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An Analysis of Feuerbach's Iconoclastic Approach Which Supports the Notion of the Anthropological Core of Religion as Opposed to One with Theological Quintessence

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ABSTRACT Ludwig Feuerbach often called as the "Father of Modern Atheism", had a huge effect on the study of religion and is commonly regarded as the facilitator of the intellectual linkages between the thinking of Hegel and Marx. He is also considered to be an antecedent of Freud. Inspired by the philosophy of Hegel, he proposed the notion that the method by which religion was invented was merely a dream come true since prognostication is one of the most resilient desires of humankind. The Christianity has a hold on the human psyche and offers to people the prospect of 'eternal' life in God's kingdom, and, thus, removes from humanity the dread of death. Drawing on prior research, this paper presented an investigation into a whole range of issues around Feuerbach's views and argued that although, flawed in argumentation, he nonetheless made a contribution to the analysis of religious epistemology as well as the philosophy of religion by asking pertinent questions apropos human notions of God.

INTRODUCTION

There are basically four main arguments related to the existence of God including the cosmological, the design argument, the ontological argument and the moral argument. In opposition to these stand the notions of atheism and agnosticism. Atheism denies the existence of God or indeed any other spiritual beings. This notion aligns with the philosophy of materialism which postulates that nothing exists apart from matter which is what the Greek philosopher Democritus (460-370 BC) proposed. Within the group of atheists we encounter the logical positivists who argued that the notion of God is untestable and thus, pointless. Friedrich Nietzsche was one such philosopher who stated that 'God is dead'. We also have the followers of agnosticism which states that we do not have enough evidence to deduce the existence of God.

Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-1872), who is considered to be the 'father of atheism' of recent times, was born in Bavaria. He passed on his 'spirit of atheism' to the likes of Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx. His father was a Protestant lawyer and professor. Ludwig was baptized as a Catholic, however, his upbringing was to all intents and purposes Protestant in orientation. From an early age he demonstrated a passion for religious studies and even studied Hebrew at High School so as to enable him to better comprehend the Holy Scriptures. He was keen on a vocation as a pastor and in 1823 opted to study theology at the University of Heidelberg. In 1824 he became so enthralled by the philosophies of Hegel that he decided to abandon his study of theology and instead, opted for studies in philosophy which he studied in Berlin where Hegel served as a lecturer. The latter's philosophies were very appealing to Feuerbach, but he gradually deviated from pure Hegelian thought and adopted a stance which has been described as 'left-wing Hegelianism' in which he became an ardent critic of religion. He differed with Hegel principally on the Hegelian notion that religion was located as a major component of the dialectic movement of history. Hegel's philosophy of history was built on the idea of the immanent actualization of the *Zeitgeist* (supreme world spirit), and for him history is a progressive consciousness of human free will. Hegel stated that: *"The content of religion and philosophy is the same, but religion is the truth for all mankind"* (Fetscher 1966: 133).

Two strands existed in Christian theology, the natural and the revealed. The first involved deducing knowledge about God the supreme-being who is postulated by believers to be the Creator of the cosmos, from the natural world around us. The principal advocate of this reasoning was Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), who in-

corporated aspects of the reasoning of Aristotle into Christian thought and postulated reasons and arguments in support of the notion of the existence of a Creator God. There are, however, thinkers who propagated the notion that a man is too sinful to be able to learn anything at all about God, and that God is, thus, known through His revelation to mankind.

Feuerbach viewed the gradual fading of religion as the key in the evolution of an enlightened scientific social order and propagated such ideas as a lecturer at the University of Erlangen. He criticized the belief in a metaphysical super being or God who is the object of peoples' rational assumptions and developed through his theory of projection an appraisal of religion as a sphere in which human beings need and desire could be creatively objectified. He stated that: 'Religion is the dream of the human mind, but even in dreams we do not find ourselves in emptiness or in heaven, but on earth, in the realm of reality; we only see real things in the entrancing splendor of the imagination and caprice, instead of in the simple daylight of reality and necessity…" (Feuerbach 1957: 32.)

