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Feuerbach and the Unique One

The consequences of Feuerbach and their fight against criticism and the unique.

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The critic goes on his way unstoppable, certain of victory and victorious. He is defamed: he smiles. He is called a heretic: he smiles. The old world goes on a crusade against him: he smiles. - Max Stirner is the leader and general of the crusaders. At the same time, [he is] the most capable and bravest of all fighters. The political liberal, who wants to break self-will, and the social liberal, who wants to destroy property, fall before the unique one and his property. You fall before the critical knife of the unique one. Only the critical liberal who, in the opinion of the unique one, wants to deprive man of his egoism, his individuality - he does not want to fall before criticism because he himself is the critic. What is the unique one doing with him? No! he exclaims, nothing will come of it. My peculiarity is mine. I'll keep it; You can't and shouldn't take it from me, critic. He stretches his limbs and lies down. Hurrah!¹ I'm done now. All full², free from everything. I have set my affairs on nothing. - The unique one is the last place of refuge in the old world, the last refuge from where it can make its attacks on a form that is completely different from it and therefore unmistakable from it. The only thing is the substance, continued to its most abstract abstractness. This I, the unspeakable, not naming and not expressing properties, which has its content neither in the physical nor in the psychic world, much less in both, which is neither in heaven nor on earth, but God knows where in the air around staggers and wavers, lives and floats; this I, the most exalted, most powerful and vigorous egoism of the old world, but for that reason the impotence itself, the egoism, which shows how vain and fleeting, without support and life, the egoism of the old world was and must be; this I, not the self-consciousness that leans on itself and directs the world by itself, not the self-reliant personality, not the person who binds and loosens with his strength and rules the world because he just has the power in his hands, but the ego, which needs hypocrisy, deceit, external violence, petty persuasion to support its egoism - this ego is the substance in its hardest harshness, "the ghost of all ghosts," the completion and the climax of a bygone era. -

Feuerbach was never able to harm the critic. He let him drive on in his triumphant chariot and collect new triumphs. Or rather, he fought the most honorable fight the past could fight criticism: he was silent. -

Not so with the unique one. Here Feuerbach found an equal opponent with whom he could and would measure himself, a dogmatist. "*The Essence of*

1 [Bauer says Juchhe! - Tr.]

2 [I have used 'vol' instead of 'los' - Tr.]

Christianity' in relation to the 'The Unique One and His Property'”, Wigand's Quarterly, 1845. Second Volume, pp. 193-205. Feuerbach:

“I have put my business on nothing” says the unique one. But isn't nothing also a predicate of God, isn't the sentence: God is nothing, a saying of religion? So the “egoist” has also put his cause on God! So he too still belongs to the “*pious atheists!*”

- Right. Just continued like this! - But Feuerbach cannot slaughter the unique one as a result of his criticism, because he is interested, because he wants to defend his system against another, because he criticizes theologically, because he wants to have said what he did not say and does not want to have said what he said. Feuerbach is therefore no longer allowed to understand himself and his earlier writings - that is the curse of all criticism controlled inwardly. Like an earlier statement:

“As far as my relationship to Strauss and Bruno Bauer, in association with whom I am always mentioned, is concerned, I only draw your attention to the fact that the difference between our works is already indicated in the difference in the subject, as indicated by the title. B. has as the object of his criticism the evangelical history, i.e. biblical Christianity, or rather biblical theology, St. Christian doctrine and the life of Jesus, which can also be subsumed under the title of Christian doctrine, i.e. dogmatic Christianity or rather dogmatic theology, I Christianity in general, that is, the Christian religion and as a consequence only Christian philosophy or theology.”

- Just as Feuerbach here already reveals an ignorance about himself and his surroundings, so he has made remarkable progress in this theological criticism, as he shows in the case of the unique one. He wants to defend the essence of Christianity against the unique one. As if there was no difference between 1841 and 1845. As if a work that was a strange phenomenon in 1841 because it stood in time and intervened in time, still had value for development in 1845, i.e. is still standing in time, could still intervene to make an epoch. Then it would have been of no use in 1841, and would have never been in and about time, as it was at all. - Of course, Feuerbach learned nothing and forgot nothing. With him the world still stands on the standpoint taken by the essence of Christianity, for his philosophy of the future with its materialism already broke through in the essence of Christianity. - Let's follow Feuerbach in his struggle with the unique one. -

