Karl Marx's Theses on Ludwig Feuerbach

Introduction

Feuerbach maintained God is a human projection resulting from the alienation of the human self and its historical, social activity.

Note 1. The human self is alienated, but not self-alienated (as in a doctrine of original sin.)
Note 2. Feuerbach presupposes a self.

Marx insists that even the idea of the self is as much a projection as "God", both being the result of the interplay of historical forces and human activity.
Marx insists that all thought is shaped by material history.

Thesis One

Whereas Feuerbach assumes thought to be reflection upon an object, thought is as much matter-determined as objects themselves. If Feuerbach had more "dirty Jewish" blood in him (Marx was Jewish), he would be more "earthly" and wouldn't be betrayed by this falsely abstract; he'd understand "practice" as that human activity in which
(i) the truly critical occurs (all "criticism" at the level thought is mere game-playing),
(ii) revolution can occur, for revolution occurs not when ornate theory is superimposed on life but when the deed is done.

Thesis Two

Objective truth is revealed not by abstract reflection but by "practice"; truth discloses itself as such only as we immerse ourselves in concrete conflicts.

Thesis Three

Since a change in material circumstances effects change in everything else, "would-be" educators must first be educated to understand that only change in material circumstances effects change so very far-reaching as to amount to a revolution in which humankind is remade. Under capitalism one's labour results in one's self-alienation; under post-capitalism one's labour is one's self-making.

Thesis Four

Whereas Feuerbach maintains that "God" is the human self projected onto a cosmic screen, and religion is therefore inherently an exercise in one's self-alienation, the non-religious, secular sphere is equally self-contradicted. This self-contradiction is overcome only through revolution. Heretofore philosophy has attempted to understand the world; it should have attempted to change the world.

Thesis Five
Feuerbach, correctly wanting to avoid the one-sided abstractions of Idealistic philosophy and instead to affirm concreteness, fails to see that the only truly concrete is the actuality of human activity.

**Thesis Six**

Feuerbach, having jettisoned the religious as real, is left with the human as real, which reality (or human essence) he locates in the individual. Individuals are united naturally; i.e., as a collection. He should understand that the humanly real is found in the "togetherness" of social relationships, a social organism. Apart from this matrix of social/material relationships the humanly real doesn't exist.

**Thesis Seven**

Feuerbach, thinking that religious feeling results from my relating myself to the deity I've projected, fails to see that it arises from the particular rung I occupy on the socio-economic ladder.

**Thesis Eight**

All mysticisms and mysteries can be reduced without remainder to the interplay of social forces.

**Thesis Nine**

Feuerbach fails to grasp the significance of "practice" just because he views society as a collection of separate individuals.

**Thesis Ten**

Feuerbach's "old materialism" understands society as "civil", the "civil" being how a group of people order their public lives. He ought to understand society as "human", the "human" being a matrix of forces with an inherent thrust for change.

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