His primary thesis was consequently termed the 'Projection Theory' and he remained faithful to his convictions in this regard until his death in 1872. His acclaimed, "The Essence of Christianity" (*Das Wesen des Christentums*) which he published in 1841 was a continuation of the transformation in the critical study of Christianity which was started by Strauss amongst others (McLellan, 1969: 88). Feuerbach was referred to by Wagner in his autobiography as *"the sole adequate philosopher of the modern age"* (Kohler 2004: 261). Feuerbach's ideas mark an essential shift from generally acknowledged Theism to a highly critical Atheistic Humanism. In The Essence of Christianity Feuerbach asserted that, *"Religion is the dream of the human mind"* (Feuerbach 1957).

Religion was viewed by him as the 'dream' of the human spirit and he contended that all religion is based on lack of understanding and, thus, error based. Whatever religious belief that existed is based on an anthropomorphic projectionism. As a humanist interested in people, his atheistic system is characterized as being 'anthropotheistic' and as such any idea of God is simply an anthropomorphic projection of the individual human mind. In terms of this idea, the notion of 'God' thus, exemplified man's conception of his own character.

Even, a perfunctory examination of literature showed us that Feuerbach played a great role in theological debates and ideas to this day. His post Hegelian reductionism, informed his ideal humanism. The notion that religion was not established by God, but was rather man-made, was also in evidence in both ancient Greece and Rome, where Xenophanes and Lucretius respectively disseminated such an idea. Religion is a basic form of man's consciousness of himself as a human being, and as such it is therefore an archaic anthropology which oppresses the human mind. This view inspired Karl Marx when he said religion was *"the sigh of the oppressed creature"* and also "the opiate of the masses" (Marx and Engels 1975).

Hegelian Influences

Georg Hegel advanced the dialectical interpretation of history that history is not static but dynamically undergoes perpetual revisions. This implied that every idea, ideology, archetype has a beginning and an end. This happens when a counter thesis manifests to challenge a current thesis. The offshoot of this is that there is a period of struggle between conflicting notions before a synthesis or resolution is arrived at. Hegel's philosophy was unique according to Engels in that it was the first time the entire world, including the natural, historical and intellectual was characterized as a dynamic process of transformative growth in which efforts were made to find internal linkages that create a continuous whole (Marx 1974). Human existence and reality are based on thoughts which create and inspire a person's reality (Philosophy of History 1901). Feuerbach was highly critical of the speculative workings of Western thought and especially Hegel's idealistic stance. He believed that Hegel had omitted to include naturalism and empiricism in his model of *Zeirgeist* or spirit. For him, Hegel's metaphysics destabilized the natural and existential reality of the model by promoting its survival underneath a speculative concept.

To Feuerbach, what separated a man from the 'brutes' is man's awareness of himself as a unique species-being and this is not merely a fact that man is cognizant of but has greater significance. What it is in reality is an important recognition which fundamentally changes the very character of human consciousness. Hegel considered the self-development of thought as

real progress and facts were, thus, reflections of such an advanced reality. He discarded the analysis of the eighteenth century rationalists who held that religion as such, did very poorly at what only science was capable of accomplishing. The religion merely served the purpose of satisfying man's continuous psychological need to possess an image of himself and of humankind which he would utilize to orientate himself to.

To Hegel, consciousness is an intentional state. When one is, thus, conscious in any way, one is of necessity conscious of something. To Feuerbach, God is man's consciousness of himself as a species- being. The entire human reflective process emanates from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. Hegel sought to track the development of the mind or spirit (*Geist*), by his reintroduction of the historical movement into the realm of philosophy. Feuerbach argued that nothing existed except man and nature and 'higher beings' are simply a reflection of their own anxieties and ambitions. Thus, the religion per se, serves basic human needs and is not concerned with science (Wartofsky 1977: 322). In any event, the human mind is capable of achieving total knowledge and reaching a juncture of self-consciousness as it moves from having perceived the current to a state of understanding that allowed man to analyze existence and organize his own actions as a result thereof. Subsequently, there is a stage of reason and an understanding of what is considered to be real. Philosophy engages with concepts, whereas, religion uses human imagination. Sigmund Freud shadowed Feuerbach's thinking, by linking humanity's religious compulsion with subconscious longings. God is then the creation of: *"illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind"* since "*the benevolent rule of a divine Providence allays our fears of the dangers of life"* (Freud 1961). Feuerbach eventually rejected Hegel's view that reality comprises ultimately of ideas.

