial, self-sufficing speculation, –that speculation which draws its material from within. I differ *toto coelo* from those philosophers who pluck out their eyes that they may see better; for my thought I require the senses, especially sight; I found my ideas on materials which can be appropriated only through the activity of the senses. I do not generate the object from the thought, but the thought from the object; and I hold that alone to be an object which as an existence beyond one's own brain.³

³ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957. Preface to the second edition.,p. xxxiv

Again,

I am nothing but a natural philosopher in the domain of mind;
and the natural philosopher can do nothing without instruments,
without material means.⁴

His predilection for empiricism is evident. He says that philosophy has for its principle, not the substance of Spinoza, not the ego of Kant and Fichte, not the absolute identity of Schelling, not the absolute mind of Hegel, in short, no abstract, merely conceptual being, but a real being, the true *Ens realissimum* – man. Man, as the true principle of philosophy, is, in the highest degree, positive and real. Philosophy generates thought from the opposite of thought, namely matter, existence and the senses. They are all passive receptacles that define the nature of man. In strictly theoretical philosophy, Feuerbach attached himself, in direct opposition to the Hegelian philosophy, only to realism, to empiricism and materialism. The transition to atheism is a short one from here. Little wonder then that he paves the way for modern atheism and materialism. He studied theology in terms of anthropology. Likewise, he studied epistemology in terms of sensualism; and metaphysics in terms of materialism.

Feuerbach's question on religion and theology illuminates not only the modern theology represented by Schleiermacher, but also the mysticism of the older theology. The shadow of Feuerbach's suspicion adumbrates the mystical element in any theology. His criticism of the extravagant views of Luther on faith warns us that we may not repeat them without some caution.

⁴ *ibid*, xxxiv

Feuerbach explained (away) religion, by not doing theology, but reducing theology to psychological anthropology. Man is not only the measure of all things, but also the epitome, the origin and end of all values. This at once gives justification and assurance to human existence, its needs, wishes and ideals. His unique contribution to philosophy gets registered in the context of his elaboration of the essence of man. Feuerbach proclaimed man to be the basis of all philosophy, in which the concept of man represents the attempts to overcome the traditional dualism of mind and matter, of the knower and the known, of the theoretical and practical reason. Feuerbach sees a dialectical unity, a logical interdependence of the subject and object of knowledge. For him, man is both matter and mind, understanding and will, sensation and passion.

Feuerbach's finest insights have been absorbed and transformed in the works of Marx, Freud, Dewey, Lukacs, Sartre, Marcel and Buber. Each one of them has taken one or the other aspect of his philosophy and amplified it. Buber has taken over Feuerbach's "I-Thou" as the touchstone of the relation of the self to the other. Wartofsky thinks that Feuerbach has too long been treated either as a transitional figure between Hegel and Marx, a purveyor of aphorisms, or as a crude and simple materialist. On the contrary, Feuerbach is an epochal figure and simple materialist in the history of philosophy, for the originality and fundamental character of his philosophy lies in a critique of philosophy itself. Feuerbach is the first and the greatest of the modern critique of philosophy outside the positivistic tradition. What is more striking and substantive in his philosophy is the detailed character of his critique of

philosophy. It would not be wrong to consider Feuerbach as a foundation stone of modern atheism.

Some of the studies made on Feuerbach had even harmed his distinctive character. He is often seen to be half materialist and half idealist, without putting him on a clearer relief. To be sure, his method of study is largely based on Hegel's idealism. But his material of study is anything but Hegelian. It is straightforwardly matter. He is here not with the idealist philosophers, but with the positivistic scientists. Indeed, till the end, he remained a spokesman for science in the field of philosophy. In the cause of philosophy of science, he explained away religion by applying the principles of natural sciences. He called into question the age-old beliefs, or the accepted view of the traditional religions, particularly, of Christianity.⁵

There were three great discoveries of science during his time: First, the discovery of the cell as the unit, from whose multiplication and differentiation the whole plant and animal body develops. Second, the discovery of the transformation of energy, which demonstrated that all the so-called forces operative in the first instance in organic nature, -mechanical force and its complement, so-called potential energy, heat, radiation (light or radiant heat), electricity, magnetism and chemical energy-, are all different forms, or the manifestation of the universal motion. The unity of all motion in nature became no longer a philosophical assertion but considered to be a fact of natural science. Third, the discovery of the Darwinism theory of evolution of

⁵ Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, New York: International Publishers, Seventh Printing 1974, pp.65-67.

the species that spoke of continuity from the simple organism to the complex man. Feuerbach breathed in the air of these discoveries.

All these complex factors led him to an uncompromising atheism, via his analysis of human nature, by the power of imagination, a complex faculty in man. The atheism of the subsequent years owes its inspiration to Feuerbach in one-way or other. In order to drive home the contribution of Feuerbach; some of the claims of the atheists of modern times are briefly studied in what follows. I shall take the term 'atheism' in its widest sense as the negation of God as a reality. Such a negation may be of a God-in-the world (Pantheism), or a God-beyond-the world (deism), or God who is actually both in the world and beyond it (transcendentalism and immanentism of theism in general), or a God beyond the world who is yet related to the world as a mind to body (panentheism). When we consider the position of the denial of God in its several versions, it is advisable to view the atheist as simply non-theists or even agnostics, instead of those militantly hostile to the God and the religious claims. Hence atheism is inextricably linked with such doctrines as humanism, materialism, naturalism and positivism. Some of the contemporary arguments for atheism are briefly stated as follows.

I. COSMOLOGICAL DISPROOFS AGAINST GOD

(a) . Causality Leads to an Infinite Regress

Some atheists as Bertrand Russell,⁶ opined that everything needs a cause. So does God, in which case he would not be God. If God does not need a cause, then, there is no God. In either case, whether everything needs

⁶ Bertrand Russel, *Why I Am Not a Christian* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.

a cause or does not need a cause, there can be no God. But if we insist that everything needs a cause, then we launch on an infinite regress and never reach a first cause, which the philosophers have understood as God.

(b). Causality Leads to an Impossible Self-caused Being

Jean Paul Sartre stated that, if, in accordance with the principle of causality, we affirm that everything must have a cause either in itself or outside itself, then, we must assume that, if we arrive at a cause that no longer has need of any cause beyond itself, then, this cause must have the cause for its being within itself.⁷ This means that God must be a self-caused being. But to Sartre, a self-caused being is impossible. For, to cause oneself to exist, one would have to exist prior to his existence. This is a manifest absurdity. Only what does not exist needs its existence to be caused, but to cause existence one must exist; nothing cannot cause something. Therefore to cause one's own existence one would simultaneously have to exist and not exist. Hence, the existence of God, as the self-caused being is impossible, for it is riddled with absurdities.

2. ONTOLOGICAL DISPROOFS AGAINST GOD

J.N. Findlay, one of the most ingenious contemporary philosopher of religion, attempts to disprove God as follows: Philosophers have argued that God is a necessary being. If there is a God then he must necessarily exist, for to exist contingently would mean that he is not really God.⁸ Following closely Feuerbachian's materialism, he says that nothing can exist necessarily, since

⁷ Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Trans. by Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square Press, 1966. p.758.

⁸ J.N.Findlay, "Can God's Existence Be Disproved?" . Trans. by R.H. Popkin, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965. p .157.

necessity does not apply to existence; necessity is simply a characteristic of propositions, but never of reality. The only way God could exist, if there were one, is then the very way he cannot exist. Hence, the existence of God as a necessary being is manifestly impossible.

3. MORAL DISPROOFS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

Many attempts to disprove God's existence here come from the moral sphere.

(a). Pierre Bayle's Famous Dilemma for Theism

Pierre Bayle is credited to have given formulation to the classic moral argument against the existence of God from the existence of evil.⁹ He begins with the fact that evil exists in the world. If there were an all powerful God, he could destroy evil, and if there were an all-good God, he surely would destroy evil. But evil persists, it is not destroyed. Bayle therefore, came to the conclusion that God is: either

- (i) impotent, and cannot destroy evil, or
- (ii) malevolent, and will not destroy evil, or.....
- (iii) both malevolent and impotent.....
- (iv) there is no theistic God at all.....

