

THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF  
LUDWIG A. FEUERBACH

by

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## CHAPTER I

### THE INFLUENCE OF FEUERBACH'S PHILOSOPHY

"What is man that Thou should be mindful of him?" This question was penned by the Psalmist after he had contemplated the vastness and the splendor of the heavens. There as he had stood under the canopy of the night sky the thought had come to him: how could a God who had created such splendor and magnitude be concerned with such a finite creature as man? Nor has the Psalmist been the only one to ponder such a question. For the question of "What is God?" along with its counterpart "What is man?" have been plaguing man for as long as he could remember. In time the two disciplines, philosophy and theology, arose in the attempt to find the answer to these questions.

From the time of the Greek philosophers to a period of just over a century ago men have attempted to find the answer to these questions mainly within the boundary of reason. Sometimes theology and philosophy would unite within one individual's system but more often than not they would pursue their separate goals within their separate systems. Early in the nineteenth century one philosopher sought to bring Christian theology and philosophy together in one grand rational system. This system produced by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was to be the culmination of rational systems of thought. However, Hegel's system was to be challenged almost immediately by a new type of philosophical system, producing what has been termed by Michele Federico Sciacca as a "crisis" in philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Philosophical Trends in the Contemporary World, trans. Attilio Salerno (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), p. 1.

This new system of thought, according to Sciacca, was not a rational system of thought, as Hegel's had been, instead it was to have its foundation in faith, not reason. The subsequent conflict between the rational and the non-rational (including analytical philosophy) has seen the non-rational form win an almost complete victory. This movement--which gave the "practical" supremacy over the "theoretical," the "will" over the "intellect" and the philosophy of "life" over "reason" has come to make up four-fifths of contemporary philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

This movement, which, according to Sciacca, was to have its beginning in the Romantic movement began as a reaction to the Enlightenment and Napoleon and was to give philosophy a new direction. Among those who gave impetus to the non-rationalistic movement was a group of Hegel's own disciples known as the Young Hegelians. The most important of this group was Karl Marx the founder of Communism, but it should be noted that he did not formulate his ideas of Marxism or the Communist system directly from the ideas of Hegel. Instead Marx built his system mostly upon the works of the other Young Hegelians.

For Marx, the most important of the Young Hegelians was Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), from whom he obtained his early concepts of humanism. However with the ascendancy of a militant Marxism with its emphasis upon economic determinism the ideas of Feuerbach were to be almost forgotten. Feuerbach was to be important in his own era for only a short time; from the period 1841 to the Revolution of 1848 he was the leading philosopher of Europe. The Revolution of 1848 was to mark the demise of his ideas and for

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the past hundred years he has been largely either ignored or pushed into a corner of the philosophical world where he has been glossed over.

It is only in the past few years that Feuerbach has been reexamined. Sidney Hook, in a book entitled From Hegel to Marx, was one of the first to recognize that Feuerbach had a more influential role in philosophy than he had been accorded. Hook wrote: "The significance of the life and thought of Ludwig Feuerbach is only now emerging in contemporary philosophy. The rise of Marxism, [philosophical Marxism dealing with alienation and humanism] the development of what is called Existenzialphilosophie in Germany (Heidegger, Jaspers), the renaissance of Hegelianism, and the increasing interest in philosophy and psychology of religion have gradually brought Feuerbach into the field of vision of philosophic consciousness."<sup>3</sup>

Modern writers, such as the theologian Martin Buber (1878-1965), and the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905- ), have taken Feuerbach's concept of "I-Thou" and adopted or adapted it to their own use. Martin Buber accepted it to the point of entitling one of his books I and Thou. Albert Camus (1913-1960) the French Philosopher and critic of Christianity used the ideas that he found in Nietzsche which had originated with Feuerbach as a method of indicting Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The well known Swiss neo-orthodox theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1965) thought Feuerbach's theology was the most consistent and significant development of radical subjectivism in the nineteenth century, and developed his own theological views as a direct reply to

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<sup>3</sup>(Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1968), p. 220.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Onimus, Albert Camus and Christianity, trans. Emmett Parker (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1970), p. 40.

the views of Feuerbach.<sup>5</sup> Until recently Feuerbach, when he was studied or thought of at all, had been considered only in respect to his influence and relationship to Karl Marx. He was not considered as a major philosopher or theologian or humanist, only as an influence on and a precursor to Marx. The reason for this concept of Feuerbach was a small book written by Friedrich Engels, entitled Ludwig Feuerbach, where Feuerbach is portrayed as part of the foundation upon which Marx rested his system. Feuerbach's reputation thus rested upon his relationship to Marxism; and, until recently, Feuerbach was considered an early Marxist philosopher.

While it may seem that Feuerbach was a precursor to Marx, a bridge between Hegel and Marx, one who has gone part of the way and from whom Marx has taken his ideas and pushed them to their logical conclusion; this view is not accurate, for Feuerbach's view of man and Marx's views of man are not the same. The purpose of this thesis will be to view Feuerbach in the light that he saw himself, that of a philosopher-theologian performing much the same task of Luther, whom he greatly admired, that of purifying and understanding man's religious impulses.

It was with theology (for Feuerbach theology and philosophy are synonymous terms) that this "anti-theologian," as Barth called him, was most concerned, and it was to the field of theology that Feuerbach made his most important contribution. It was because of his critique of religion and philosophy with its total humanism and his concepts of man's relationships to man that the influence of Feuerbach has spread beyond that of a precursor of Marx.

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<sup>5</sup>Protestant Thought, from Fousseau to Ritschl. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 359.

Feuerbach was not a systematic thinker, in the style of a John Calvin where he lists his concepts and ideas in systematic orderly progression building one step upon another, nor did he write in this fashion. Feuerbach wrote and thought more in the style of lightning flashes, with flashes of insight and immediate grasp of concepts. The reason he did this was that he felt that the idea was more important than the schematic setting, that the end or goal was more important than any system or method that would interfere with the obtaining of that goal. That goal was the freeing of men--not partially--but completely from the superstitions and foibles that, he considered, have enslaved mankind. He expressed this intention during the lectures he delivered for his part of the Revolution of 1848, when he stated that he wanted to "transform the friends of God into friends of men, believers into thinkers, devotees of prayer into devotees of work, candidates for the hereafter into students of this world, Christians who, by their own profession and admission, are 'half animal, half angel' into men, into whole men."<sup>6</sup>

Feuerbach, who was the son of a distinguished German jurist and criminologist (Paul Johann) Anselm Feuerbach, began his studies at Heidelberg in 1823. There he studied theology with such vigor that his father warned him about studying too much.<sup>7</sup> However, Feuerbach soon grew tired of studying theology and turned to philosophy. The philosophy taught at the school was mainly Hegelian and Feuerbach soon grew bored with learning second-hand; and

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<sup>6</sup>Ludwig Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 285. (*italics his*).

<sup>7</sup>Feuerbach, Sämtliche Werke, eds. Wilhelm Bolin and Friedrich Jodl (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Fromman Verlag, 1964), p. 217.

with the prodding of the only teacher who inspired him, a professor of theology named Karl Daub, he left Heidelberg to study at the feet of the masters in Berlin. There he began his study of theology, as his father had wished, under Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and, as he wanted, his study of philosophy under Hegel. It was during his second year at Berlin, that Feuerbach gave up the study of theology and began the full time study of philosophy under the tutelage of Hegel. For a time he was to forget the teachings of Schleiermacher and theology and became entirely engrossed in the teachings of Hegel. In 1830, at the age of 26, he published his work entitled Thoughts about Death and Immortality. This work was to have a profound effect on his hopes for a career as a university professor; Its appendix of satirical-theological epigrams that denied the life-after-death and said that religion was only an insurance company and that it should free itself by negating itself, was designed to do anything but placate the Prussian religious conservatives who were in control of the universities. Because of this work Feuerbach was denied a university chair and was forced to exist as an independent scholar living off his wife's dowry, a part ownership in a porcelain factory in Bruckberg, and his writings.

Until around 1837 Feuerbach could have been regarded as a member of the Hegelian school. By this time, however, two gradual developments of Feuerbach's thought began to make themselves felt. One was the rejection of Christianity and the other was the belief in the objectivity of nature and the importance of knowledge gained through the senses would eventually cause the rejection of Hegelian thought.<sup>8</sup> The first break with Hegel came with his

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<sup>8</sup>Eugene Kamenka, The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 23.

article "Toward the Critique of the 'Positive Philosophy'" (1837), and the breach was finalized with The Essence of Christianity (1841).

In The Essence of Christianity, his best known work, Feuerbach completely rejects Hegel. With these words, "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,"<sup>9</sup> he completely rejected the Hegelian system based on the mind. In order that there might be no misunderstanding as to whom, and about what, he was addressing his remarks, Feuerbach continued by stating that his "philosophy has for its principles 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 conceptional being but a real being, the true Ens realissimum--man; its principle therefore, is in the highest degree positive and real. It generates thought from the opposite of thought, from Matter, from existence, from the senses."<sup>10</sup>

It was Feuerbach and not Marx who took Hegel and turned him upside down. Feuerbach took man off of his head, after Hegel had put him there, and placed him back on his feet. The philosophical system of Feuerbach did not rest on reason and in the mind of man but in the feelings and on the senses.

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<sup>9</sup>Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, trans. George Eliot, with introduction by Karl Barth (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. xxxiv.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. xxxv, (*italics his*).

It was no wonder that, to the philosophical world of the nineteenth century, Feuerbach's ideas seemed--almost--like the warm sun on a cold afternoon. As the chill of the Absolute reached its nadir, Feuerbach's concepts of man and his senses as the absolute--with man as a sensuous being living and existing in matter, not as some cold rational idea existing in nothingness--spread across the earth as a warm spring breeze.