This is followed by the human spirit attaining absolute knowledge via the vehicles of religion and art. Man then understands the world as diverse stages of his own rationale which Hegel terms 'alienation'. They are called this because they are constructions of the mind but considered to be self-sufficient and greater than the human mind. The resultant absolute knowledge is simultaneously, a type of surrendering of the *Geist* since each successive stage preserves some aspects of the previous one as it goes beyond each one of them. Religion when perceived to be the return of the Absolute Idea to itself, and when coupled with philosophy, was considered by Hegel to be the highest form of man's spiritual existence. Religion could, in any event, be coupled with philosophy by means of the philosophy of religion which interpreted at a higher level of both raw faith and critical *raison d'être*. Religion for Hegel was a basis and a peoples' conceptualization of itself with a God who is viewed as a spirit above nature. Interestingly, Feuerbach was the solitary adherent of Hegel's philosophy who was able to come to terms with his dialectic.

Hegel's denigration of religion was not the result of any precise condemnation of the super being of God, but the degree to which it emanated from speculative conjecture which was due to the anti-naturalism aspects. His favored representation of consciousness affords special treatment for an exemplar of compliance and influence.

Luther's Influence on Feuerbach

A Lutheran perspective of naturalism provided the perspective for a few of Feuerbach's interpretation of religious subjectivity. When Luther explains that humans experience existence before God was in tandem with the significance that Feuerbach's attached to religious naturalism. Luther's theological expositions also provided a contradiction in terms as regards the relationship between God and humans. Martin Luther viewed that, original sin had such an effect on mankind that human rationality and understanding were not sufficient as a means of self-identification or even any recognition of God.

People possessed a spirit of self-consciousness that was affected by their consciousness of God. When people feel weak and helpless and are thus limited, this proves the existence of a superior being devoid of similar limitations. A person's self is, thus, both naturally and existentially made aware, but also links one's knowledge of a superior being to knowledge of nature. God remains the supreme creator being in Luther's representation, but the finality of physical life creates a deeper state of individual consciousness of God and makes mankind acknowl-

edge the existence of God and thus reliant on God's grace. Feuerbach demonstrates similar understanding of self-consciousness in his works and describes the process of self-awareness in association to religious consciousness. Feuerbach's archetype of religious experience is, undoubtedly, phenomenological and concurs with Lutheran thought in certain aspects.

Freud and Feuerbach

In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach claimed that God is only a projection of an idealized human: *"The divine being is nothing else than the human being, or rather, the human nature purified, freed from the limits of the individual man, made objective – i.e., contemplated and revered as another, a distinct being. All the attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of the human nature."* It is, thus, important that human beings reclaim for themselves the desired characteristics and virtues if they wish tom be truly content with life. Freud 'the father of psychoanalysis' established from his psychoanalytical approach that *"at bottom God is nothing other than an exalted father"*. God does not exist for Freud and he is merely a human creation who thrives by generating feelings of guilt and anxiety in those who believed in Him. Freud translated Feuerbach's philosophy into psychological notions of human need. Freud and Feuerbach, thus, view religion as mere wish-fulfillment. Freud stated that people have a huge need for security and forgiveness, and this drives them to invent a source of security and forgiveness, namely God.

Both Feuerbach and Freud adopt an atheistic reductive assumption view that man actualized and projected God, so that God is a farce. They both purport to have proven that God is only a figment of the human imagination. By terminating God they can liberate human beings to self- actualize without the encumbrances of religion and its superstition and guilt complex generation.

We can argue that a super being is not a human projection of the 'I', but rather an outer reality toward which all human actions are directed. Humanity uncovers an outer supreme reality when reflecting on human liberation and the utter voraciousness of human will. People cannot find any solace or answers in neither Feuerbach's nor Freud's way of understanding global events and thus, expose themselves to something greater that is beyond themselves. We may view religion as an immature delusion, and atheism as a mature realism, *"But the will is not satisfied with any finite end, no matter how good. The dynamism of the will, therefore, goes beyond psychological projection. Man, spurred on by the search for meaning, begins to search for an adequate term, ultimately conceding that he is unable to find such a term in the finite world"* (Cihak 2000).