Thus the infinitely good and powerful God of traditional theism is logically ruled out.

(b). Bertrand Russell's Moral Disproof of God

⁹ Pierre Bayle, *Selection from Bayle's Dictionary*, Translated by R.H.Popkin, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965. p.157

Russell put forward an argument: If there is a moral law, as theists claim, then, either it results from God's fiat or else it does not.¹⁰ If it results from God's fiat, then, it is arbitrary, and if it is so, then, God is not essentially good. If, on the other hand, the moral law does not result from God's fiat, then, God is himself subject to some essential goodness (the law), which is beyond himself and to which he finds himself subjected. But a God, who is subordinated to some essential goodness beyond himself, cannot be the ultimate, that we all understand to be God.

(c). Albert Camus On Theism As Contrary To Humanitarianism

Camus provides an interesting existential moral argument against a theistic God in his novel *The Plague*. The situation depicted is one of an epidemic. One must either join the doctor, and fight the plague of rats, sent by God on the sinful city, or one must join the priest and refuse to fight the plague, lest one is fighting against God who sent it.¹¹ But to refuse to fight the plague is anti-humanitarian, as it is a refusal to help to alleviate human suffering. Therefore, it follows that, if humanitarianism is right, then, theism is wrong. What is more, if there is any kind of God, then he must be resisted, because he is not even humanitarian. So, Camus concluded that an all-good theistic God does not exist.

(d). The Argument From Innocent Suffering

Atheists point out that it seems to be an undeniable fact of life that this world could be improved. As for instance, not every evil may be said to be deserved : cruelty, cancer and rape sometimes even strike the innocent.

¹⁰ Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.

¹¹ Albert Camus, *The Plague*, Translated by Stuart Gilbert, New York: Modern Library, 1948.

An all-wise, all-powerful and all-good God, would not allow any innocent to suffer evil or unmerited suffering.¹² Unless theists can supply some plausible explanation for the suffering of the innocent, it is practically impossible that there is a God.

(e). The Argument From Unjustifiable Suffering

Theists sometimes claim that some evil is a necessary condition, or means, of a greater good.¹³ But atheists counter the claim, and reject the existence of God. If human suffering is justifiable, then, it would be wrong to work to eliminate it. It is not wrong to work to eliminate suffering on the humanitarian ground; it is, in fact, right. If there were a theistic God, using human suffering as a means to a greater good, then, working against suffering would be wrong, for it would be tantamount to working against God. Therefore there cannot be a theistic God, whose existence is compatible with the unjustified suffering.

4. DISPROOFS OF GOD FROM THE NATURE OF GOD AND CREATION

(a). The Antinomy of Omnipotence

Some atheists contend that, if there were an all-powerful God, then, he could do absolutely anything, including making a stone so heavy that he could not lift it or creating a monster that could get out of control. If God could make such thing that he could not control, then, he would not be all-powerful, since there would be something that he could not overpower. Hence, there cannot be an omnipotent God, as Omnipotent is contradictory.

¹² Roland Puccetti, "*The Loving God*", Religious Studies, Vol. No.2 April 1967.

¹³ H.J. McCloskey, "*God and Evil*" The Philosophy Quarterly 10 (April 1960), reprinted in Nelson Pike, *God and Evil*

(b).The Antinomy of Perfection

As against the claim of possession of absolute perfections by God some atheists argue for its impossibility. They ask, how can one and the same being possess both love and wrath? The one is the cancellation of the other. God cannot be both all-knowing and all-loving.¹⁴ An all-loving God would not force, or coerce, man to do anything against his will, for love is never coercive. Likewise both absolute goodness and absolute freedom cannot go together, as one cannot be both free and not free to do evil.

(c). The Antinomy of Creation

Theists contend that God is a necessary being and that his will is one with his essence. But his act of creation is free, for he is free not to create. Atheists counter this argument of the theists. Either God is not a necessary being or else creation is necessary, because it is impossible for creation to flow both necessarily and freely from God.¹⁵ In either case creator God cannot exist.

(d). The Antinomy of Time.

It is believed by the theists that the world had a beginning in time. God is eternal, but not the world.¹⁶ Atheists call this into question. If the world began in time then, there must have been a time before the time began which is a logical absurdity. Hence, there cannot be a atheistic God, who created the world in time.

¹⁴ Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness*, New York: Schocken Books, 1970

¹⁵ Shubert Ogolem, *The Reality of God*, New York: harper & Row, 1966. p.17.

¹⁶ Siger of Bradent, *On the Eternity of the World*, Latin Averroist of the thirteenth century.

5. DISPROOF OF GOD FROM THE NATURE OF MAN AND FREEDOM

(a). Disproof of God from the Nature of Human Freedom

Jean Paul Sartre argued from the viewpoint of human freedom that there cannot be a God.¹⁷ Man is free, indeed, totally free. Man's freedom is incompatible with god's existence. Freedom implies responsibility for one's own action. But if there is a God, then, man is not responsible for his action, in as much as divine promotion, according to the theists, is required for any human action. In fact, if there is a God, man cannot be free, for man's freedom would then be circumscribed by the divine determinism of human action. Sartre says, " I cannot choose not to be free, for the choice not to be free is itself an act of my freedom. My freedom, then, eliminates the possibility of God. Either I am absolutely free to determine myself, or else I am not free because God has determined me". Thus Sartre concluded that, as man is absolutely free to determine himself, there is no God.

(b). Disproof of God from the Nature of Man.

Sigmund Freud called into question the existence of God by his argument from illusion. In this argument we clearly perceive his indebtedness to Feuerbach. Belief in God is founded on human wish-fulfillment. It is a cosmic childhood neurosis that seeks for a father-protector, or a cosmic comforter.¹⁸ Belief in God is based on this wish for comfort from the tragedies of life. God then is an object of human wish-fulfillment. The strength of belief in God is

¹⁷ Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966 pt. four, Chap.1.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, Translated by W.D. Robson Scott. New York: Liveright, 1955. Chap.6.

really the strength of human wishes. Sartre contends that man not only wishes that there be a God, but that it is man's very project in life to realize God.¹⁹ Man needs God in an existential way. Man's whole being is a thrust toward becoming God. When we analyse however the nature of man's project to become God, we find it to be absurd. Theist believes that God is the uncaused being. The difficulty of the human project is that the uncaused can never become the self-caused. Sartre asserts that man is an empty bubble on the sea of nothingness, a useless passion. Life is considered to be without any transcendent, or objective meaning. The only meaning life has is the subjective meaning we give to it. There is no God who may be said to provide meaning for life from the outside. Needless to say, Freud has picked up a single thread of thought from Feuerbach to develop his argument.

(c). GOD IS A PROJECTION OF HUMAN IMAGINATION

Freud's thesis gets illumined, when we jux-ta-pose it with Feuerbach's own thesis.²⁰ Feuerbach argued that man alone, in contrast to animals, is self-conscious. Man by nature is a being that must project his own subjective nature into an object. God is man's own subjectivity objectified. Nature of God is nothing other than an expression of the human nature in its deep-rooted feelings. God is of the nature of heart God is love. The projection itself is made possible through the powers of imagination. Human reason, will and affection exist for their own sake, and not as a means to something else. God is what the human will wills in man for its own sake, even as God is what the

¹⁹ Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*.

²⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, Translated from the German by George Eliot, New York: Harper Torch books, 1957 pp. 9-12; 16

human reason thinks for its own sake; even so God is what the human feeling feels for its own sake. Again, one can go no further than the limits of one's own nature; one cannot get outside of one self. It is true that man can think, love and feel the infinite, but the infinity he knows, loves and feels is really the infinity of his own nature. That infinite nature is truth, is man's own finite nature, unrealistically projected out as lying beyond oneself. Marx followed Feuerbach's basic dialectical argument for atheism, but Feuerbach himself followed the Hegelian method, rejecting at once to Hegelian pure Idea, the spirit, to assert the material nature of man as the only reality. Marx was voicing the Feuerbachian thesis in speaking of man: "Who looked for the super man in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the reflexion of himself....".²¹ It would not be wrong to say that Feuerbach is the father of modern atheism. Modern atheists owe their disproof against God to either the materialism or projectionism or humanism advocated by him. The process of double alienation of human self-consciousness, first, in theology, and then, in metaphysics, becomes more than a pragmatic sketch in Feuerbach's treatment. In the years to come, it was to acquire psychological, socio-political, economic, humanistic and existentialistic hues. The mythological atheist, Nietzsche, observed that the God-myth was once alive, that is, it a model man, believed in long ago; but this myth now is dead, and is no longer workable.

²¹ Karl Marx and Feuerbach Engels, *On Religion*, New York. Schocken Books, 1964. p.41.

Feuerbach's ideas inspired those who were trying to work out a realistic program of reform in Germany during the mid nineteenth century.²² Many of his dicta became the dogmata for the radical movement. "Man is what he eats" is a dictum ascribed to Feuerbach. Even as innocuous, a statement as this acquired a great political and ethical significance in 1850. Food that we ingest becomes blood, and blood becomes heart and brain, thoughts and mind-stuff. Since human welfare is the foundation of man's culture and thought, it was argued, if you like to improve a nation, quality food must be consumed by the populace, instead of declamation against sin. Again, through the adoption of the Hegelian dialectical method, he gave fillip to his materialism, and provided the means by which German thought could become 'scientific', while still indulging in its overriding interest in historical processes, inspiring Marx and Engels. Engels, being influenced by him, said that, with one blow, Feuerbach pulverized the contradictions of idealism, and that without circumlocutions, placed materialism on the throne again. He also may be said to have laid the foundation for a materialistic-humanistic ethics, when he rejected the contradictions of the Hegelian philosophy, and established the illusionistic character of all religious belief, and pleaded for a new philosophy based on anthropology. He also laid the foundation for a phenomenological anthropology that made him a source of information and insights for such modern philosophers as Heidegger, Sartre and Karl Barth.

One of the contributions of Feuerbach's philosophy is its unconscious, but evident, affinity to the ideology of the Socialist Workers' movement. This

²² Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 3&4. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1972, pp. 191-192.

became possible due to his anthropological naturalism, even if it developed a humanist ethics based on strictly sociological approach to historical phenomena.²³ Marx's "materialistic method" is to be rooted on the concept of "alienation" in Feuerbach. Marx conceived of alienation as a phenomenon related to the structure of those societies, in which "dead labor" (capital) dominates "living labor" (the worker), when he attempted to bring revolution and reformation in human society by attacking capitalism. He wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, "what the bourgeoisie.... produces, above all, are its own grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable". In ending the preamble to his inaugural address to the internal working Men's Association (1864), Marx pronounced the same statement or summons that ends the Manifesto, 'working men of all countries, unite!' He participated in the removal of classes in societies of his time. Communism, which is still strong in many countries in various modifications of social organization and governmental systems, owes a great deal to Feuerbach's anthropological naturalism, which was hailed by Marx as the perfect philosophy.

Feuerbach's contribution to philosophy itself lies in his powerful critique of philosophy, which forced a reassessment of what the philosophical enterprise is all about. Marx Wartofsky wrote, "The critique makes philosophy self-conscious in a way that reveals its human foundations and its social and epistemological uses in a new way. By means of this critique, by putting philosophy itself fundamentally in questions, Feuerbach enabled Marx to

²³ David L. Sills, *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol 9&10. The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, New York: Cotleer Macmillan Publishers, London, 1972.p 36.

transform the method of theoretical critique and self-reflection into a method of practical critique, or critical reflection on society."²⁴ More importantly, Feuerbach reveals the extent to which both religion and philosophy are masked and esoteric forms of practical, human thought. Feuerbach's analysis of religion provides a crucial epistemological context for the contemporary discussion of ideology, of nature of social beliefs and their formation. Feuerbach must be taken seriously.

In the early 1840s, Feuerbach became the theoretical leader of the school of the Left-Hegelianism; he came to wield considerable influence both on Marx and Engels. Engels openly acknowledged, "We are all Feuerbachians". In his book on religion, Feuerbach's reflections on religion occupy a central place. This much for the contributions. But, what are the limitations?

B. LIMITATIONS

It was stated that the arguments against the existence of God adduced by the atheists owe in a greater or lesser measure to the anthropological atheism of Feuerbach. Naturally, the limitations of these arguments at once reflect the limitations of the anthropological naturalism of Feuerbach. Hence, selectively though, let me briefly evaluate some of the disproofs for god's existence.

1. (a). Causality Need Not Lead to an Infinite Regress.

The view, "If anything needs a cause, then these must be an infinite regress", is founded on misconceptions of the principle of causality. It suffers

²⁴ Marx W. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, Preface (XI).

from confusion between the principle of existential causality and the principle of sufficient reason.²⁵ Aquinas, for example, held that only finite, changing, dependent beings need a cause, and this does not necessarily lead to a contradictory self-caused being, but to a non-contradictory uncaused being. If only finite beings need a cause, then, the infinite being does not need a cause. The concept of the infinite and the uncaused being with the atheists is the legacy of Feuerbach, in as much as it is a projected essence, to all of them.

(b). The Ontological Disproof of God Is Self-Defeating

“No statements about existence are necessary” is one of the premises in the alleged ontological disproof of God. If this were true, then, it should apply also to that very statement itself.²⁶ The statement in question is either necessarily true or else it is not. If it is necessarily true, then, it is self-defeating, as, in claiming that no necessary statement about existence can be made, it is a necessary statement about existence. The atheists cannot rule out *a priori* the possibility of making a necessary statement about existence without at the same time making a necessary statement about existence, which is self-defeating. If a negative statement can be made about existence, such as “God cannot exist”, then, why can't we make a necessary positive statement about existence, such as “God does exist”?

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York: Benziger Bros., 1947-48.

²⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, New York: Baker Books, 1976. Indian Edition, 2000. p. 225.

(c). Bayle's Moral Dilemma Is Invalid

Bayle's argument based on his moral dilemma is that "evil is not defeated."²⁷ In the argument, it would seem, at least two premises have been assumed: first, nothing has been done to defeat evil up to the point; second, since evil has not been defeated up to this point of time, it will never be defeated. The first assumption is not acceptable to Christian theists who sincerely believe that evil has been in principle defeated by Christ. Again, Bayle offered no real proof for his second assumption that, if an all-loving and all-powerful God has not defeated evil now, he never will defeat it. This premise, too, is not acceptable to Christian who believes that God will yet actually destroy evil in Christ's return. What is sought to be converged here is that Bayle does not meet the Christian theist at the level of latter's belief.

(d). Moral Law Need Not Be Arbitrary or Superior to God

In opposition to the Russell's dilemma, the theists claim that moral law is neither outside God, nor superior to God nor arbitrary.²⁸ The moral law is seen by them as rooted in God's unchangeably good and loving nature; it is not seen as flowing from God's arbitrary will. The apparent dilemma is then resolved. The ultimacy of the good within God's own nature is seen in the moral Law. God cannot be less than absolutely good. His nature demands that he be absolutely good. God cannot decide to be unloving. Nor can he desire that cruelty and injustice be perpetrated on man. God's will must perform in accordance with his unchangeably good nature. Hence, Russell's dilemma is claimed to be without a basis by the theists.

²⁷ *ibid.* 226.

²⁸ Many theists following Aquinas argue for an ethic rooted in God's nature

(e). Theism Is Not Anti-Humanitarian

Camus argument, the theists observe, is based on a false dichotomy between fighting the plague and being a believer in God.²⁹ One may very well hold that fighting the plague is working for God; further, one may well claim that truly effective way to counteract the plague is by belief in God. The theists may also subscribe to the belief that man has brought the plague upon himself by rebelling against God. But, none of his beliefs imply a refusal to help him back to God and wholeness again. Norman L. Geisler therefore argues that only theism is truly humanitarian, since only theism offers hope of saving man from his self-inflicted plague.