Friedrich Engels recorded the feelings of his colleague, Karl Marx, concerning the philosophy of Feuerbach in his book, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy. Marx reportedly stated that "one must himself experience the liberating effect of this book to get the idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians."<sup>11</sup> Marx was not the only one to praise Feuerbach. Another of the Young Hegelians, David F. Strauss (1808-1874), whose Life of Jesus (1835), a criticism of established religion, had exerted some influence on Feuerbach, had this to say after the publication of The Essence of Christianity: "Today and perhaps for some time to come, the field belongs to him. His theory is the truth of this age."<sup>12</sup> Feuerbach's rise was almost like a meteor and his demise was almost as sudden. But from 1841 to 1848 he was the philosopher of Europe. He, who had dethroned Hegel, mounted Hegel's throne itself--albeit, for a short time.

The Revolution of 1848 marked the decline of Feuerbach and his ideas. The cause for this was threefold: the ascendancy of one view of the

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<sup>11</sup>Ed. C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1941), p. 18.

<sup>12</sup>Ausgewählte Briefe, p. 184 cited in William B. Chamberlain, Heaven wasn't His Destination, the Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941), p. 13.



teachings of Karl Marx, the abortive democratic revolution in Germany, and the rising cult of science. Feuerbach was not completely forgotten, however, part of his influence and his ideas were carried over into Marxism. It has been mainly the Marxists and those interested in Marxist ideas who have studied and kept Feuerbach alive. But in spite of what the Marxists say, Marxism is not and was not a continuation of Feuerbach's system. Feuerbach did not form some sort of footbridge between Hegel and Marx. He influenced Marx but he was much more than the beginning of Marxism, even more than just the beginning of Marx's concept of alienation as John H. Schaar implies in his Escape from Authority,<sup>13</sup> and much of his philosophy is still alive today.<sup>14</sup> That Feuerbach had a profound influence upon Marx, cannot be denied, and Marx was the first to admit to this influence by stating, "There is no other road to truth and freedom . . . than the road through the 'brook of fire' (Feuerbach). Feuerbach is the purgatory of our time."<sup>15</sup> It is true that Marx's reforms of the Hegelian system began under the influence of Feuerbach, and in the respect that Marx continued to use the Feuerbachian method, with man as the basis of his philosophy, he remained a Feuerbachian the rest of his life.<sup>16</sup> However, to say that Marx was a continuation of Feuerbach is to be guilty of a mis-statement. Marx, as well as Feuerbach,

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<sup>13</sup>(New York: Basic Books, 1961), p. 185.

<sup>14</sup>Sciacca, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe, Vol. I, p. 175, cited in Manfred H. Vogel trans., Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, by Ludwig Feuerbach (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), p. lxvi.

<sup>16</sup>A. James Gregor, A Survey of Marxism (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 6.

believed that "Man" and not the "Idea" or "Consciousness" was the real basis and the real subject of history. Both believed that it was with man that one must start, but it did not take long until Marx realized that he and Feuerbach were not talking about the same "Man." Marx saw man as an activist, one who was capable of changing his milieu through revolution while Feuerbach saw man as more passive. For Feuerbach man could change things, not through revolution or by his own individual actions, but through the interaction with others. It was this interaction of man with man, or as Feuerbach called it the "I" with the "Thou," that allowed man to redefine his society. Marx felt that Feuerbach was only deceiving himself in believing that man saw himself only in relation to other men and that Feuerbach could call himself a Communist simply because he felt that he was a common man. To be a Communist, according to Marx, was to be dedicated to "overthrowing the existing state of things."<sup>17</sup> The differences between the two men can be seen in their reactions to the Revolution of 1848. Marx called for an active role in the overthrowing of the existing order; Feuerbach felt that his contribution to the Revolution was the giving of a series of lectures on the essence of religion. Feuerbach took no active part in the Revolution and Feuerbach's view of man was to cause Engels to accuse him of only accepting the materialist view "backwards but not forward." Engels felt that Feuerbach did not understand nineteenth century materialism and was lost in eighteenth century materialism and until he left the eighteenth century he could never understand Marxist ideology.<sup>18</sup> In fact, it was Engels who began

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<sup>17</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, ed. R. Pascal (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 83.

<sup>18</sup>Engels, p. 83.

the view of Feuerbach as a footbridge between Hegel and Marx, it was the influence of Engels' writings that caused Feuerbach to be interpreted in this manner. In saying that Feuerbach's materialism did not stretch as far as Marx's; Engels was right, but he was wrong in assuming that Feuerbach went just so far and then stopped and it was Marx who pushed Feuerbach to his logical conclusion. Feuerbach's concept of man allowed man to operate in nature because he was essentially a natural being; this was the extent of Feuerbach's materialism. Man, for Feuerbach, became the "I" which was developed and understood through the interaction of the "Thou," or others; therefore, man saw himself as he was reflected by others.

Feuerbach's materialism as well as his other philosophical ideas were an outgrowth of his religious philosophy. This was the heart and soul of Feuerbach. This philosophy, which will be viewed in detail later, begins with the establishment of the necessity of religion and of God. From this point Feuerbach proceeds to negate God as he has been understood up to his time; he does this by showing that God, as man understands Him, is nothing but the projection of himself. Feuerbach demonstrates this principle in what he defines as the three divisions of Christianity: ordinary theology, speculative theology or philosophy, and Protestantism. With the negation of Christianity Feuerbach returns to the necessity of God; and he demonstrates that, in reality, God is the "Thou," the alter ego of the "I." In short man worships, not himself but mankind. This is for Feuerbach the real concept of God, as he believes that man is the measure of all things. Feuerbach is the consummate humanist not a materialist.

It is important, at this juncture, that Feuerbach not be seen as a footbridge between Hegel and Marx. Manfred Vogel made this point clear in

his introduction to Feuerbach's Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, where he stated that Feuerbach's commitment to sense perception "would prevent him from following the path of Marx. It committed him to a view diametrically opposed to that of Marx."<sup>19</sup> In Feuerbach's concepts truth and reality of being reside in the object as it is in nature and would be independent of the activity of the human subject. Marx might well have agreed that the reality of the being would reside in the object but would not have agreed that the object would be independent of the activity in which it partook.<sup>20</sup>

Feuerbach influenced others besides Marx. According to Eugene Kamenka and Paul Tillich, among others, he also exerted a great deal of influence on the thoughts of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). This could be seen in Freud's theory of wish-fulfillment. Feuerbach's concepts of religion and mortality as the object of a wish-fulfillment are also seen in Freud. While concrete proof of this idea that Feuerbach influenced Freud is lacking, there is a growing feeling that there was some relationship. Eugene Kamenka, after fifteen years of studying Feuerbach, has stated that his influence can be seen ". . . in the work of such diverse figures as Karl Marx, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud."<sup>21</sup> Paul Tillich also echoes this same thought. Discussing Feuerbach, he notes that "in Hegel God comes to himself in man; for Feuerbach man creates God in himself."<sup>22</sup> It was

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<sup>19</sup>Ludwig Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, trans. Manfred H. Vogel (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), p. lxvi.

<sup>20</sup>Marx and Engels, p. 83.

<sup>21</sup>Kamenka, p. viii.

<sup>22</sup>A Complete History of Christian Thought, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 139.

upon this theory of projectionism that Freud built his theories.

The idea that man created God in himself was Feuerbach's theory of projectionism. This meant, for Feuerbach, that man created the type of god that met his needs best. In doing this man would project himself in the form of the creation or being that man thought would satisfy his needs or "dependencies" which was the term Feuerbach used. In short, man projected his own image and called it God. In a further discussion of the word projection, Tillich analyzed how the term was used today. He felt that all education dealt with the methods of projection but its use was not limited to the fields of education, for it has been used extensively in psychology. According to Tillich, Freudian thought interpreted God as a human projection, but this projectionism was somewhat different than Feuerbach's. This difference lay in the type of God reflected back from the projection. In Freud God was reflected as the father image; but, according to Tillich, Feuerbach's view "was much profounder. I recommend to all of you who have just discovered Freud's theory of projection to go back to Feuerbach; he had a real theory of projection."<sup>23</sup> Freud's projected image was the finite image of the father, Feuerbach's projected image was the infinite image of mankind.

Obviously, the concept of projectionism was not new. The belief can be traced as far back as six hundred years before Christ, but the Feuerbachian view was different. It was different in the type of image that was reflected off the screen. This screen, according to Tillich, was man's infinity. Man's infinite will to live, the infinite intensity of man's love for himself, and the infiniteness of man as a species made up the screen upon

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

which Feuerbach cast his image; thus Feuerbach's image that was reflected back was also infinite. Tillich was correct when he stated: "Feuerbach saw much better than so many seemingly educated people of today that if you have a theory of projection, you must explain why the images are projected on just this screen, and why the result is something infinite, that is, the divine, the unconditional, the absolute. Where does that come from? The father is not absolute. Only if there is an awareness of something unconditional or infinite within us can we understand why the projected images have to be divine figures or symbols."<sup>24</sup> While it would seem to Tillich that Freud's theories were not as strong as those of Feuerbach's, Freud, nevertheless, did draw some of his ideas from him. The brunt of Tillich's criticism was directed not so much at Freud's ideas but at those who accepted them. He challenged them to look back into the nineteenth century and at Feuerbach who had a real theory of projectionism.

