

# 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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