(f). Innocent Suffering Does Not Eliminate Theism

The atheist is mistaken in arguing for the non-existence of God, from innocent suffering. For, in the first place, it is possible that all suffering is deserved in some sense. Secondly, it is possible to argue that God's mercy saves man from more suffering. The above two reasons may not be acceptable, because they presuppose a theistic belief. What the atheists need to prove is not that there is innocent suffering, this is obvious, for example, the suffering of a child, but that there is some unredeemable or unjustifiable sufferings. Such suffering is unredeemed, because this world is not yet the final chapter in the story of human suffering; even so, it is not the best of all possible worlds. But suffering can be a way of obtaining the best possible world, which is yet to come. There is another dimension to suffering testified by the story of Job in the Bible: it is seen as the suffering sent to test and steel

²⁹ Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, New York: Baker Books, 1975. pp 226-227.

his faith. The theist may even argue that suffering is a necessary precondition for achieving the greatest good, for the most worthwhile things are often achieved only through pain. Hence, there is the possibility of immediate evil like suffering of the innocent, leading to an ultimate and greater good.

One thing, which is certain, is that the atheist cannot press for his claim that evil is ultimately unjustifiable; and, thereby, in the meantime, reject God's existence via evil. It is plain that, if some evil is ultimately unjust in this world, then, there must be some ultimate standard of justice beyond this world. All injustice presupposes a standard of justice by which it is judged to be not just. An ultimate injustice necessitates an ultimate standard of justice. This points us right back to God, the ultimate standard of justice beyond the world.

(g). Working to Eliminate Suffering Does Not Disprove God

The argument of such atheists as Camus, that working to eliminate suffering, which is the means of attaining the end of the greatest good, will eliminate theism, does not follow. This is so for the reason that working against evil, far from eliminating God, may at best be understood, if at all conceded, as working against God who permits it for achieving some good.³⁰

These atheists further contend as follows: God must work to achieve the greatest good possible in this world. If permitting evil is the means of achieving the greatest good, then it follows that permitting evil is the best way for God to achieve the best world. From these two premises they conclude that God must do his best, if he permits the maximum evil. Now, this conclusion is actually belabored. Even if God does not do his best, one has no legitimate

³⁰ *ibid.* p228.

ground for complaining that this world is not the best that God could have created. This world is still in many ways a good world, despite the presence of evils. Some virtues, for example, patience and courage, are not possible without a measure of evil. Even so the highest degree of some pleasures and virtues, like forgiveness and reconciliation, are not achievable without some evil or pain. Therefore, it would be necessary for God to permit the necessary first order evils in order to achieve the second order greatest good.

(h). Inability to Do the Impossible Does Not Disprove An Omnipotent God

The fact, that the omnipotent God cannot do certain things does not disprove his existence; rather it merely shows that some activities are incompatible with omnipotence. That God cannot make a stone heavier than he can handle, as contended by atheists, is impossible. No activity of his can deny his nature, the source of his activity. If he can create something he can also control it, nay more, snuff it out of existence.

(i). Incompatible Perfections in God

God's attributes are not incompatible, though his activity can vary. God's attributes do not change, but his acts may change in accordance with the change in the human attitude towards him.³¹ The simile given is apt: "As the same sun hardens clay and melts wax and the same sun maintains its same consistent impact on the elements and the same rays soften or harden an object, depending on the receptivity of it, so it is with the heart of man".

³¹ *ibid.* p299.

(j). Contingent Creation Does Not Eliminate Necessary God

The atheists' argument that a contingent creation proves God's non-existence is fallacious. It is not contradictory to hold that God is a necessary being, while holding at the same time that creation is contingent.³² It is not necessary that the necessary being must will necessarily and unconditionally. One does not have to do something in order to be something. One must exist in order to do something, but he need not do something in order to exist. The existence of God is necessary, but he need not will anything else necessarily. All else may flow freely from his love, and not under compulsion. If creation flows from a loving God, there it must flow freely, as it is necessary to the very nature of love that it act freely.

(k). A Temporal Creation Does Not Disprove a Theistic God

It may be wrong to conceive of creation in time, as time is a concomitance of a created and changing order. Time began, when God caused the changing process of this world. Geisler thinks that the atheistic antinomy of time does not disprove God, but at best corrects a mistaken way of speaking about time and creation.

(l). God is Not Incompatible with Human Freedom

The incompatibility between God's existence and human freedom, spoken of by such atheists as Sartre, is mistaken. Freedom given by God out of love is persuasive, but never coercive. Allowing man to freely determine his own destiny is the loving way of all freedom. It is found in the nature of love

³² *ibid.* p. 230

that other persons be able to respond freely. Knowing what man will do with his freedom is not the same as ordaining what he must do against his freedom.³³ Man is responsible immediately, because he is not forced to choose what is morally wrong, but freely choose it. Therefore man's freedom does not eliminate God. Rather it involves him and if man is free, then, he is also responsible; if he is responsible, he is responsible before the one who has given that freedom to him. Human freedom, so, it is argued instead of disproving God, ultimately implies God, the giver of that freedom.

(m). Man's Unfulfilled Need for God Does Not Disprove God

Sartre argues that man is a useless passion engaged in a futile project of realizing God. The 'for-itself' can never attain the 'in-itself' by itself. According to the theist, this argument by no means disproves God. If man has as great a need for God, as Sartre claims, then, one is cruelly unjust to give up the search as hopeless. It can be asked whether it is necessary that all hungry men should stop striving for food, and say 'there is no food', because they did not find food; whether it is necessary that every thirsty wanderer in the desert should conclude that there is no water anywhere.

The theist turns the table on the atheist. The deep-seated need for God is a sufficient reason for supposing that there is a God.³⁴ Is it not reasonable to assume that what man really need is available? It may be true that a hungry man may never find food, and some lonely person may never find a companion. But is it reasonable to conclude from their unfilled need that neither food nor friends can be found in this world? As an ineradicable need

³³ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, London: G.Bles, 1942. Chap.8

³⁴ Norman L. Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974, Chap.4.

for God is deep within man, would it not be reasonable to suggest that man should continue his search on the assumption that God may be found? The theist claims that Sartre's attempted disproof is reversible into a plausible assumption for God's existence.

2. THE UNTENABILITY OF THE ATHEISTIC POSITION

It is generally agreed that modern atheism owes a great deal to Feuerbach for its content as well as method. Some of the arguments of the atheists have an explicit reference to Feuerbach's anthropology, while in others the reference is only implicit. No doubt, the atheists have provided some of the most convincing arguments against atheism. The reply or the refutation of the theists is not focused, especially, if they accept the viewpoints of the believer and his faith. Nevertheless, they are largely successful in showing that the disproofs against God's existence often entail the existence of God. Here below are given a few instances of such entailment.

(a). One Must Assume God in Order to Disprove God

The ontological disproof of God entails making a necessary statement about existence, when it claims that necessary statements cannot be made about existence.³⁵ To absolutely eliminate God, one needs to take absolute knowledge, but absolute knowledge can only be derived from God. Therefore, to disprove God in the absolute sense, one would have to assume God.

(b). Atheistic Arguments Are Reversible into Reasons for God

Many of the atheistic arguments are often self-defeating; they entail premises that could plausibly conclude for the existence of God.³⁶ Instead of

³⁵ Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, pp. 233-234.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 233

supporting the probability of atheism, the arguments from the existence of evil, human freedom, and human need all call out for, rather than against, God. It is also pointed out that the age old arguments, from causality are reversible into the cosmogonical argument for the existence of God: If every contingent finite, or dependent being needs a cause, then, it would seem to follow that there must be an infinite, necessary and independent cause of the actual existence of every other thing that exists.