The criticism of Tillich seems to run parallel to that of Karl Barth. In chiding modern theology, Barth states that Feuerbach "has had and still has, secretly, a head start over modern theology--not only over modern theologians--in fact all his solutions or reinterpretations of Christian theology . . . derive from one point where he has the old and even the oldest, tradition on his side."<sup>25</sup> Barth believed that this man had such a head start on modern theologians, that Feuerbach must have known the Old and New Testaments better than contemporary theologians, or at least Barth wondered enough to ask "Why has Christian theology not seen these things earlier and

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>25</sup>Feuerbach, Essence of Christianity, p. xxiv.

better than Feuerbach, things that it certainly must have seen if it really knew the Old and New Testament?"<sup>26</sup> Barth saw the same things that Feuerbach saw, and Barth directed his own theology in response, and as an answer to the teachings of Feuerbach. He gave to whomever would read Feuerbach and find himself in disagreement with him this final warning: "One had better look out if one picks up the only weapon that will take care of Feuerbach. No one may strike him with it unless he himself has been hit by it. The weapon is no mere argument which one exploits in apologetics, it should rather be a ground on which one can stand, and with fear and trembling allow to speak for itself."<sup>27</sup> If one is to criticize Feuerbach, one must be careful where one stands--for as Barth says, if man is considered to be in God and not God in man, then there is no cause to criticize Feuerbach; but we are with Feuerbach "the true children of his century."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. xxix.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. xxix.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. xxx. (*italics his*).

## CHAPTER II

### FEUERBACH'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

In a letter to his close friend Christian Kapp, Professor of Philosophy at Erlangen and later Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg, Feuerbach wrote, "It is not the Idea, only the carrying through of the Idea that makes the man."<sup>1</sup> When Feuerbach wrote this he was working on his Principles of the Philosophy of the Future; and in 1842 he did not think it would take a century for his ideas to come to fruition. He was aware, as the title of his work showed, that much of what he was writing would not be either understood or followed by his generation. But one wonders if he thought it would take as long as it did for his concepts to be revived. However, his ideas are only now being revived for as yet there is no Feuerbachian school of philosophers or theologians as there are with Hegel and others. Even those in the humanist tradition look only marginally to Feuerbach for leadership. In the introduction to the Principles of the Philosophy of the Future he had this to say about the era in which he lived. It was an era of "refined illusions and priggish prejudices that was totally incapable of understanding not to speak of appreciating, the simple truths from which these principles are abstracted."<sup>2</sup> Feuerbach was right the majority of his generation did not understand, not did they appreciate his concepts. Those changes in religion that Feuerbach prophesied had to come to pass before it was understood or appreciated. Feuerbach had predicted that

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<sup>1</sup>Feuerbach, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. XII, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 3.



religion would be secularized, humanized and moralized; and while these tendencies have always existed in religion never have they had the force as they do in twentieth century Christianity. This trend in Christianity has caused some to wonder where and how it developed. What was the reasons for the humanization and secularization of Christianity? In this light and in the light of the rising humanistic trends in philosophy many have begun to wonder where these ideas originated. Part of the responsibility has been fastened on the teachings of Feuerbach and some have begun to acclaim him as one of the most significant theological thinkers in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Karl Barth, one of those who felt that Feuerbach was one of the more significant thinkers of the nineteenth century, argued that Feuerbach was the logical consequence of the Lutheran doctrine of the personage of Christ in the Lord's Supper and the deity of Christ. Barth argued that in order to counteract Feuerbach's teachings Lutheranism needed a "Calvinist corrective." By this, as will be discussed later, he meant that Lutheranism needed to recognize the total depravity of man and the impossibility of divine, human predicates.

Both Eugene Kamenka and S. Rawidowicz argued that modern philosophy and theology have gone beyond Feuerbach. This they contended had to happen-- but they deplored Feuerbach's having been ignored or rejected as of no value. However, they also contended that even as it was inadmissible to pass him by it is just as inadmissible to return or go back to his philosophy. What was necessary was to go through him, and in this sense with him, into a new understanding of philosophy and theology.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Kamenka, The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 151, and Rawidowicz, Ludwig Feuerbach's Philosophie, Ursprung und Schicksall (Berlin: Reuthen and Reichand, 1931), p. 508.

This is to be the purpose of this thesis. Before Feuerbach's influence can be assessed with any great accuracy it is necessary to understand and grasp what he believed. Thus this paper will be an attempt to do that, in the sense that Kamenka and Rawidowicz mean through Feuerbach not around him. This thesis will attempt to view Feuerbach's concepts of religion and Christianity specifically in as systematic way as possible. This will be done by breaking Feuerbach's ideas into five major headings: (1) the necessity of an object of worship; (2) the negation of ordinary theology; (3) the negation of speculative theology or philosophy; (4) the negation of Protestantism; (5) the real object of worship.

In attempting to deal with Feuerbach's thought in a systematic way, it should be noted that Feuerbach was hardly a systematic thinker. William Chamberlain referred to him, in his biography of Feuerbach Heaven Wasn't His Destination, as more of a mad painter than a systematic thinker. Kamenka described Feuerbach's genius as not in his systematic thought but in his flashes of insight and ability to excite thoughts and ideas in his readers. Feuerbach, himself, realized this and stated to his audience when he delivered his first lecture at Heidelberg in 1848 that his purpose in "delivering these lectures is to explain, to elucidate, to demonstrate what I have said in my books. What makes this seem all the more fitting is that I tend to write with the utmost brevity and succinctness, confining myself to the most necessary and essential, omitting all tedious transitions, leaving all self-evident parentheses and consecutive clauses to the reader's intelligence--thereby exposing myself to extreme misunderstandings, as the

critics of my works amply demonstrate."<sup>5</sup> Even though he knew what he said was open to misunderstanding, he did little to rectify the situation.

What follows will be an attempt to give some system to Feuerbach's thought without destroying, changing or misinterpreting him. Only the essence of Feuerbach's ideas will be examined, only that which made up the core of his philosophy--his theology. Feuerbach's other philosophical concepts, such as his view of ethics, knowledge, method on any thing that is not directly connected with religion will be mentioned only as it has bearing on his religious philosophy. Feuerbach stated that: "God was my first thought; Reason my second; Man my third and last thought."<sup>6</sup> From these three Feuerbach built his philosophical system.

Feuerbach's criticism of religion was both positive and negative. It was negative in that he wished to replace the negated object with the (for Feuerbach) proper object. Feuerbach had no intention of negating the act of worship, only the object. He attempted this by explaining and illustrating that the object of man's veneration was, in reality, nothing but the creation of man himself. After man had created this object, whatever it were; he then placed the object outside of himself and conceived of this object as an independent being.<sup>7</sup> Thus man himself, albeit unknowingly, was the object of his religion. However, for Feuerbach, this did not mean he denied religion but that as soon as man realized that it was he, himself, that created his own God then the trappings of religion could be discarded.

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<sup>5</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>Feuerbach, Sämtlich Werke, Vol. II, p. 338.

<sup>7</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 187.

It would be then and only then that man could set about improving his lot. Feuerbach may have called himself a communist and started Marx on his materialist path but he hardly agreed with Marx that religion itself should be negated. Feuerbach accepted religion, albeit with certain of his own modifications. Feuerbach may, at one time, have called himself an atheist, but by this he meant his own kind of atheist, not one in the sense that the term atheist was generally understood. He felt that he differed "radically" from earlier atheists because he cited not only the "negative but also positive grounds of religion; not only ignorance and fear, but also emotions opposed to fear, the positive emotions of joy and gratitude, love and veneration as grounds of religion; and I maintain that for not fear alone, but also love, joy and veneration are makers of gods."<sup>8</sup> He was an atheist by his definition just as he was a communist by his definition. He could call himself an atheist because he believed that man created God out of his needs and by showing how man did this and at the same time rejecting the object that man worshipped he could call himself an atheist. Feuerbach in no way rejected the act of worship, only the object; thus, by his definition he was and was not an atheist. Feuerbach made this distinction so that he would not contradict himself later when he demonstrated how atheism, in its traditional sense, was only the negation of theology with theology and as such was an invalid position, or at best a contradictory and absurd position. Feuerbach did not deny the subjective human foundations of religion or as he put it, the feeling and imagination and "impulse to objectify and personify his [man's]

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<sup>8</sup>ibid., p. 30.

inner life, an impulse which lies in the very nature of speech and emotion."<sup>9</sup> Feuerbach did not reject the feelings of religion, only the object that these feelings produced or at least had produced up to now. His reason for doing so was that he wanted to make men free, not just partially but completely free. His goal was to have men stop setting their hearts on the things that were not in keeping with his nature and needs. Instead, man was to worship an object that would not conflict with himself. By his showing man the way, mankind could transform themselves into whole men.<sup>10</sup>

It was not enough to free just the minds of men as he felt Hegel had done. He felt that in the Hegelian system man could be free if his mind were free but for Feuerbach this represented only a half-way point. In order for Feuerbach's man to be free he had to be both physically and politically free as well as spiritually and mentally. If on the other hand man were politically free but still enslaved to his religious prejudices and imaginings, then he was not completely free. For Feuerbach, "True freedom is present only where man has become master over his religious prejudices and imaginations."<sup>11</sup> True freedom was not when man was free from religion per se, but when man was free from that object that was in conflict with himself. True freedom and true culture would arrive only when man had become the master of his religious feelings and imaginings. It would never come as long as these feelings were the master of man. Feuerbach's position was that of the humanist and those who have made him a crass materialist or a complete

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 180-181.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

atheist have done so only by reading him out of context. Feuerbach's goal was to free man and for him this could be accomplished only when man realized what he was worshipping, what he should be worshipping and why.