Feuerbachs Theses

Feuerbach with his secular outlook, found the promise of immortality as espoused in Christianity to be especially alluring since humans fear death more than anything else. By becoming true adherents of Christianity, people are, thus, able to set aside any fear that may lurk concerning death and live an idyllically ignorant life. Feuerbach was predominantly interested in the contradictory aspects that by design called into question any anti-natural propensities so that to Feuerbach the very notion of a God is a mere human projection. To him, Christianity by its very nature and since its inauguration, asserted that the man had become God since this was the real meaning of the Christian contention that in the Incarnation God in the form of the Logos, become man.

Marx and Freud amongst other prominent thinkers tried to found their ideas on his philosophical conceptions. Karl Marx, for one, uses Feuerbach's ideas in his analytical work of society and utilized it in his vitriolic attacks on bourgeois principles and beliefs (Marx and Engels 1974). Sigmund Freud used some of Feuerbach's notions in his study of the unconscious in the role it plays in repressing primordial instincts as well as in the process of sublimation (Freud 1928). To Feuerbach's way of thinking, Hegel made a mistake when he postulated that existence precedes thinking. Thought was dependent on the 'sensuously apprehended natural world of objects and events' and people are part and parcel of the world and only when they refer to it is any meaning and content generated. Pure conception cannot, thus, be used as a starting point (Pasley 1972: 393).

Feuerbach puts it succinctly when he stated:

"The object of the senses is in itself indifferent-independent of the disposition or of the judg-

ment; but the object of religion is a selected object; the most excellent, the first, the supreme being; it essentially presupposes a critical judgment, a discrimination between the divine and the non-divine, between that which is worthy of adoration and that which is not worthy. And here may be applied, without and limitation, the proposition: the object of any subject is nothing else than the subject's own nature taken objectively. Such as are a man's thoughts and dispositions, such is his God" (Feuerbach 1957: 12).

If such a progression to be effective humans cannot simply intentionally opt to accept a religion as a way of evading their greatest fear. The resolution needs to be an unconscious one since humans are driven by their unconscious minds to espouse a religion in whatever from or shape. As a materialist Feuerbach believed that only matter has reality and vehemently attacked orthodox religious teachings and denied immortality. The notion of a God, thus, originates from man who detaches and projects of his individual nature as he wishes to have the psychological needs of his human nature satisfied. People, thus, have a tendency to transpose their subjective natures into a being which is subjective in its unique nature, into an entity which is self-sufficiently beyond them. Feuerbach stressed that self-conscious humans envision their human nature abstracted from ending and consign to it the designation "God". By doing that, they project and attribute to God the entire range of faultless human qualities but God is a spirit: *"God is pure spirit, pure essence, pure activity – actus purus – without passions, without predicates imposed from outside, without sensuousness, without matter. The speculative philosophy is this pure spirit, this pure activity realized as an act of thought – the absolute being as absolute thought"* (Feuerbach 1843).

It is questionable if humans do indeed incorrectly perceive their nature for a being outside of themselves. If this is the case, they are deceived by the *'opium of the masses'* and are utterly perplexed about who they are and what essentially an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God is (Marx 1844). People in the process are *'a being becoming objective to itself'* (Feuerbach 1957: 6). It is in the development of self-consciousness where individuals become confounded and are both the subject and object. They begin to erroneously view their individual objective natures as something which is distinct from themselves, such as God or ethereal beings and consequently shift themselves from where they actually are (Feuerbach 1957: 121). Human beings have needs and wants that a God can provide: *'God springs out of the feeling of a want; therefore conscious, or an unconscious need,-that is God. Thus the disconsolate feeling of a void, of loneliness, needed a God in whom there is society, a union of beings fervently loving each other'* (Feuerbach 1957).