(c). Atheism Has No Adequate Explanation for Basic Metaphysical

Questions

Atheism does not provide sufficient explanation for several questions about reality. Firstly, instead of holding that matter gave rise to mind, it seems more reasonable for anyone to hold that mind formed matter. Idealistic philosophies have a philosophical depth that the materialistic philosophies often lack. Secondly, instead of believing that the potentiality actualized itself, it seems much more reasonable to believe that something so actual as a pure act actualized the potential of the universe. Potentials must be actualized by some actualizers, and the theists claims that the world potentials are actualized by some world actualizer namely God. Thirdly, atheism has no sufficient, or adequate, answer to the basic questions, "Why is there something rather than nothing at all?" It is not sufficient to assert that the world is just 'there' or 'given' 'How did something get into the picture when it did not have to be there?' is an inevitable metaphysical question. Another equally inevitable metaphysical question is, "Who gave existence when it did not have to be given?" Logically, the non-existence of the whole, -even the universe as a whole, is conceivably possible. If the universe is not necessary,

then, it follows that it might be. In this case, there is no explanation in atheism as to why the universe is rather than is not. When analyzed, in the final place, atheism must hold the absurd conclusion that some thing comes from nothing, that is, that non-being is the ground upon which being rests, but this apparently is highly unreasonable. So much for the general limitations of modern atheism founded on Feuerbach's philosophy.

We may now turn to more specifically Feuerbachian limitations.

(a) Feuerbach explained everything relating to the basic doctrines of the Bible, or the essence of Christianity for that matter, in terms of the product of imagination. He hardly gives any other reasons than the power of human imagination to project man's own nature into the essence of God. Conversely, Feuerbach emphasised the individual purely in terms of the biological nature. The latter is a down to earth material nature. The juxtaposition of the two is embarrassing even to the well-meaning Feuerbachians. Again, he sees religion as an alienation of humanity from itself. Religion is the relation between human beings based on the affections, the needs of the heart. He saw religion to be emerging from the feeling of dependence. Whatever reasons he could provide for the essence of religion, they are nothing more than the projections of the human essence onto an ideal God. Therefore, in his opinion, God does not make man; rather God is the invention of the human imagination. This is a highly anthropocentric philosophy, even when it breaks the human barriers to have a peep into the transcendental bases of human life.

(b) It is also unfair, on his part, to totally condemn and outrightly reject what man has revered most in his history and culture. To arrive at the radical

conclusions that he has actually arrived would require a multi-pronged analysis, and not merely his theory of psychological projectionism. It is also an undeniable fact that, in man, there is always a deepest longing for an almighty God. The veracity of the content of that longing deserves a greater sympathetic enquiry than Feuerbach has done.

(c) Even if Feuerbach is to reject the content of human imagination, he cannot afford to treat the faculty of imagination itself as illusion. It would be equivalent to throwing away the baby along with the bathtub. Imagination cannot be considered as a total illusion, whose function is to originate merely false knowledge. That it is the root of all knowledge is ably shown by Hume, Kant and Sartre.

(d) Norman Geisler rejects the view that God is a product of mere human projection. He argues that Feuerbach's argument for atheism depends for its validity on a premise, which is self-defeating. When it is stated that the only way to know God is to treat God as the projection of human imagination and emotion, does one know more than these mere projections? For, unless man knows more than the contents of his consciousness, there is no way of being assured that man's own consciousness is the limit of all reality. The limits cannot be known unless they are transcended, and if they are transcended, then, they are not anymore the limits. Unless one sees beyond a wall, one cannot know where the wall ends. Hence it can be concluded that the only way Feuerbach's disproof of God would work is only if the contents of reality were not more than the limits of man's understanding. But if reality is more than man's understanding, then, it cannot be true that reality is nothing more than the objectification of man's understanding of himself. In this way, he is setting a limit to his own philosophy.

(e) Feuerbach is also ambivalent every time he tries to attempt to specify the essence of man who is material, in terms of the spiritual nature. This ambivalence is explicable, in a sense, in as much as his philosophy is partly based on Hegel's philosophy of idealism and partly on the materialistic scientism of the day. He is halfway between idealism and materialism: the lower half of him is materialist, the upper half idealist. His destruction of Hegelianism is less important than the way he started it out, and the way he reached a scientific materialism. His destruction was the sport of almost every significant thinker in German of his day, and herein lies the serious limitations of his philosophy. Marx, in his 'Thesis on Feuerbach'³⁷ found it necessary to state that Feuerbach resolved 'the essence of religion into the essence of man', but the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each separate individual, rather it is in its reality the ensemble of social relations as if to rid Feuerbach of his ambivalence to idealism and materialism. Marx, the thorough-going materialist that he was, knew that Feuerbach is mistaken here, when he tried to do away the notion of the metaphysical or the abstract psychological being by bringing the notion of a generalized man. The generalized man, too, is a concept and not as existent individual of social relations. Marx's critique of Feuerbach was on the mark that Feuerbach unfortunately ignored the historical events that had taken in space and time. His anthropology, the foundation of his philosophy, has its sources neither in matter, nor in history, but in the human psyche. It is bound to be, in the final analysis, somewhat constrictive.

³⁷ Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, New York: International Publishers, 1974, pp.82-84.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION: A CRITIQUE

Feuerbach, for all his brilliant analysis, is not without an exposed Achilles heel. His reflections on religions must be subjected to a critique. One of the strongest attacks on Feuerbach in the twentieth century is carried out by the eminent German Philosopher theologian, Karl Barth. However, his critique has been primarily from the viewpoint of Christian theology. But my critique, here, hopefully, will be essentially from the philosophical standpoint. Can Feuerbach philosophically sustain the ground for his atheism? Can we subscribe to a purely scientific, materialistic, worldview without any reference to human transcendence, even if spirituality were to be abrogated? If the latter were not to be abrogated for sound philosophical reasons, what historical evidences are likely to militate against the Feuerbachian thesis that religion is an illusion. Ethnologists have witnessed the fact that the most archaic forms of societies, which lacked a basic technological civilization and a practise of grain-based agriculture, apparently have had a sense of religiosity among them. Is it merely for psychological needs of man? Is it purely for a social cohesion and the sustenance of the structures of human societies, with no relations whatsoever to human ontology?

The ground of his atheism is the nature, or essence, of man. But, his philosophical anthropology went to the extreme in that, man, endowed with the power of imagination, created the image of God out of his own essence. The power of imagination is said to be responsible for separating the two extremes of

human nature and a projected divine nature within the unity of man. Alienation springs from this self-division of the unity of man. Religion therefore is an illusion. Let us first of all turn our attention to imagination.

Philosophically studied, imagination cannot be rejected completely to be baseless. Kant speaks of imagination:

Synthesis in general is the result of the power of imagination, a blind, but indispensable, function in the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious. To bring this synthesis to concepts is a function which belongs to understanding, and it is through this function of the understanding that we first obtain knowledge properly so called.¹

Feuerbach sees Kant to be still a supernaturalist, or a transcendentalists, to the extent that he distinguishes between imagination and understanding; and that the understanding is the divine reason in man. Kant in his second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is particularly concerned with two quite distinct questions. First, What are the conditions to be fulfilled, if any sort of discursive consciousness is to have objective knowledge? Second, how does cursive consciousness, not only intuit data passively, but does so under the particular forms of space and time? In the context of the first question, Kant speaks of the understanding, but of the second, he brings in the imagination as well. He is of the view that the business of the imagination is to connect, whereas that of the understanding is to make explicit the principles on which the connecting proceeds.² Kant has found a genuine function for the imagination to perform.

¹ Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1972. p. 313

² *ibid.* , p.313

Therefore, from Kant's point of view, imagination cannot be totally rejected. Kant talked of imagination to be the common root of both reason and sensibility. If so, imagination is not logically and philosophically absurd completely. It is rather the highest form in which both reason and sensibility spring forth.

The *Nous* of Permenides in Greek philosophy did much the same function of imagination, it served as the root cause of both reason and sensibility. Therefore, imagination holds an important place in the philosophical studies. It cannot, and must not, be rejected fully. If Feuerbach were to reject religion on the ground that it is the product of imagination and nothing else, it may not sustain his ground for atheism or materialism.