### The Necessity of an Object of Worship

Feuerbach began his critique of religion with the concept that there was a need for religion but that it was through wish fulfillment and fantasy that man had created the gods he now has. However, Feuerbach did not just accept this as a presupposition but asked the question "why?" He did not start with the denial of God or attempt to prove the existence of God. He did not begin with the abstract--God and proceed to the concrete--man, instead, he began with man and proceeded from this. Man worshipped, which was an obvious fact; but what was the cause of this act? For Feuerbach the cause of man's desire to worship was not found, as it was for some, in the concept of fear. Feuerbach found the cause for man's wish to worship in other emotions such as love, joy and hate, to mention just a few. Man had no existence within himself, for when he was afraid he wished to have something to protect him. When he had joy he wanted to share it with someone; the same thing was true for love as well as the other emotions. Man was not content with merely sharing his joy with someone who was like himself, he also wished to be loved, and he wished this love to be the same love which he wanted to share with others. Thus, for Feuerbach, there were causes other than fear which were the prime motivator of religion. For Feuerbach there was no single emotion that was the cause of religion, although love would come the closest.<sup>12</sup> The reason for this was that man had needs which were both

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

positive as well as negative. He needed to be protected from fear by object to which he could turn in the time of trouble, but man also needed something to praise when that time of fear was past. He needed an object that was worthy of his love and veneration. This need to satisfy the emotions could be likened to the physical needs of hunger and thirst. They exist for a purpose. It was only the thirsty person, according to Feuerbach, who felt the benefit of drink and only a person who was hungry felt the benefit of food. Both of the latter existed only as the object of the former. Without an object to satisfy the need; the need became self-defeating and purposeless. Thus the object existed as the satisfaction of these needs.<sup>13</sup> This was true, not only for physical needs, but also for emotional needs. They existed only because there was an object that could satisfy their existence. However, for Feuerbach, the word needs did not convey the complete meaning of what it was that caused man to worship some object. He felt that the one word that best conveyed what it was that caused man to worship was the word dependency. This word, unlike needs which seemed to convey a negative meaning, dependency conveyed both a positive and negative concept. Man felt he was dependent on something greater than himself, as an individual, to satisfy this feeling of dependency. This object man termed God. It was the concept of dependency that became the key to the reason, why man developed a religion and a God. This concept, dependency, was not limited to the realm of the material and emotional, but could, also, be spoken of in the realm of the intellect. The dependency of the intellect became the second reason why

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<sup>13</sup>Ludwig Feuerbach, Essence of Faith According to Luther, trans. by Melvin Chernob (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 41.

man created a God. The first was man's emotional dependency on something or someone greater than himself to satisfy his feelings of fear, love, joy, hate and the other emotions. As Feuerbach stated: ". . . only that being is an object of religious worship, only that being is a god, who can curse and bless, harm and help, kill and restore to life, bring joy and terrify."<sup>14</sup> Man's emotional dependency presupposed a satisfaction for that dependency.

But man is more than just emotionally dependent. This dependency extended beyond the emotional into the intellectual realm. God's existence was not only an emotional need but an intellectual necessity.<sup>15</sup> The reason for this was that the universe and the world in which man resided did not care about its existence. This meant, to Feuerbach, that the world and the universe had nothing within themselves that was the cause of their being, or that cared if they continued to exist. The world was made up of matter and, as such, it did not contain the cause of its being, nor did it contain the "why" of its existence. As matter it contained no feelings, or intellect, or thought for itself. It was completely indifferent as to whether it existed or not. This being the case, who was the cause, or who or what was responsible for the world? Feuerbach's answer to that question was that "the world necessarily presupposes another being as cause and indeed, an understanding, a self-conscious being that acts according to reason and purpose."<sup>16</sup>

Religion, according to Feuerbach, could have been founded on man's emotional and intellectual dependency, but these were not the only things

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<sup>14</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup>Feuerbach, Essence of Faith According to Luther, p. 35, and Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 7.



upon which it was founded. The last pillar on which Feuerbach placed the need for God was the greatest dependency of man: death. It was this last dependency that forced man to believe in God. If man were infinite, then he would not have needed to depend on an object that was. But since the most sensitive and the most painful of man's feelings was the knowledge of his own finiteness and that one day his life would end, man created an infinite object. To put it simply, man dies therefore God does not. Man is finite, that was obvious, but just as obvious if there were no infinite than man's finiteness would have been self-defeating. Death would become as purposeless as hunger without food and thirst without water--a self-defeating thing.<sup>17</sup> Since man did not wish to die, he imagined through fantasy or imagination a being who was infinite, who existed beyond man. Religion, according to Feuerbach, was founded and rested upon man's dependency. But would the realization of this cause an end to religion? Not according to Feuerbach. Religion did not have for its purpose the task of making man dependent and leaving him in such a position. It was created to do exactly the opposite. Man founded his religion on the concept of dependence, but he did so in order to free himself from this dependence. This freedom from dependence is the goal of religion, as Feuerbach stated, "in both a rational and an irrational sense, it is the ultimate aim of religion. Or in other words; the divinity of nature is indeed the foundation of religion but the divinity of man is its ultimate end."<sup>18</sup> Religion was to bring freedom to man not enslavement. This,

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<sup>17</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

too, was the goal of Feuerbach; he was not interested in freeing just part of man but wanted to free the whole man.

What kind of God was envisioned by man? Feuerbach felt that every God was the creation of the imagination, an image or projection of the type of individual who worshipped him. A man would worship the type of God that he best understood, as Feuerbach stated, "A man's Imagination is molded by his nature; a gloomy, fearful man imagines terrifying being, terrible gods; a serene, happy man imagines serene, friendly gods. Man's gods, the creatures of their imaginations, are as diverse as are men themselves; or ex post facto, we can reverse the order and say that men are as diverse as their gods."<sup>19</sup> But one thing must be remembered and that was that God was the object only of man, he was not the object of either animals or matter. Some might argue that this was not true but Feuerbach felt that it was only in the mind of man that the stars and animals worshipped God. It was the mind of man that interpreted the actions of these as veneration. It was only man that had a God; none of the animals worshipped a higher creature. But if God were only the object of man, asked Feuerbach, then what did this reveal about God? The answer was that the essence of God was nothing but the essence of man.<sup>20</sup> It was man who attached the name to the object, not the object that attached the name to the subject. Just as man attached a name to an invention or a state or a city, so he attached the name of God to the universe.<sup>21</sup> Man, who realized the vastness of the universe, who felt that he was too

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<sup>19</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 188.

<sup>20</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 95.

insignificant and hardly sufficient within himself to comprehend it, found himself dependent upon something that could understand it. Thus in his dependency, man created a god who could control it.

Did this thesis apply to all groups, even those who worshipped animals? These beliefs might seem inexplicable in a rational way but they were not, according to Feuerbach. Even these beliefs were based on dependency. Those who worshipped these animals did so because they felt that their life was dependent on them. This, Feuerbach explained, showed forth only their own folly, for they had projected on the animals their own dependency. They had become dependent on this animal and made it an object of worship. But this was, also, what all mankind had done, and in so doing man illustrated the value he placed on his own life and person. Man projected on the object his own dependency, which was the reason the object showed only the essence of man. It was man's dependency that gave that object its deity. Thus, the type of God would reflect the personality of the person worshipping it. Or as Feuerbach put it, "Whoever can think of no other being but a sensuous being, whoever, therefore, possesses a reason limited by sensation, will, precisely as a result, also have a God limited by sensation."<sup>22</sup>

At this juncture, it might seem that Feuerbach had developed a contradiction within himself. This seemed to happen before when he stated that he was not an atheist, but then turned around and said that he was. Now it would seem that the latter has been born out while the former has been negated. However, care must be taken in interpreting Feuerbach. What he

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<sup>22</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 6.

said should not always be taken at face value; he must be read in context lest a misinterpretation occur.

What was attempted in the preceding pages was to show Feuerbach's explanation of how God was only the creation of the imagination of man. He had no intention of showing that the act of worship ought to be negated--only the object. Feuerbach argued that the act of worship, up to now, had produced only a God that was the object of man's dependency and the result of his imagination. He also maintained that the objects of religion, "as objects of religion, are imaginations; I have not denied the reality of these same objects as such."<sup>23</sup> The imagination could create nothing out of itself. The object that the imagination deified was a real object, an object upon which the person was dependent. If, by chance, the imagination created an object of veneration out of itself, from interaction only within itself, then this would have forced one to, in Feuerbachian terms, believe in a creatio ex nihilo which would be impossible. The imagination created objects of worship only out of natural and historical materials.<sup>24</sup>

Feuerbach had no intention of negating religion, as he stated, "I do not deny religion. I do not deny the subjective, human foundations of religion, namely, feeling and imagination and man's impulse to objectify and personify his inner life, an impulse which lies in the very nature of speech and emotion; I do not deny man's need to contemplate nature in poetic, philosophical, and religious terms. I merely deny the object of religion, or rather religion as it has been up to now; I should merely like man to stop setting

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<sup>23</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 189.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

his heart on things which are no longer in keeping with his nature and needs, and which he therefore can believe and worship only by coming into conflict with himself."<sup>25</sup> What he did was to attempt to present an answer to the rationalists of the Enlightenment.

Feuerbach partially rejected the ideas of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis upon reason and science. He did not believe, unlike those of the Enlightenment, that the hope for man rested solely on man's rational ability to solve his own problems; however, neither did Feuerbach belong completely within the Romantic movement. He, with those in the Romantic movement, accepted the idea that man had a soul and could find himself only by an act of faith. But Feuerbach coupled this faith with the rationalism of the Enlightenment in that he believed man's hope lay in an understanding and a rational belief in his own ability to help himself. In short a belief in reason and faith. While this position would seem to be a contradiction, it was, in actuality, only a paradox. In one case Feuerbach would be talking about man as an individual and in the next case man as a species. What would apply to one would not, necessarily, apply to the other, as we shall see later. Feuerbach belonged to neither Romanticism nor the Enlightenment. Instead he was able to synthesize his ideas from both without coming into conflict with himself. The reasons for this was that he did not push his position to the extreme, and drew his ideas from both and in the Hegelian fashion synthesized from them a system that contained elements from both. The synthesis that Feuerbach produced was a humanistic philosophy in which there was a recognition of the dependency of man on something beyond himself,

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-181.

and that something was mankind. It was this "something" beyond man himself that distinguished Feuerbach's philosophy from his contemporaries. In order that those around him might hear and understand his ideas, Feuerbach found himself in much the same position as the early church fathers, an analogy he enjoyed. He found that he condemned the object of religion but not the act of religion itself. And like the early church fathers--and for that matter most Christians in general--who never tired of condemning and ridiculing the pagans for their worship of useful things such as fire, water, sun, moon and any other object on which the pagan thought his life depended, so Feuerbach never tired of condemning the Christians for the God they worshipped.