Essentially then, when man worships a God, he is seeking to satisfy needs and wants, and he is worshipping himself. This is not in itself a bad thing since worshipping a Divine being assists man to obtain a far greater sense of self-understanding and what he can optimistically hope to develop into. *"God created man in his own image"* (Genesis 1:27) but for Feuerbach *"Man first unconsciously and involuntarily creates God in his own image, and after this God consciously and voluntarily creates man in his own image"* (Feuerbach 1957: 114). The God being conveys a facet of the expectation humans have to be free from their great limitations. Indeed, God's very holiness is a human projection of a fervent desire to be free of sin. The omniscience of God is a projection of the human sense of isolation and mutual separation that people experience. The triune Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is a projection of the necessity felt by humans to be complete as they are an "I" that is distinct but yet can participate in a "Thou". This is why they partake in church sacraments, so as to put aside their weakness as they project a God. On the negative side, however, an idealized conception of God will inexorably lead human beings to devalue their own unique status and lead to a self-impoverishment of the earthly kingdom (Winiger 2004). People, thus, become alienated and should strive to return to themselves through recognizing and realizing that they have unique powers and possibilities. Feuerbach asserted that the process of perplexing human nature begins by means of theology and specifically, with the projection of human characteristics onto an abstract, but very personal being called 'God', and this is sustained by philosophy which exchanges the projection from 'God' to the created universe and ultimately to the metaphysical abstraction or 'Being'. Stirner (1907) stated: *"To God, who is spirit, Feuerbach gives the name "Our Essence." Can*

we put up with this, that, "Our Essence" is brought into opposition to us — that we are split into an essential and an unessential self? Do we not therewith go back into the dreary misery of seeing ourselves banished out of ourselves?" He further stated: *"The world is not God; it is other than God, the opposite of God, or at least that which is different from God, but that which is different from God cannot have come immediately from God, but only from a distinction of God in God"* (Feuerbach 1957).

The existence of God and the nature of God are part of the same 'being'. Consequently the existence of any being and the fact that it has certain attributes are inevitably connected. People are deceived when they believe that they may accept that the characteristics attributed to God are merely anthropomorphisms, if they refute the notion that God himself is also anthropomorphism. When humans who are religious assert the existence of a God being, they are simply making human qualities godlike qualities and, thus, deceive themselves since God is a mere projection of a perfect human nature: *"Man-this is the mystery of religion-projects his being into objectivity, and then again makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject"* (Feuerbach 1957: 29-30).

Feuerbach commented on atheism stating: *"He alone is the true atheist to whom the predicates of the Divine Being – for example, love, wisdom, justice – are nothing; not he to whom merely the subject of these predicates is nothing"* (Feuerbach 1957). He contended that God is the totality of his characteristics and if these are anthropomorphic then clearly God is anthropomorphism. How society conceives of God is dependent on the moral value system of that particular society, so this implied that morality as such precedes religion. *"We have reduced the otherworldly, supernatural and superhuman essence of god to its particular foundations in the essence of man. Thus we have in the end arrived back at our starting point. Man is the beginning of religion, Man is the centre of religion, Man is the end of religion"* (Thornton 1996). Human qualities are not considered to be godly because God possesses them. If God did not have them He would be an imperfect being.

Anthropology, Religion and Philosophy

Feuerbach's quintessence of Christianity is not to destroy theology but to highlight that "theology is anthropology". He stated further that *"The task of the modern era was the realisation and humanisation of God – the transformation and dissolution of theology into anthropology"* (Feuerbach 1843). He sought to develop a naturalistic explanation of Christianity, that is, anthropological and psychological explanations, "so that it covers every detail of the papers of the Christian Creed" (Brunner 1947: 244). To Feuerbach's anthropology is then the mystery of Christian theology: *"Man is the God of Christianity, Anthropology the mystery of Christian theology"* (Feuerbach 1957: 336). As a result, the core of religion is the core of every human being and it applies to human beings only. By knowing God man knows himself but he is unaware of the nature of the knowledge. He claimed that: *"Religion is man's earliest and also indirect form of self-knowledge"* (Feuerbach 1957: 13).