Feuerbach, by the single stroke of the pen, as it were, reduces to the context of imagination all the basic tenets of Christianity: God, Moral Being, the Law, the incarnation, the suffering God, the trinity, the logos as the Divine Image, the cosmological principle in God, the nature of God, providence, creation out of nothing, prayer, faith, the resurrection, the mediation of Christ, the Personal God, the heaven, personal immortality and many others. They are all mysteries, and every mystery is a miracles, which is identical with the phantasy of imagination. It is not the case that a miracle has no real dynamics, but its dynamics is for the fulfilment of the powerful and urgent human wishes in imagination. For example, he did not enquire into the historical value of Christ directly, but viewed him purely as a symbol for human satisfaction. He did not explain Christ as an individual who came, lived, preached to leave a lasting influence on the consciousness of his contemporaries, but as a concept, a symbolized form in the phantasy world of religion. In the same spirit, God became a gap-filler for the lack

of knowledge of nature and its forces. His mistake lies in this that he considered the historical event that had taken place in time and space to be only a symbol.

Feuerbach talked of science to be the only reliable source of human knowledge. He is caught in a dilemma, as science is never definitive or final in knowledge. It is tentative, and ever on the search for better articulation of the laws operative behind the universe. Science is replete with the inexplicability of many a phenomenon. Some of its discoveries were continually changing, some were insufficient, some were true, and some were manifestly wrong, especially at the early nineteenth century. Very little was conclusively known in the field of biochemistry, indeed in life science, in general, during Darwin's times. The application of the principle of adaptation to environment seemed quite reasonable, then, as the explanation for all life. Since no alternative to Darwin's theory of origin is suggested, other than the traditional Biblical account of creation, scientists all have accepted Darwin's theory, despite the many limitations it has as a theory of the origin of life. But, Darwin himself did not have the data on the mutation of genes. What is sought to be highlighted is the tentativeness of a scientific hypothesis like evolution. Even if the theory of evolution of species were true, it still does not adequately explain the origin of the most simple form of life that evolves into complex forms. Herbert Mitchell thinks that Darwin postulated that all life had originated from the creation by God of a very simple one-celled plant. Since Darwin could not name a simple one-celled

plant, he is bound to accept the notion of a creator God, who created the first unicellular form of life, thinks Mitchell.³

One of the most profound beliefs of science is that the Universe had a beginning, popularly known as the Big Bang theory. Scientists estimate that this happened between 10 to 20 billion years ago. The Bible explains the origin of the Cosmos: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' (*Genesis* 1:1). By faith, many were quite happy to leave it at that. But, others seek a scientific explanation for the origin of the universe and the subsequent development of millions of life forms. Both are legitimate pursuits, the one of experimentation, the other of intuition. Even for the Big bang to take place, Herbert Mitchell asks, 'where did all this matter come from, and how did it get fantastically hot?' Science may not have a ready answer, because it proceeds on the assumption of the existence of matter, likewise the existence of life. Bible, too, has a vision of reality, accessible to human intuition. In the final analysis both science and religion, and religion, ends up as some kind of belief-system, despite the experimentation of the former. They need each other. Perhaps, Albert Einstein the Physicist and Nobel prize winner meant this in his statement. "Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind". Science and religion thus needs not contradict each other; instead, they may complement each other. Feuerbach's possible mistake is his perception that science and religion are antithetical to each other, when he reduced the content of religion to illusions and identified science with reality. The radicality of their opposition, if any is not philosophically warranted.

³ Herbert F. Mitchell, *Beyond Science*, Mexico, Editorial Pentecostes, 1974 p. 25

Mathematician Carl Gauss writes, "There are problems to whose solution I would attach infinitely greater importance than those of mathematics, for example.... our relation to God, or concern for our destiny and our future, but their solution lies wholly beyond us, and completely outside the province of science".⁴ Physicist Paul Davies acknowledged that, among those scientists who are not religious in a conventional sense, many confess to a vague feeling that there is something beyond the surface reality of daily experience, some meaning behind existence. He writes, "If physics is the product of design, the universe must have a purpose, and the evidence of modern physics suggests strongly to me that the purpose includes us".⁵ Therefore, it is clear that even scientists who are not religious in a conventional sense do feel that they can never claim to have known everything. They cannot know where the limit of human knowledge reaches. Erwin Schrodinger, the Nobel prize-winning physicist (1887-1961), writes, "The scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient. It gives a lot of factual information... but it is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart." Another Physicist Mary Gellmann says that it is difficult to imagine that a handful of residents of a small planet encircling an insignificant star in a small galaxy have as their aim a complete understanding of the entire universe, a small speck of creation, truly believing it is capable of comprehending the whole. Another forceful statement, highlighting the limitation of a purely materialistic, scientific worldview, is that of John Houghton, Director General of British's Meteorological Office: "Science is dealing with the things that are given.

⁴ Joseph W. Tkach, *The plain Truth*, (Science and Religion), Melbourne: Printed by Wilke Color, July issue, 1993

⁵ *ibid.* p.19

Attitudes of awe, wonder and humility before the facts are essential, if man is to be in harmony with both his environment and his creator".⁶ Indeed, it would seem unthinkable on the part of any sensible human being, that man, a part of God's creations, can acquire a complete knowledge of God, and, worst still, leave God out of the scene from whatever theory of knowledge he may come up with for the ever better explanation of the universe. When a great deal is said of the universe there may still be questions about ourselves that cannot be fully explained through the psychological, sociological, biological and anthropological studies. Religion steps in precisely here, suggesting at once that these questions are beyond the reach of science and that they, however, are given through revelation, faith and intuition.

The old method of investigation and thought, which Hegel called 'metaphysical' preferred to investigate things as given, as fixed and stable. This method, still strongly haunting people's mind, had a good deal of historical justifications in its day.⁷ It was necessary first to examine things before it was possible to examine processes, whereby they came into existence. One had first to know what a particular things was before one could observe the changes going on in connection with it. Such was also the case with natural science, especially in its initial years. The old metaphysics accepted things as finished objects, natural sciences too investigated the dead and living things as finished objects. But when this investigation had made considerable progress, it became possible to take the decisive step forward of transition to the systematic

⁶ *ibid*,p.15

⁷ Fredrick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*,_ p.45

investigation of the processes and the relations with one another. In fact, the natural sciences upto the end of the eighteenth century was predominantly a "classifying" science, a science of finished things. But in our century, it has grown into an essentially "collecting" science, a science of the processes, of the origin and development of things and, above all, of the inter-connections which binds all natural processes into one great whole. Theoretical scientists today are speaking of a grand unified theory that is applicable across the division of the positive sciences. Physiology, which investigates the processes occurring in plants and animal organisms, embryology, which deals with the development of individual organism from germ to maturity, geology, which investigates the gradual formation of the earth's surface, are all held together under a comprehensive theory. They are all, the products of the nineteenth century science, which has grown increasingly into a theoretical method of knowing, without neglecting their experimental aspects. This makes a purely mechanistic deterministic vision of Feuerbach highly suspect.