Feuerbach also condemned the gods of the pagans, denying these gods and the Christian deity for the same reason: they were both the projection and the imagination of man's essence. There was a slight difference between the two beliefs, however, in the case of the pagan it was obvious that he was dependent on the objects he worshipped and that they were a projection of the worshipper. But while the Christian started--as had the pagan--with a god abstracted from the sensual universe, he, through the use of the human faculty of abstraction and imagination, posited this "something" outside and beyond the sensuous world. From this he derived a non-human necessity, which was then made into an objective necessity, and then reintroduced as the positor of the concrete world. This Feuerbach called absurdity, for "it is absurd to suppose that because man rises from the sensuous to the suprasensory, to abstract, universal ideas, that because he then descends from the universal abstract to the concrete and derives the latter from the former--it

is absurd to suppose therefore that the abstract is really the source of the concrete."<sup>26</sup> However, this was exactly what the Christian did. The Christian religion states that the abstract created the concrete, not the concrete created the abstract. It was the Christian religion with which Feuerbach was most concerned, and at this point in time it had caused man to come into conflict with himself. Since the Christian teachings did not start with the concept of the concrete forming from dependency an abstract which in turned formed the concrete; but started from the precept that the abstract formed the concrete, then man could not rely on himself to change his world; instead he must rely on the will of the abstract. In Christianity the concrete could not change the concrete nor had the concrete formed the abstract, instead the abstract formed and must change the concrete, therefore man came into conflict with himself. He had become enslaved to his fantasy and imagination. Feuerbach's critique of Christianity became the same as his general critique of religion; that was that the Christian created his own god out of his dependencies just as the pagan did, and just as the pagan, he had become enslaved to his imagination. Therefore, in order to free man, Christianity would have to be negated.

Feuerbach recognized that not all forms of Christendom were the same, that there were different sections within the general meaning of the term. Feuerbach divided the general category of Christendom into three subdivisions. The first division was ordinary theology, the second speculative philosophy and the third Protestant theology. The first two, ordinary theology and speculative philosophy, will be examined first. The reason for

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<sup>26</sup> Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, pp. 174-175.

this was that Feuerbach handled the two together, as he felt that speculative philosophy had risen from ordinary theology. His method of examining them was to compare the one against the other, to draw parallels, and to contrast them with each other. However, for the purpose of better understanding the two and Feuerbach's criticism of each, they will be separated and discussed individually. A discussion of ordinary theology, followed by speculative philosophy and concluding with Feuerbach's views on Protestantism will be the format that is to be followed.

### The Negation of Ordinary Theology

Feuerbach began his logical negation of ordinary theology by starting right with God. God as God, with which ordinary theology was most concerned, was an intellectual or abstract being. Since he was a non-human, nonsensuous being, he could be the object of only the reason or the intellect and approached only through the reason or the intellect. In other words, God could not be approached in a sensuous manner. This could be seen in the statement of Christ that God must be worshipped in spirit and truth (John 4:24). If God could be reached only through the intellect or reason, Feuerbach argued, was he not in reality only the essence of reason itself?<sup>27</sup> But if the orthodox Christian were to answer not so, for God does not exist in either sense perception or in reason but only in faith (Hebrews 11:6), then Feuerbach would reply that God as God existed only in the imagination, for what was faith but the imagination of man.<sup>28</sup> If it were through faith that

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<sup>27</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 180.



the believer viewed God and if it were by faith that he was able to see the invisible; then what was the role of the imagination? For the imagination, as well as faith, was--as Feuerbach wrote, "not of things which are seen but of things which are not seen. The imagination concerns itself exclusively with things and beings which are no longer or not yet, or which at least are not present."<sup>29</sup> Feuerbach allowed that the word imagination could be substituted for the word faith without changing the effect on the faithful. This was because the end of ordinary theology led the individual to himself. This faith led the individual to take upon himself the form of God. Feuerbach illustrated this with an example from Catholicism, which was a form of ordinary theology, "For they teach men to trust to their merits. None of the Papists and monks calls himself Christ; none of them says 'I am called and wish to be called and named Christ.' But they say all the same 'I am Christ.' They withhold the name from themselves, but they attribute to themselves the position, the power, and the person."<sup>30</sup> This position was assumed by the Papist because it was the Church that assumed the responsibility for the salvation of the soul and the absolution of the guilt feelings of the individual. Those within the hierarchy of the Church assumed the place of God in satisfying the needs or dependency of the individual. Thus the Catholic put his faith in the Church, which was in reality the priest who was only an extension of the faithful. But the extension of the devotee was, in reality, only his belief in his imagination. Therefore, the words faith and

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>30</sup>Feuerbach, The Essence of Faith According to Luther, p. 40.

belief were nothing but other forms or terms for the word imagination.<sup>31</sup>

What, in essence, the Catholic was doing was worshipping the creature of his imagination. He was, in short, projecting his own concepts and his own self into that of God. Catholicism was only one of the types of beliefs that was classified, by Feuerbach, within ordinary theology. Theism was also placed within this category. It was placed within this category as the theist too conceived God as an existing and personal being as the Catholic did. This being was an object external to and apart from man. Man was the subject while God was the object; therefore, the subject thought about God as the object of his thoughts. He conceived God as a being, but only as a being according to his imagination.<sup>32</sup>

Pantheism, the opposite of theism, was nothing more than theological atheism or theological materialism. The Pantheist began with matter which, in ordinary theology, was the negation of God, gave it divine predicates or attributes, making matter divine. However, the pantheist's belief was an invalid negation because the end was the same place as the beginning and nothing, in reality, was negated.<sup>33</sup>

Empiricism or realism was also placed within the category of ordinary theology, by Feuerbach. This may seem, at first, somewhat unusual, but he justified this because realism, which included the "so-called real sciences" and especially the natural sciences was the negation of theology but only on

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<sup>31</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 178.

<sup>32</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

the practical level; it in no way touched the theoretical level.<sup>34</sup>

Empiricism maintained its place in ordinary theology because the empiricist negated theology on the practical level but the God negated was an abstract being. At the same time he was negating an abstract God, he deified the real or material world. This came about as the realist made, "that which is the negation of God, or at least is not God, into the essential business of his life and the essential object of his activity."<sup>35</sup> While the theist projected his dependencies upon an abstract God, the empiricist projected his dependencies upon the real world, thus, empiricism became a form of theology.

One might suppose that a combination of empiricism and pantheism to be what was needed to negate theology in both the practical and theoretical realms. But such a combination would have negated religion completely and this was not the goal of Feuerbach. He wished to negate only the object of religion--not religion itself. Even if this had not been the case, a combination of the two systems would have resulted in so many contradictions and unanswerable questions that the final product would have, instead of freeing man from his superstitions and foibles, embedded him deeper in the mire of self-contradiction and confusion. The act of faith to believe the product of the two would have been greater than what man had, already, been called on to accept. It was Feuerbach's goal to free man, not to further imprison him. Any attempt to unify these two systems would not have accomplished the freeing of man; the two systems were mutually exclusive. The one system met only half of man's dependency while the other also met half,

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

but they do not satisfy the opposite halves. For Feuerbach, man had a soul. The empiricist, in the person of the Enlightenment could not, with the emphasis upon the rational, satisfy the needs of the soul. But man also had an intellect; and pantheism, which was anti-intellectual, could not satisfy the dependency of the intellect. Therefore, some new ground would have to be broached for man to be redeemed. Feuerbach placed the combination of theism and naturalism in the same relationship as empiricism and pantheism. In these two systems the theist began with man and worked to nature while the naturalist began with nature and worked to man.<sup>36</sup> There was no possible middle ground on which a compromise could be reached, even if the devotees of each of the different systems would have been willing to try.

A new system had to be found because in ordinary theology, according to Feuerbach, the contradictions and the projection of self had become apparent. For example, the theist thought of God as the cause, not just an impersonal cause, but a loving and personal cause as the creator of the world. He conceived God as a completely immaterial being that drew from his non-material self a universe of matter. The theist drew from the negation of matter, which was the essence of theology, the proposition that "matter does not exist" He then took his proposition and deduced, in contradiction to his own beliefs, that matter "does exist." The theist was able to affirm the existence of matter from non-matter without negating his beliefs because he did so in his imagination and thus they (his beliefs) became mere fiction.<sup>37</sup> The theist overcame the inherent contradiction through the use

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<sup>36</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 150.

<sup>37</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, pp. 20-21.

of fantasy, mere wishing, and through projection of himself onto God. Ordinary theology, when examined closely, dissolved into the projection of man into God, or in the contradiction of non-matter and matter.