Human nature is the initial foundation of Feuerbach's philosophy of Religion. Anthropologically, he perceived humans to be in constant need of something or other and are capable of learning. They can be simultaneously the subject and the object. What varies from one culture to another is the environment that influences human conceptions of what God is and how individuals conceive themselves also tends to diverge. Thus, the culture is then central to comprehending human nature. The real world which is important to humanity is the world of material things which people experience via their sensuality and obsessions. Individuals as part of a communal society develop principles, values and ideals which they seek to defend and consequently project these and they are separated from them in a sense alienating them to the realm of a separate entity termed 'God'. In fact, this is so intense that 'Man is nothing without an object' called God (Feuerbach 1957). It is via this external 'being' that humans are able to uncover their own nature. People tend to morally and idealistically evaluate attributes in their own right before they are ascribed to God. It is, thus, moral and ethical norms and principles that determine the human conception of God and religion. Human identity is, thus, expanded and transformed. People who are religious fail to comprehend this notion. Religion is, thus, a human creation and the *raison d'etre* of the mystery of God is in fact man and anthropology. Using religion man projects his nature into a mystical being. Feuer-

bach urged people to recapture the wholly human connotation of religion and reflect it as an idiom of human moral ambitions.

Feuerbach said that God springs out of a feeling of desire, that is, God is nothing but the fulfillment of our inner and most central desires. Sigmund Freud, who was an ardent disciple Feuerbach encapsulates this concisely when he stated: *"religious ideas, which are given out as teachings…are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest, and most urgent wishes of mankind"* (Freud 1961).

Anthropology played the role informing people about religion and its falsity and sought to promote the notion that human consciousness is the same as the superior being consciousness and Feuerbach asserted that philosophy and religion are both superior arrangements of anthropology. When people are religious they tend to see their natures in a positive light and one way or another wish these to a state of faultlessness. They view nature as a supernatural force and become all powerful and knowledgeable. Feuerbach stated that the definitive goal of philosophy is the creation of relationships between people and religion as well as Hegel's philosophy had impoverished people of their natural absoluteness. God is simply a notion of the human species: *"God is the idea of the species as an individual-the idea or essence of the species, which as a species, as universal being, as the totality of all perfections, of all attributes or realities, freed from all the limits which exist in the consciousness and feeling of the individual, is at the same time again an individual, personal being"* (Feuerbach 1957: 30).

He further stated that: *"The more empty life is, the fuller, the more concrete is God. The impoverishing of the real world and the enriching of God is one act. Only the poor man has a rich God"* (Ibid 336). It is clear that Feuerbach's notions strive to destruct theology and hypothetical philosophy so as to reduce them to anthropology. Religion *per se* is nothing more than a fabricated consciousness: *"Ordinary theology turns the standpoint of man into the standpoint of God; by contrast, the speculative theology turns the standpoint of God into the standpoint of man, or rather into that of the thinker"* (Feuerbach 1843). His approach is very positivistic in that information derived from logical reports of sensory experience is the private source of all authoritative knowledge which is truth or valid knowledge. Society like nature operates according to universal laws. Introspection and all knowledge that is based on instinct are rejected. In this sense he differs with Hegel's speculative philosophy which conferred meaning to the relationship between God's self-knowledge and man's consciousness of a superior being.

"All speculation that would rather go beyond nature and man is therefore futile – as futile as the kind of art that would like to give us something higher than human form, but gives us only distortions. Futile, too, is the speculative philosophy that has risen against Hegel and is in vogue now – the speculative philosophy of the positivists. For instead of going beyond Hegel, it has actually retrogressed far behind Hegel in so far as it has failed to grasp precisely the most significant directions suggested by Hegel and his predecessors, Kant and Fichte, in their own characteristic ways. Philosophy is the science of reality in its truth and totality" (Feuerbach 1839).

CONCLUSION

Feuerbach understood that the major difficulty of speculative thought in the form religion is its simplistic removal of the legitimacy of the both the natural and existential experiences of people. To him any form of religious consciousness was the second last instance in which people reflected on the complexity of human existence. He sought to revise the anti-natural and speculative propensities of philosophy and theology by the promotion and implementation of a universal humanism which negated religion. In this way, society could be improved. His primary attack was against the idealistic stance of Hegel but this was followed by a more vigorous attack on religion due to its very hypothetical assumptions. Feuerbach's philosophies altered and developed throughout the entire course of his life so that it is difficult to fully reconcile his early efforts with his future philosophy. He paradoxically tried to naturalize religion. He fervently believed that all religions are mere projections of human desires and in so doing failed to consider the many non-theistic religions such as for example, Buddhism, which explicitly deny the reality of a superior being? Buddha explicitly warned his adherents to ignore the God if they existed, since they also had trifling desires, ac-