There are three momentous discoveries of the time, which have enables our knowledge of the interconnection of natural processes to advance by leaps and bounds. The discovery of the cell as the unit, from which the multiplication and differentiation the whole plant and animal organism develops. The discovery of the law of unified energy, which understands all the operative forces in nature as the different forms or the manifestation of universal motion. The whole motion of nature is reduced to this incessant process of transformation from one form of energy into another. The discovery of the Darwinian theory of evolution, which holds that the organic products of nature surrounding us, today, including

mankind, is the result of a long process of evolution from a few original unicellular germs, and that these, again, have arisen from the protoplasm or albumen, which came into existence by chemical means. All the three discoveries along with their numerous associated theories may be said to have dissolved the Kantian realm of reality, or "things-in-themselves" as opposed to "nature". The realm of reality, to Kant, was supposedly spiritual, unknown and unknowable, distinct from nature, the realm of objects given to us in our experience, circumscribed by the *a priori* forms of sensibility, viz. time and space, and the *a priori* categories of understanding. God, soul and immortality belonged to the realm of reality which is basically spiritual. This spiritual reality got pulverized with science which was a tool for understanding all forms of knowledge. Feuerbach is a child of this type of scientism. But we cannot ignore Kant's confession that he was prepared to deny knowledge to assert faith. If the postulates of faith are not accepted, i.e. the realm of the things-in-themselves, he would be compelled to fall into the human scepticism. Feuerbach does not seem to be aware of the serious consequences of a narrow adherence to scientism and the restriction of reality only to matter and its manifestations. Speaking philosophically, if we do not extend the realm of reality beyond matter, we cannot do even science in its higher and theoretical aspects. Therefore, even if pure science is applied for the explication of the universe and the workings in it, it is quite deficient. For no man has ever accomplished in establishing a theory in which pure science seems to be an absolute reasonable answer to various important empirical observation as well as the metaphysical quest of man. It is much beyond the realm of purely natural, or physical science.

What is the moral vision of Feuerbach? Since he claimed God to be the epitomized perfections of the nature of man, there is a sense in which it could be said that his approach to the Christian moral ethic is positive. After all he wants to assert the glories of human perfections and aims at recovering man to his fullest nature from all alienation he suffers from religion. But, there is a serious difficulty in his ethics. His ethics cannot go beyond a humanism, in as much as he extricates all elements of transcendence from it, in as much as God is the projected human essence, a magnified human nature, endowed with all human perfections. The Christian God is only a “fantastic reflection, a mirror, image of man which is the product of the tedious process of abstraction”⁸. His ethics is a self-referential ethics. The inter-subjectivity of an “I” and “Thou” is only a reflection of the primordial anthropological division of one’s own nature into an “I” and “an eternal thou”. “The other”, then, social, or religious, is an extension of oneself, therefore, the other is a being-for-oneself. This is nothing short of an ego-centric ethics. Besides, it does not take into account the concrete individuality of the other, but an abstracted essence of one’s own nature. All altruism with such an abstract essence of oneself should sound hollow to any ethics.⁹

Feuerbach speaks of Christianity as “inhumane”.¹⁰ But, here, he does not refer to the moral values enshrined in the Bible, rather to the alienated essence of man into an “I” and a “Thou”. Alienation, or the sting of separation is the worst

⁸ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957.

⁹ Fredrick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, New York: International Publisher, Seventeenth Printing, 1974. p. 36.

¹⁰ Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vols.3 & 4, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.,Inc., 1972. p.190.

of its kind, when viewed from the viewpoint of unity of human nature. Hence, he was keen on destroying the distinction between 'I' and 'Thou'. But the distinction between the "I" and "Thou" is inherent in the heart of reality; it is an integral part of divine nature, which becomes the basis for all the inter-subjectivity to Christianity. Christianity guards this distinction assiduously. Therefore, Feuerbach brands Christianity as inhumane. But it can legitimately ask why should we treat the duality of "I" and "Thou" as alienation? It can also be seen as an expression of perfect union and communion. Christianity, it can be argued, has wisely recognised that the approach to meaningful inter-subjectivity is not direct, but indirect, through the trinity. A direct relating is fraught with the danger of objectifying another centre of subjectivity, as is rightly observed by even the atheistic existentialists. One's subjectivity will have to be taken into God, the maximum subjectivity. Man meets the other first in the heart of the trinity to make it the basis of any social inter-subjectivity thereafter.

For all his avowed materialism Feuerbach is often accused of violating the principle of materialism and taking flights to abstraction. Marx observed, "The chief defect of all existing materialism 'that of Feuerbach included' is that the object, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or contemplation but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not objectivity".¹¹ In opposition to idealism Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really differentiated from the thought-objects, but does not conceive human activity itself as activity through objects. He regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human

¹¹ Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, p.82.

attitude, while on the other hand, practice is conceived as fixed. Hence, he did not grasp the significance of the revolutionary practical-critical, activity.¹² To be sure, he was not satisfied with the abstract thinking and appeals to sensuous contemplation, but did not conceive sensuousness itself as a practical, human-sensuous activity. Marx was disturbed by this failure on the part of his mentor. In his opinion Feuerbach tried to resolve the religious essence into a human, but did not realize that human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations. He accused Feuerbach that the latter did not attempt the criticism of that real essence. Had he done this, then he would be compelled to abstract from the historical processes and to fix the religious sentiment as something for itself. In the absence of such a critique Marx averred, Feuerbach was compelled to accept that the human essence only as a "genus", a dumb internal generality, which merely naturally unites the many individuals. Thus, even the well-meaning friends, too, could not accept Feuerbach's philosophy unreservedly.

When Feuerbach's ideology is studied critically, we may note that he sought to dismiss religion on the ground that it is founded on the imaginary contents for the satisfaction of the innate urge for happiness on the part of man. In doing this he once again appeals to the general human nature, the 'species-man', to use his expression. Now, the Species man, we may note, is not a concrete object, but the existent only in the mentally accepted realm of knowledge and understanding. It is the abstract man, as such an imaginary

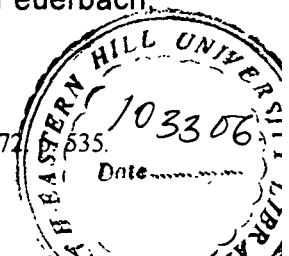
¹² *ibid*, p.83.

content. It is baffling how Feuerbach indulges in inconsistencies. His rejection of Christian religion rests on shaky foundation. On the one hand, Feuerbach affirms God's nature as Man's true nature. His feeling towards the ethical values accepted by Christianity is positive. In this regard Barth said, "He affirms, love and praises man and his will for life, the will revealed in the needs, desires and ideals which prompt man to rise above his dependence, his limited and threatened state, to distinguish between the valuable and the worthless, to struggle for what is valuable and against what is worthless".¹³ But he goes on to deny the existence of an abstract divine being, a theology thereof divorced from nature and man, on the other. He is also near to the Existentialist point of view, when he says that the interest he feels in God's existence is one with the interest he feels for his own existence. His agenda is to highlight the importance of man as man, and to exalt man above religion. He believes that religion exists, religion is possible and necessary. But it is man who is the beginning, the middle and the end of religion. In the fulfilment of his agenda, he accepts an abstract human nature, but rejects an equally abstract divine being, whose existence is central to Christian religion.

Karl Barth rightly pointed out that Feuerbach's philosophy was made possible, because there were several things, which, he failed to see.¹⁴ Many of his contemporaries, and even opponents in theology of his time, too failed to take into account these things. Max Stirner, a Hegelian, living at the same time as Feuerbach, objected, unable to rightly highlight the short-comings of Feuerbach,

¹³ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 539.



to Feuerbach's attempt to focus on the concrete man. Stirner argued, that "the true man, if he is to be thought of in completely existentialists terms, should surely be individual man". Feuerbach, aiming to speak of the sensuous man, ended up, on the contrary, discussing man in general, like the theologians of his time, and attributing divinity to him in his sense; in fact, he said nothing about man as he is in reality. Marx was right in his critique of Feuerbach. The theology of his time could not defeat him for the time being, as they too held similar views with Feuerbach, generalising the idea of man.¹⁵ Later, Existentialist Philosophers like Sören Kierkegaard rightly argued about the importance of the individual concrete man. He even chose for his own epitaph the words, "that individual". For this criticism of Hegelianism, the continent had to wait for a Kierkegaard. He attacked the concept of the stereotyped man of the collectivity, a mass, a generality. His critique surprisingly could be applied to both the Hegelians and Feuerbachians who spoke of the generalized man, the essence of man.

Marx W. Wartofsky rightly observes that Karl Marx's critique of Feuerbach is well founded. "It is precisely at the point of drawing the fullest consequences of his own critique that Feuerbach fails. He remains too 'philosophical', even 'abstract', in his conception of human nature, as a fixed 'species nature'.¹⁶ Moreover, he also touches more fully and more explicitly on the psychology of belief, on the epistemological problems of the relation of our consciousness to our every day life, on the mind-body problem, and, on the mechanism of human self-knowledge and self-deception than Marx does. Herein lies one of the failures

¹⁵ Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 1972 p. 147.