### The Negation of Speculative Philosophy

From ordinary theology arose a new system that attempted to resolve this contradiction. This new system called itself speculative philosophy. The difference between ordinary theology and speculative philosophy or theology--Feuerbach used the terms interchangeably--was that in ordinary theology "man transforms his thoughts and even his emotions into thoughts and emotions of God, his essence and his viewpoint into the essence and view point of God."<sup>38</sup> But, in ordinary theology this would have been denied, for God, the non-matter, was the creator of man--matter. Thus, the God of ordinary theology was self-contradictory, as Feuerbach stated, "for he is supposed to be a non-human and superhuman being, yet in truth he is according to all his determinations a human being." In speculative theology the reverse was true. Here, "God is in contradiction to man, he is supposed to be the essence of man, at least of reason, and yet in truth he is a non-human and superhuman, that is abstracted being."<sup>39</sup> Ordinary theology--pantheism, theism, empiricism or catholicism--transformed the point of view of man into the point of view of God. This left man with a contradiction in his theology. Speculative theology, on the other hand, transformed the point of view of God

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

into the point of view of man or as Feuerbach put it, "the thinker"<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, the speculative theologian conceived God, not from the standpoint of matter or from the point of view of the senses, but from the point of view of the mind or thought. The viewing of God from this position had an advantage not present in ordinary theology. God no longer had the disturbing appearance of a sensuous being that lay somewhere between himself and the object of the worshipper. The speculative theologian's God did not lie somewhere between theory and actuality. Speculative philosophy was the rational or theoretical elaboration and dissolution of the God of ordinary theology. It dissolved the God of ordinary theology, for the God of speculative philosophy was in no sense a sensuous God. Instead he became one of pure intellect, or pure reason, the abstract Absolute. The extension or projection of God in this manner also created a contradiction, according to Feuerbach. Only this time the contradiction did not lay just within the system itself. Speculative theology became caught in the contradiction of itself with ordinary theology. It became the negation of theology from the viewpoint of theology, which in reality was the negation of theology with itself. And as has been noted theology negated by itself was an invalid negation. This contradiction found its culmination in the Hegelian system.<sup>41</sup>

It should be noted that it suited Feuerbach's purpose to show how all speculative philosophy, from Descartes to Hegel, culminated in the concepts of Hegel. Therefore, a negation of the Hegelian system negated all speculative philosophy. Though Feuerbach intended to negate Hegel and speculative

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

philosophy and made this clear before he began his negation, his critique of Hegel was still valid, for Feuerbach was right and Hegel was, in actuality, the culmination of speculative philosophy. Feuerbach, in his criticism of Hegel, showed that in Hegel the absolute reached its pinnacle and became the pure spirit and the activity that could be realized only in the act of thought, only in the mind. It was in Hegel that the absolute being became the absolute mind. Before Feuerbach could begin his negation of Hegel he had to show how Hegel was the heir of Descartes. Thus the negation of Hegel began with the philosophy of Descartes.

Descartes began with ordinary theology and developed his ideas in antithesis to it. He began by building the abstract from sensation and matter. His concept "I think therefore I am" was the beginning of this process of developing the absolute from sensation. Building from the ideas of Descartes was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), the German philosopher on whom the classical period of German and European philosophy, in general, was dependent. With these two, according to Feuerbach, the abstraction, God, was considered only as a subjective condition. This was necessary in order that one might know the immaterial or divine being who, for them, was immaterial only as an object because they still shared the viewpoint of theism that God was immaterial only as an object not as the subject. Leibniz and Descartes were idealists only in a general sense; they did not negate the material world. In the meaning of Leibniz's philosophy, only God was the consistent, complete, and true idealist. Only God could conceive all things without the obscurity imposed upon man because of his senses. Not only was God above and beyond the sense of man, he was also the immaterial abstract and fully Idealized being. Man was only partly idealized, as man was still

bound by his senses; full idealization would not come till later. For Feuerbach, the absolute idealism of Hegel was nothing more than the realized divine mind of Leibnizian theism.<sup>42</sup>

The next step in the movement toward the Absolute Mind of Hegel came with the ideas of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). This German idealist attempted to bring into reconciliation the two opposing views of Rationalism and Empiricism. In his philosophical system it was the object that conformed to the understanding and not the understanding which conformed to the object. Kantian idealism became nothing more than the theological conception of the divine mind. For the divine mind determined the object; the divine mind was, in no way, determined by the object. Feuerbach's accusation that Kantian idealism was still bound by theism seemed proven accurate.<sup>43</sup> Kantian idealism freed man only partially; he (man) was freed only from a matter, a doctrine, or an idea but not from the hold of that doctrine or idea on his mind. Kantian idealism was only a half-way cure.

Kantian idealism remained bound to theism until the disciple of Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Fichte added his ideas to those of Kant and by doing so, was able to free Kant from his theistic ties.<sup>44</sup> However, this, according to Feuerbach, led speculative philosophy to the position of making God as abstract and transcendental being. God was transformed into reason, but this was the reason of the ego. As Feuerbach saw the philosophy

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.



of Fichte there could be no God outside of the ego.<sup>45</sup> The ego became God and God became a being separated from the senses; speculative theology caused a cleavage between the mind and the senses. Fichte, Feuerbach argued, had, by divorcing the ego, the inner self or the reason from the senses, had produced a God who was not a sensuous being. Rather, God had become the negation of all sensuous determinations and could only be known through the abstraction from the sensation.<sup>46</sup> What Fichte had done was to develop a God who could be known only in the mind; there was no way this God could be approached through the senses, only reason could come to this God. Hegel was to build upon this concept and push it to its logical extreme and develop the concept of the Absolute Mind. Thus Feuerbach demonstrated that Hegel had indeed become the culmination of speculative philosophy, and therefore by negating Hegel and his ideas, Feuerbach could negate all of speculative philosophy. With the collapse of Hegel the whole system would come crumbling down.

In dealing with Hegel's ideas Feuerbach stated:

Hegelian philosophy is reversed idealism, it is theological idealism, just as the Spinozist philosophy is theological materialism. It placed the essence of the ego apart from the ego, separated from the ego, and objectified as substance, as God. But by doing that, it expressed again indirectly and reversely the divinity of the "I," making it--as Spinoza made matter--into an attribute or form of the divine substance; man's consciousness of God is the self-consciousness of God. That means that the essence belongs to God and the knowing belongs to man.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

The very heart of Hegel's system lay in man's projection of himself into the personage of the divine. Hegel transferred the subject--man--into the object--God. He did this not in the way ordinary theology or even speculative theology had done before, but by splitting the very ego of man into two parts--the essence and the knowing. The essence he called God; which, according to Feuerbach, was nothing other than the "essence of thought, or thought abstracted from the one who thinks." God was nothing more, in the Hegelian system, than the abstract creation of the mind of the thinker. As Feuerbach stated, "Hegelian philosophy made thought--that is, conceived as a being distinct from the subject--into a divine and absolute being."<sup>48</sup> Hegel had taken the thought of man and redefined it as outside the thinking being. This creation, this object, he termed God. The Hegelian system hardly needed to be negated, according to Feuerbach, for it would soon fall due to its own weight and contradictions. All that was necessary was that it be understood that within the Hegelian system man satisfied himself only in his essence and the system would fall of its own volition.<sup>49</sup> Hegel had taken the imagination of man and made it no longer man's imagination but the object of man's veneration. He took the thoughts of man and changed them into the thoughts of God. Even in Hegel, as in all other systems, God became nothing more than the creation of the imagination--the act of belief or faith of man. Hegelian thought stated, as did all other systems, that the animals worshipped God only in the mind of man. Man and man alone is, has been, or ever will be capable of abstract thought

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

and it was only man through his imagination and fantasy that could create an abstract God. Even if the Hegelian system was based on the imagination, it was still a real system, Feuerbach admitted--albeit, it was an idealistic realism. Feuerbach noted that:

Hegel is a realist, but a purely idealistic realist or rather, an abstract realist; he is a realist in the abstraction from all reality. He negates thought, namely, abstract thought so that the negation of abstraction is itself abstraction. According to Hegel, philosophy has for an object only "that which it"; but this "is" is itself only an abstracted and ideated "is" Hegel is a thinker who surpasses himself in thought; he wants to grasp the thing itself, but in the thought of the thing. He wants to be apart from thought, but within thought itself--hence the difficulty in comprehending the "concrete" notion.<sup>50</sup>

In short the Hegelian system is absurd. Not only did man create his own God with his mind and then worship this God with his mind; he also made God love within his mind. God thought and as a thinking being he was not concerned with the sensuous side of man. For Feuerbach the Hegelian system, in reality, ignored the most important aspect of man--the real man. Man was only half freed in Hegel's system: it mattered not, to this system, what condition the body happened to be in the sensuous world, only that the mind was free. This was not good enough for Feuerbach; only a humanity completely free--not partially free--was the goal of Feuerbach. What good was it to man if he were free politically and not free religiously or mentally or, on the other hand, free mentally and not free politically? Feuerbach's goal was to free man completely and to make "men into whole men." Speculative philosophy, even Hegel's, left man only half free and only half real. Reality, for Feuerbach, could be found only in the sensuous--not in

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-49.

the abstract; only the concrete was real. For Feuerbach, truth, reality and sensation were identical. Only a being who was sensuous was a true and real being.<sup>51</sup> All else was only imagination and fantasy.

Feuerbach did not deny the methods that ordinary theology and speculative theology used in achieving their ends; he negated their ends. By demonstrating that the objects created by them were nothing more than man worshipping himself, he negated the object, not the act of veneration. This concept is important in understanding Feuerbach. Feuerbach felt that the act of worship was real because it was performed by a real being, but the object was a creation of the imagination of man's mind and was based on the dependency of man. In negating the object, Feuerbach considered himself a second Luther for he felt that he was purifying man's religion. Just as Luther purified man's beliefs more than three centuries before, Feuerbach felt that he did this for his own age. Feuerbach's likening himself to Luther was not too illogical for Karl Barth stated that Feuerbach was the logical extension of Luther's concepts.<sup>52</sup> It was for this reason that Feuerbach's criticism and negation of the object of Protestantism was different from that of either ordinary theology or speculative theology. The Protestant system, as expressed through the teachings of Luther, placed the major emphasis on the humanity of God in Christ. This emphasis was different even from that of the other forms of Protestantism. But Feuerbach did not treat the other forms any different and when he saw Protestantism he

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 51. (*italics his*).

<sup>52</sup> Barth, Protestant Thought, p. 359.

saw it through the eyes of Luther. Thus all of Protestantism tended to blur into one group. For Feuerbach's purposes Lutheranism was synonymous with Protestantism. The unique position of Christ in Protestantism caused Protestantism, in reality, to dissolve into religious anthropology.