tions and suffering and had to follow the same conduit to be liberated from suffering. However, to Feuerbach, religion was advantageous as a means of reflecting upon human nature which in itself facilitated a self-awareness and created knowledge and thus makes humans conscious of the most essential aspects of the 'I' and there is no 'Thou'. '*Thoughts on Death and Immortality'* published in 1930 cost Feuerbach his work as a lecture. In this publication he that reason is the quintessence of what it means to be human. He criticized religion for affording too much prominence on the narcissistic idea of human immortality and also supposed that the idea of a personal God was similarly arrogant. Notwithstanding his attack on Christianity he did not at this point in his life reject religion in its entirety.

His main stance at this juncture was that Christianity was unsuccessful as a 'true religion' because it was narcissistic rather than including God. For Feuerbach true religion was a matter of God, of the will of God, and of God in and for himself. Later on his life Feuerbach's arguments are, however, rather inconclusive and he tends to be far too analytic and highly objective and his projection theory cannot be rigorously proven and is only a premise which merely associates the human psyche with religion and theology. He also tends to indiscriminately accept the hypothesis that the religious discourse is accurate. He inaccurately believes that religion is contrary to everything in modernity and fails to explain how it is that even adherents of religion continue to negate it from time to time but nonetheless still firmly trust in it. To Feuerbach, participating in religion still has merit because it provided opportunities for believers to explore both human consciousness and human nature. Feuerbach did thus not reject religious consciousness *per se*, but rather its anti-natural propensities as evident in religion. He also rejected of the anti-natural inclination of speculative philosophy which is found upon intuitive or *a priori* vision and particularly insight into the nature of God and rationalism.

Despite his philosophy influencing great thinkers such as Marx and Engels in the development of dialectical material which became Communist philosophy, Feuerbach's theory has not been established, and one needs to question if in fact all human beings desire the existence of a God. One could equally state that it is atheism as such, which is in fact a human projection. He also critiques the human-centered notions of Christianity but fails to see issues of faith relating to a divine Savior. His atheistic stance denies of God in the sense that it is in fact God who denies the cogency of the human nature. However, there is a huge difference between the psychology of human belief and the rationality of belief. Why would humans aspire to be found guilty before a God or for that matter seek to give any exaltation to a higher being? Feuerbach does not prove anything but raised more questions. Through carefully interrogating Feuerbach's theses, it is just as probable that a superior being or God actually exists. Even if religion is anthropology then it holds that God and man are identical and humans must concede that there is another being, which is not able to be simplified to the physical world. Feuerbach does not adequately explain how it is that because humans reason that they are objects that they projected for themselves a God. People could just as easily have come to realize that their self-consciousness is merely personal in nature and may thus have arrived at the conclusion that God does not exist. Feuerbach's maxim that humans created God in their own image can be overturned. If God created humans in His image, then they who now have God's nature can surely project Him who is similar to them. Feuerbach dismisses things that might be reckoned to be evidence that God is really far more than just a mere figment of imagination. He is also rather patronizing to suggest that people worship themselves by projecting a God.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of moral action in the relationship between theology and anthropology is unclear in Feuerbach's understanding. Consequently, for him theology must become anthropology. However, Christian theology which is basically interested in serving mankind, first speaks of God and then man. Its basis is its knowledge of the Incarnate Logos who is a philanthropic being of love. In this way there are guarantees for humans based on the grace of God that they can enjoy an authentic existence. Feuerbach's contribution to the inquiry into religious epistemology and the philosophy of religion is in fact negligible and his logic is seriously flawed. To say God is a human projection does not make this a true statement. Feuerbach believed that

humanity is negating its own nature and is, thereby, estranging itself from what it means to be human. Human values are not derived from a higher moral nature. Karl Barth rather sought to speak of transcendence in a novel way that restricts the extent to which Feuerbachian ideas can attack religion and theology and Paul Tillich also looked for a new ontology in which he could root the objective reality of the divine. We, thus, see that a number of theological traditions have sought to move away from Feuerbachian thinking, which is not surprising as it is highly atheistic in nature. Feuerbach assumed that religion would fade away and it in fact is flourishing globally. However, his denigrations of religion have been significant and many still find his work to be a credible account of the foundation for the credibility of religion.

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