¹⁶ Marx W. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1977. 9.23

of his materialism with an element of dialectical idea, which is prominent.¹⁷ Marx saw that Feuerbach's concrete and natural conception of man is lacking in the area of the historical, social and developmental categories that would have genuinely concretised the notion of "species being". Wartofsky is absolutely right in his conclusion that Feuerbach failed to provide a history, and ended up with a historically abstract "species being", the human as such, even when he succeeded in providing us with a phylogeny and ontogeny for the human species concept. Therefore, Feuerbach's philosophy is not without a self-contradiction when he tried to establish a purely materialistic worldview.

Criticising Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, Julius Muller¹⁸ accused Feuerbach of being a benighted anthropomorphist, and he declared that, for Feuerbach, it would appear that nature itself had no independent status, except as a reflection of man's own self image. To this attack, Feuerbach replied, in defiance, that his species and delimited subject matter was indeed only the process of self-projection, only the phenomenon of human self-consciousness, in which "nature" serves as a clue to self-deception. We may note that his defending statement is not wrong, but that his defence failed simply because he failed to establish a more than anthropomorphic or phenomenological account of nature or of the objectivity of the natural world: "His theory of sensation is an enlightened and advanced theory, far beyond that of the eighteenth century empiricism. In this sense, a viable corrective and guide to the simplistic empiricist sensationalism of much of contemporary psychology and is related to such

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.24.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.25.

contextualist and organicist views as that of J. J. Gibson and to the still rich suggestions of Dewey". Wartofsky points out that, in so far as Feuerbach's sensationalist materialism fails to be adequate to concrete historical contexts, it also falls short of being an adequate materialist epistemology too. Now, as long as his anthropomorphism fails to see these categories, in their concrete historical evolution, it falls short of being an adequate materialist anthropology as well.¹⁹ I believe that Feuerbach's optimism about the complete disappearance of religion rested on a false foundation, as his optimism was based on the belief that human feelings of helplessness and dependence could be overcome by a democratic political order and further scientific progress. It is anyone's true observation that alienation does not simply disappear, for those very phenomena that remove alienation and suffering in one sphere impose them in others.

Feuerbach, for most of the time, treated what is given in sense perception itself as only a sign of reality, and no reality itself. Plekhanov of the 1920s, who became the leading philosophical representative of the Soviet dialectical materialism, points out that the so-called Feuerbachian theory of knowing developed, basing on sense-perception, but was without any particular insight or skill. He termed it to be a 'hieroglyphic' theory of knowledge. According to this hieroglyphic theory of knowledge, what is known to sensory experience, is not the object or process in itself, but the causal effects of this thing or process. These effects act as signs, or hieroglyphs, of the actual thing or process, enabling us to deduce connections and distinctions and to deal with the things

¹⁹ Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970 p. 68 P. 68.

signified.²⁰ “All this, however, is not developed in Feuerbach in any satisfactory, or even interesting, way”, says Eugene Kamenka. Feuerbach’s contribution to the theory of knowledge lay, on the critical side, in his clear realization that we could never pass from concepts or thoughts to an objective reality. His protest against idealism is also a strong emphasis on idealism: that idealism could only create an illusory world, but consciousness could not be divorced logically from the carrier of consciousness, namely from man as a physical and emotional animal. Looking on the positive side, he rightly emphasized on the logical unity of the senses and the character of knowing as a practical activity, as involving interests, social and natural interactions. But he did not look closely enough at the actual process of knowing, whether, through the senses, the understanding, or ‘reason’ can make any further contribution. Here, he vacillated in a manner characteristic of the dilettante in this, or any further, field.

Descartes’ dualism is refuted by professor Gilbert Ryle’s conception of ‘category-mistake’. Feuerbach’s argument seems to be an adumbration of the concept of category mistake. Feuerbach argued that one cannot say that thinking is brain activity, because, in making such a statement, we would be combining a subject and a predicate which do not belong to a common species. According to him, thinking has an irreducible quality, that it is more than brain activity, or that it is, in vital respects, other than brain activity. Here, Feuerbach is implying different ontological and logical statuses. It points towards dualism. Feuerbach’s thorough-going rejection of such dualism is at any rate not clear, as he also

²⁰ *ibid.* p.105-106.

suggest that thought could not be identified with brain activity, because the essential quality of thought, or 'sense', as Feuerbach called it, was lacking from brain activity. Intelligence, or thought, or mind, cannot be reduced to the physical, therefore psychology cannot be reduced to physiology.

We can well understand why Feuerbach proclaimed man, and not the mind, to be the basis of all philosophy. His concept of man in his philosophy represents his attempt to overcome the traditional dualisms of the metaphysical brand. The dualism of mind and matter, of the knower and the known, of the theoretical and the practical reason. For him, man is both matter and mind, understanding and will, sensation and passion, man is the focus, in which the knower and the known come together, both of the outside and the inside, both of the active and the passive. Feuerbach sees man as a dialectical unity, a logical interdependence, of the subject and object of knowledge. He agrees with what Protagoras says, "Man is the measure of all things". He also believes that things exist independently of man, and that we cannot consider one without the other. Here lies his source of much unexamined difficulty, reflected in his imprecise discussion of the relation between man and nature, just as in the imprecise discussion of the relation between thought and body, understanding and sense experience. There are overtones in Feuerbach's view, when he claims man to know completely and with certainty only that which he has fashioned himself. The weakness of Feuerbach's epistemology remains in the fact that he cannot decide with any consistency just what the relation of knowing is, and just what sort of understanding we do have of nature.

Finally, the dynamics of the function of the projective power of imagination as subscribed to by Feuerbach, is hardly convincing to a critical analysis. It is said that the imagination introduces the bifurcation of human nature into an "I" and a "Thou", and invests on the "thou" all the perfections that human beings aspire for, as well as rids it of all the imperfections that human nature is heir to, solely for the sake of wish fulfilment against the harshness that nature and the natural forces visit the human nature with. Closely associated with this dynamism is the problem of the origin of religion. To Feuerbach religion originates from the birth of a projected God to mitigate the cruelty of nature that man is subjected to. Needless to say, his is a psychological theory, itself rooted in the human anthropology. The theory however is hardly convincing.

There are innumerable theories of the origin of religion. Animism and animatisms, euhemerism, magic, naturalism, dream theories, primordial monotheism, polytheism, henotheism, Kuthanotheism and monism. These are psychological theories that religion is illusion; that religion arises from fear. There are sociological theories that religion is for social cohesion, social solidarity, to give sanctions to social authority, to support the social structure and so on. I have focussed my attention only on the psychological theory, here, that religious dynamism is one of wish-fulfilment. This Feuerbachian theory was to profoundly influence depth-psychologists, especially Freud.

It may be true that there are wishes that cry for fulfilment in human nature. They range from the biological needs, like food, shelter, clothing and sex to emotional needs; from intellectual needs to personal immortality; from physical healing to spiritual salvation and freedom. Yet human hankering for a God, as the

goal of human seeking and destiny cannot be explained away by any one of the needs that seeks its fulfilment. The sense of the transcendence apparently seems to be overshooting the bounds of the psychological. World's metaphysicians have only confirmed the inoculate feelings of the anthropologists and other social scientists that the phenomenon of religion, universally pervasive everywhere in the most 'primitive' to the most technological advanced culture and civilization, finally retains an element of the mysterious and the ineffability within itself. The question of the origin of religion, in recent times, is acknowledged by the scholars of religion, as a pseudoproblem. Religion seems to be co-existent with man. If so, the concept of God and religion are an essential feature of human existence, an integral part of the structure of human life, rather than a evolving and passing phenomenon. Precisely on account of the relation of God and religion to the ontology of human existence, any psychological explanation including the one given by Feuerbach, is bound to be partial. The critique undertaken in this dissertation has shown it to some extent.

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