### The Negation of Protestantism

Feuerbach noted in his criticism of Lutheranism that "The true God, the true object of Lutheran faith, is only Christ; this is only because in him there is possible no further distinction between Christ-in-himself and Christ for us, and therefore in him all the conditions of God are fulfilled, all mysteries of the divine nature are resolved, all objections and doubts are taken away, and all bases of mistrust and suspicion are put aside."<sup>53</sup> Mistrust and suspicion were put aside because, in the Lutheran faith there was an interchanging of God and man. In Lutheran orthodoxy there was the doctrine of communicatio idiomatum in genere majestatico, which attributed such predicates as divine glory, omnipotence, omnipresence and eternity to humanity and in abstracto of Christ. This meant that the higher and lower positions of God and man could be reversed.<sup>54</sup> Feuerbach noted this and in explaining the Lutheran faith said, "God has revealed Himself to man; that is, become man . . . has no other meaning but that in Christianity God has become a sensual being instead of a being in thought. A sensual being comes not from my head, but it comes to me from without."<sup>55</sup> For Feuerbach

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<sup>53</sup>Feuerbach, Essence of Faith According to Luther, p. 92.

<sup>54</sup>Barth, Protestant Thought, p. 359.

<sup>55</sup>Feuerbach, The Essence of Faith According to Luther, p. 67.

Protestantism--in the form of Lutheranism--had man for its God. Protestantism became no longer concerned with God as God, as was ordinary or speculative theology, but became concerned with God in man--Christ. Protestantism became no longer theology, but essentially Christology, or in Feuerbach's words "religious anthropology."<sup>56</sup> The God of Protestantism began as a sensuous being, a being not created out of the mind of man; nor was he created from the matter of the universe but from man himself. With the belief of God coming from man and the tendency of Lutheranism to blur the positions of God and man by an interchange of the two, Feuerbach felt that Lutheranism was on the right track. The only problem was that Luther did not go far enough but Feuerbach would take what Luther had begun and complete it. The task was, as Feuerbach saw it, the completing of the realization and the humanization of God. Theology must be transformed and dissolved into anthropology.<sup>57</sup>

Protestantism began this process--the freeing of man--but it did not complete it. As the Protestant tradition had developed man was neither free, true nor good. Had he been there would have been no need for God; but since man was none of these, Protestantism could project these attributes upon God. In the Protestant tradition God could and did become that which man was not. Because man was none of these things, God was; therefore, God had a reason to exist--to meet the dependency of man.<sup>58</sup> If man possessed divine qualities, then God would become a luxury article--and as such, would

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<sup>56</sup>Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 5

<sup>58</sup>Feuerbach, The Essence of Faith According to Luther, p. 34.

not be necessary. If he were unnecessary, he would not meet man's dependency, for man would have no dependency. Feuerbach argued, therefore, that every affirmation in God presupposed a negation in man. This became the foundation upon which Luther erected the edifice that shattered the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>59</sup> Since man was evil, he could not produce good fruit, for good fruit came only from good trees. Feuerbach continued to argue that Protestantism taught; that since man could not produce good works he could not ascribe them to himself. Any credit for good works had to be given to God, as only God was capable of doing anything good. The logical conclusion of this concept was that man could not redeem himself. Therefore, if man were to be redeemed it must be God that provided the redemption. As Feuerbach stated, "If God is himself the mediator of man with God, if God is the Savior, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, then man cannot be the redeemer of his own sins, his own savior. And consequently all the so-called meritorious works performed by man--all the sufferings and martyrdoms which he places upon himself in order to absolve his sins, to reconcile himself with God, and to attain divine grace and bliss--vain and invalid, therefore, are the rosary, the lenten fare, the pilgrimage, the mass, the sale of indulgences, the monk's hood, the nun's veil."<sup>60</sup> Either man met his own dependency or God did. Salvation was either grace or merit; and in the Protestant tradition, it was grace. Man could not earn his salvation, instead man's dependency became met through an act of faith. With this act man gave evidence of God and that God was the one on whom his salvation rested. Any attempt, by man to rest

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

on his own works only gave evidence that it was man and not God who met man's dependency. Feuerbach found in his analysis of Luther that one had to believe completely in God, or completely in man. What this meant was that if one believed in God one must doubt man or if one believed totally in man that one must doubt God.<sup>61</sup> Feuerbach illustrated this concept by using the homely and readily understood illustration of the relationship between husband and wife, likening the relationship between the two to the relationship of God to man. In this illustration he stated:

Where my wife is active I am inactive; where she is something I am nothing. In general, what I have in my wife, I need not have in myself; for whatever is the wife's is also the husband's . . . Now if I prevent man from self-satisfaction, am I therefore inhumanly barbaric toward him? Certainly not; for I am not keeping him from satisfaction. I am only keeping him from satisfying himself, from seeking in himself what he should seek<sup>62</sup> outside himself and naturally can find only outside himself.

This passage is one of the keys to understanding Feuerbach's view of Protestant theology. It clearly posited that whatever was the wife's was also the husband's and what the one had the other need not have. When Feuerbach extended this into theology, he concluded that Christ's passion and suffering was not passion and suffering unto itself but it was man's passion and man's suffering.

In other words, it was God as man suffering for man--or man suffering for man for his salvation. The object of Christ was not his salvation but man's salvation. Even though Christ was a separate being outside of man, he

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 45.



became for man his being. In essence, he became man. Therefore the object of man's faith did not lie outside of him but in him. This eliminated the contradiction seen in ordinary and speculative theology where the object was outside of man. Thus the purpose and the meaning of man's faith, according to Feuerbach, was not that Christ was Christ but that he was Christ for man. He died and suffered not for himself, but for man. Feuerbach continued his analysis by explaining that, since Christ died for man and man, by faith, was in Christ, it was not necessary for the Christian to have to die in payment for his sins. But this was not all, for as Christ was God and the Christian was Christ's, the Christian became God's. This, pushed to its logical conclusion, meant that all things that were from God and all things that were in God's power became (since the Christian was in God and was God's) in the Christian's power. The consequences of this faith were that nothing existed or could do anything against God and since the Christian was in God, then nothing existed which could harm the Christian, for God existed for him.<sup>63</sup> Of this fact the Christian could be certain because Christ, who was God, was also man. Protestantism had begun the dissolution of theology and had taken it to the position of Christology or religious anthropology. Christ became the human form of God; he was not a phantom, a creation of the mind, or a creation of matter, but a flesh and blood man. In this role, Feuerbach felt, Christ became the sensual certainty of God's love to man. He illustrated this idea when he wrote, "But the infallibility and reliability of this love lie precisely, as said, only in its humanness; for only a being

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

actually human can love man, at least in a manner satisfactory to, and appropriate to man."<sup>64</sup> Since Christ was a demonstration of the love of God, where did this love lead the follower of Christ? Almost like ordinary theology it led one to oneself. The difference lay in the word love and its application to the devotee. For love in itself and without an object was chimera. This love seemed to lead one to the love of man. If God so loved man that he died for him and if the Christian were in God and was God's he, also, had to have a love of man. Man then became the object of love. But what man--a species or an individual? Feuerbach interpreted the Protestant tradition to mean neither, but instead the first outpouring of love was to be a self-love. As he stated, "First faith, then love, 'love follows faith,' but the first thing is self-love; the second is love of one's neighbor. This order of progression has a good and proper sense as well as a bad, egoistic one. For how will I make others happy if I myself am unhappy; how will I satisfy others if the horn of dissatisfaction gnaws at me? . . . I must, there, first care for myself before I can care for others; I must first possess before I can share; I must first know before I can teach . . . In short, the object of love is the welfare of others, but the object of faith is my own welfare and blessedness."<sup>65</sup>

Feuerbach then took the logic of Christianity one step further and asked the question, Where do I become the most blessed? Where Could I, as a Christian, find the most happiness? The answer was, of course, when I am closest to God. This for the Christian came when his faith and love were

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

perfect, but this position could not take place on this earth. The reason was simple--man was an imperfect creature. Therefore the follower of Christ could not reach perfection in this life.<sup>66</sup> This achievement of perfection by the Protestant, this wish fulfillment had to take place beyond the sphere of this life; thus Feuerbach saw within the Protestant faith a strong death wish. It was only when death and the life-after-death came could one achieve true blessedness. The true believer, when he heeded only the inspiration of faith, had no other wish than to die, for it was only then that he could do away with all worldly and social bonds.<sup>67</sup> Only after death could he do away with the things of the body that had been put away spiritually. Even with the death-wish the object of man's faith and love was still man. Protestantism was, in reality, like all the others, nothing more than the projectionism of man and in the end only freed man to die.

As has been noted, the object of man's veneration was, in all cases, nothing but man himself. In paganism, man worshipped the things on which he was dependent for his existence; in ordinary theology, man worshipped matter repositied as abstraction and in speculative theology, man worshipped his own absolute mind. In Protestant theology man worshipped himself, as God. In doing so, man placed upon God the responsibility that he would have had to assume if God did not exist. In all the aforementioned cases man could not go beyond his own true nature. No matter what man imagined or projected or believed, he could not reach beyond himself. Feuerbach pointed out, "He may indeed, by means of the imagination, conceive

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

individuals of another so-called higher kind, but he can never get loose from his species, his nature; the conditions of being, the positive final predicates which he gives to these other individuals, are always determinations or qualities drawn from his own nature--qualities in which he in truth only imagines and projects himself."<sup>68</sup> Man simply projected his nature on an object, and abdicated his responsibility of bettering mankind to the object he projected and imagined. Through projectionism man was able to place both the praise and blame on the creature of his imagination for the condition in which he found himself. Religion, intended to improve man's lot, did nothing but enslave him further; now it was up to Feuerbach to show man the true and real way toward improvement.

### The Real Object of Worship

To do this Feuerbach returned to the argument for the existence of God and redefined the meaning of the existence of God. God existed--this he did not question--but the form of God now became the central problem. If one argued the "I" as a man was finite, then he could conclude the world was eternal. Using this as a basis for one's argument, could not one argue that there must be some sort of eternal being? Could it not be argued that the world was eternal in God? Even if it were not eternal in God, did it not spring up in Him as an idea--even, perhaps, as a sudden or capricious idea? Such an idea, according to Feuerbach, could be conceived but the man who conceived of it would only deify nothing but his own irrationality. It would require an act of faith to believe that the world was eternal, even eternal

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<sup>68</sup>Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, p. 11.

in God. And an act of faith, as far as Feuerbach was concerned, was nothing more than the deification of one's irrationality. However, if one abided by reason one could, Feuerbach argued, "only derive the world from its essence, its idea, i.e. one mode of its existence from another mode; in other words, I can derive the world from itself."<sup>69</sup> There was a step that was necessary before one could begin to posit the "why" of the existence of the world, one had to become conscious of the self. Involved in the process of becoming self-conscious was the consciousness of another. In order to be able to know oneself it was mandatory that one be able to distinguish oneself from another, whether this was an imaginary being, a possible, or a real being. This meant that the "I" in order to know what it was, had to be conscious of and distinguish another--the "thou" as Feuerbach called it.

The "I-Thou" concept which began with the simple "thou" of the persons around the "I" developed until the "thou" became God. The "I-thou" concept carried on into modern society and has been seen in such fields as: theology by Buber and Barth, existentialist philosophy by Sartre, in psychology by Sigmund Freud, and in Sociology by David Riesman. Riesman in his book, The Lonely Crowd, came to the same conclusion as Feuerbach; the understanding of the "I" was molded by those around him--by the "thou". It made no difference, all societies, whether tradition-directed, inner-directed, or other-directed, the conformity of the individual was insured by those on which he was dependent.<sup>70</sup> His method was different, but the

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>70</sup>David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 8.

conclusion that man knows himself as he was reflected off others, was the same. Feuerbach stated it in this manner:

The consciousness of the world is a humiliating consciousness; the creation was an "act of humility" but the first stone against which the pride of egoism stumbles is the thou the alter ego. The ego first steels its glance in the eye of a thou before it endures the contemplation of a being which does not reflect its own image. My fellow-man is the bond between me and the world. I am and I feel myself, dependent on the world, because I first feel myself dependent on other men. If I did not need man, I should not need the world. I reconcile myself with the world only through my fellow-man. Without other men, the world would be for me not only dead and empty, but meaningless. Only through his fellow-man does man become clear to himself and self-conscious; but only when I am clear to myself does the world become clear to me. A man existing absolutely alone would lose himself without any sense of his individuality in the ocean of Nature; he would neither comprehend himself as a man nor Nature as Nature. The first object of man is man.

Note that for Feuerbach, man's first dependency was on man and man continued to be dependent upon man for the rest of his life. Not only was he dependent on man for the material things, he was dependent on him for the spiritual things as well. If it were not for others the individual would not know what or who he was. Man's actions were those that he learned through interaction with others. This concept had been accepted so widely it hardly needed to be stated; but even with this realization, man still transfers his dependency to an abstract being. Feuerbach's answer for this was that man had an imagination--a fantasy nature. This nature allowed him to project himself beyond himself. The reason for this was that man, as an individual realized that he was dependent and he could not understand how this dependency could be met with creatures like himself. Therefore, he projected a God able to meet his dependencies. To this projection he confessed his

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<sup>71</sup>Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, p. 82.

failings and asked for help in meeting his dependencies. This act known as prayer was nothing more, Feuerbach stated, than man addressing his alter ego. By using the term thou, man declared that God was, in reality, his alter ego and to this God, as the being nearest to him, he confessed his deepest wishes and his most secret thoughts--thing he would have never uttered to anyone else.<sup>72</sup> It was in this act of prayer--an act of wish-fulfillment--that the "thou" and the "I" came together for the worshipper. But what was accomplished by this action? Feuerbach quickly noted that it was only the individual who gained something, not mankind as a whole. Nor would mankind, as a whole, gain anything until humanity realized that they were dependent on humanity, not on some abstract creation or projection or wish-fulfillment, only when they realized that this was their first and only dependency could men begin to improve their lot. One man could do little, but man as a species, working together in love, could change the face of the globe.

Feuerbach believed that "doubtless the essence of man is one, but this essence is infinite; its real existence is therefore infinite."<sup>73</sup> What the individual man could or did not know and where he could or did not do; mankind, together, knew and could do.<sup>74</sup> When the "I" of myself, stood alone the "I-Thou" of the species stood infinite. Feuerbach explained it this way, "The other is my thou--the relation being reciprocal--my alter ego, man objective to me, the revelation of my own nature, the eye seeing itself. In another I first have the consciousness of humanity; through him I first

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 158. (*italics his*)/

<sup>74</sup>Feuerbach, The Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, p. 17.

learn, I first feel, that I am a man; in my love for him it is first clear to me that he belongs to me and I to him, that we two cannot be without each other, that only community constitutes humanity. But morally, also, there is a qualitative, critical distinction between the I and Thou."<sup>75</sup> The "I" was, is, and will be, dependent on his fellow man for, not only his physical needs, but his emotional, intellectual, spiritual and moral needs. The "I" could not be the judge of its own action, as to its rightness; but the "thou" in the form of his fellow man could; the "I" as the alter ego of the "thou" could judge its action. In Feuerbach's view that which was truth was that which was arrived at with mutual agreement. The final criterium of the truth was that which the species agreed, for the species was the ultimate measure of the truth.<sup>76</sup> No individual could judge himself with any degree of objectivity; only another individual had the impartiality to judge one. Only God could do this and it was God on whom man was most dependent. This was not the God of wish-fulfillment, fantasy or projectionism, but the real God--the Ens realissimum--man. Feuerbach's main purpose and goal was that of freeing man, and this could be done by showing that man was most dependent upon man. Therefore, if man realized this and that man's role in the state, was not to believe what he wished (this only led to wish-fulfillment, projectionism, and fantasy) but to believe only that which was reasonable. Not only did man have to know what was reasonable, he needed to know and do that which would make him a free and cultivated man. He (man) would know that which was reasonable and that which would make him free and cultivated because he

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<sup>75</sup>Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, p. 158. (italics his).

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.



as the "I" would sit down with the "thou" his alter ego and decide that which was reasonable. Feuerbach realized that man, as an individual, was hardly perfect and that only when man realized there was no God (as he had been viewed in the past) and no hereafter and that these beliefs were only things he had created himself, then and only then would he be willing to do something to improve this world. Feuerbach saw his role as that of a guide into the truth, not a guide through it. What he attempted was not to tell man what he must do but to give man hope in himself, not in a wish-fulfillment. He realized and held out for man the hope that "what a man is not yet in reality but hopes and believes that he will one day become."<sup>77</sup> Or as he stated at the close of his lectures for the Revolution of 1848:

But the negation of the next world has as its consequence the affirmation of this world; the denial of a better life on earth; it transfers the hope of a better future from a concern of idle, inactive faith into a duty, a matter of independent human activity. Of course it is outrageously unjust that some men should have everything while others have nothing, that some wallow in the good things of life, in the benefits of art or science, while others lack the barest necessities. But it is just as preposterous to argue the necessity of a hereafter in which reparation will be made to men for their sufferings on earth as to argue the necessity of a public justice in heaven which will correct the defects of the secret justice that prevails on earth. The necessary conclusion to be drawn from the existing injustices and evils of human life is the determination, the active striving to remedy them—not a belief in the hereafter, which only makes men fold their hands and leaves the evils intact.<sup>78</sup>

Today's theology and philosophy have moved beyond and past Feuerbach, and well they should. But Feuerbach should be moved through, not past or ignored. Feuerbach's influence ought to be that of an exciter of

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<sup>77</sup>Feuerbach, Lectures on the Essence of Religion, p. 256.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 283-284.

thoughts—not that of a systematic thinker. Eugene Kamenka said that Feuerbach could be described as Savigny had described Vico: ". . . his thought was like a series of lightning-flashes on a dark night, illuminating for those who already had some conception of the way but only blinding and confusing for those who had not. Those who did see had to find the rest of the way themselves."<sup>79</sup> Feuerbach has flashed his thoughts and concepts at mankind in the same way; he has given some concepts that must be dealt with; he has given some light. The rest is up to us.

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<sup>79</sup>Kamenka, The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 149.

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THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF  
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by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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The Religious Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach analyzes a writer central to the history of theology and relates him to the major developments of nineteenth and twentieth century Protestant thought. The central focus is on Feuerbach's contention that the concept of God has been created by man as a response to the emotional, intellectual and physical dependencies found within himself. Using the term projectionism, an old philosophical device but in a different manner as the explanatory principle, Feuerbach demonstrated that the concept of God was, in reality, only the illusory image of man himself.

Feuerbach divided theology into three categories: the first he termed ordinary theology consisting of catholicism, theism, pantheism, empiricism and atheism; the second speculative philosophy or theology (Feuerbach used the terms interchangeably) into which he placed all of philosophy from Descartes to Hegel and finally Protestantism. The conclusion reached by Feuerbach after examining all three forms of religious-philosophical expression was that in all cases the venerated object was in reality nothing but man himself. Feuerbach demonstrated that, in his simplicity the pagan worshipped the things on which he was dependent for his existence, but in civilized nations, since the dependencies were more complex, the venerated object had become complex; therefore, the man who accepted ordinary theology worshipped matter projected as abstraction; in speculative theology man worshipped his own absolute mind and in Protestant theology man worshipped only himself.

Feuerbach's views on the distortion of reality because of man's imaginary illusions of Heaven and a better life-after-death which caused man's impotence in improving his mortal existence, are examined.

Feuerbach's solution to the ills of mankind was that only by a throughgoing humanism would make, in the slogan of Protagoras, man (rather than an illusory God) the measure of all things. Then and only then would progress toward the realization of man's true potential be possible. Progress required that man acknowledge and bear his burden of Promethian freedom.