The unique one: Feuerbach himself says that it is only about the destruction of an illusion. - Feuerbach: Yes; but an illusion with which all illusions, all prejudices, all unnatural barriers of man disappear, even if not for the first time; for the basic illusion, the basic prejudice, the basic limit of man is God as the subject. But whoever spends his time and energy on the dissolution of the basic illusion and the basic barrier cannot be expected to dissolve the derived illusions and barriers at the same time. So Feuerbach cannot think so far and follow where the unique one wants to go. The unique one really tries to destroy the substance from the ground up. That he does not know that this is impossible for a dogmatist - that is his fault; hence the irony that plays with him, namely that he supports substance by trying to overthrow it. Feuerbach cannot even think of

trying to destroy the substance. He lets "the divine" exist because he "has to let it exist", "otherwise he could not even let nature and man exist". Of course, not this theologized man and this specter of nature. But what is also up to them? Why should man and nature persist? Feuerbach cannot get rid of the religious categories; he only knows "atheism" and therefore does not get rid of God. -

The unique one: Feuerbach's theological view consists in the fact that he divides us into an essential and insignificant ego and presents the species, the human being, an abstract, an idea as our true essence in contrast to the real individual ego as the insignificant. - Feuerbach: unique one! have you fully read the essence of Christianity? Impossible; because what is the subject, the core of this writing? Solely the abolition of the split into an essential and insignificant ego - the deification, i.e. H. the position, the recognition of the whole person from head to heel. If the deity of the individual is not explicitly stated at the end as the dissolved mystery of religion. Doesn't it even say, "Eating and drinking is a divine act?" But is eating and drinking an act of an idea, an abstract? The only writing in which the catchphrase of modern times, personality, individuality has ceased to be a meaningless phrase, is precisely the essence of Christianity, for only the negation of God is the position of the individual, and only sensuality is the well-met Sense of individuality. - Probably the unique one who has read the essence of Christianity completely and understood it even better than Feuerbach himself. However, if it is a "divine act", eating and drinking is "the act of an idea, an abstract," which is not man handles, but that is so kind and gracious as to keep man by himself, and the end of the essence of Christianity therefore shows nothing of the recognition of the whole man. However, "only the negation of God is the position of the individual", but not just "the negation of God as subject," but also and above all the negation of God as substance, as a species being that has man, as man who is the "God of man", as sensuality, which is the hardened and petrified substance, the fantastic expression for God, - and not only the negation, but the complete abolition, annihilation and blurring of all transcendence, it may be called whatever it will, and be where she wants. - That is solely the position of the personality, the personality, which is no longer a "meaningless phrase". Feuerbach's sensuality, on the other hand, which is supposed to be the well-chosen sense of individuality, is nothing more than, in contrast to Stirner, one side of Spinoza's substance. While Stirner has raised the selective ego, the "thinking" brought to the extreme, which is one attribute of substance, on the shield, Feuerbach brings the other, "expansion" and restores it in "sensuality." -

"For F. the individual is the absolute, that is, the true, real being. But why does he not say: this exclusive individual? Because then he would not know what he wants - from the standpoint which he negates, the standpoint of religion This is precisely the essence of religion, at least in this respect, that it selects a single individual from a class or species and contrasts it with the other individuals as sacred and inviolable. This person, this "unique", "incomparable" person. This Jesus Christ is God, this oak, this grove, this bull, this day is holy, not the rest." - But does Stirner choose a single individual from the species? Does he even know the idea of Feuerbach's genre? But Feuerbach continues: "Give the particular individual no less than he deserves, but no more either. This is the only way you

free yourself from the chains of Christianity. To be an individual means to be an "egoist", but it also means at the same time to be a communist. Take things as they are, i.e. take yourself as you are, because how you take things, you take yourself and vice versa. Beat the "unique one" in heaven, but beat yourself that too "Unique" on earth from the head." - Who is he who commands, who is he who is commanded: give! Isn't the human species again, general reason, in the background? Give, she says, his fees to the individual. But what if they were not given to the Feuerbachian individual? Now if Feuerbach did not take things as they are; but if he only took them as he spins them out in his philosophical brain, how can they live in his heaven of philosophy? How? What if the individual were only "egoist" and not also "communist", only "egoist", if not Max Stirner's either? - Does Feuerbach oppose Stirner's assertions with something other than assertions and thus not one is as right as the other, aren't both wrong? - But "follow your senses!" - calls Feuerbach. "Follow your senses!" he says the second time, when you should have missed it. "Where the meaning begins, religion stops and philosophy ends, but you have the simple, sheer truth for it. Here before your eyes is a feminine beauty: you exclaim in delight: it is incomparably beautiful. But see! It is written there at the same time before the same eyes a masculine beauty. Now will you not necessarily compare the two? And if you do not do so, in order to insist on your incomparability, the two beauties will not compare themselves with one another, they will not be surprised at their equality in spite of them of the difference, about their difference in spite of the equality? Will they not involuntarily call out to each other: you are "what" I am, and finally refute their exclusivity in the name of man by enclosing each other? "I only love this unique one," says the unique one; Me too, even if I am a very communal person, but is this only woman you love an ape, a donkey, a dog³, isn't it a human woman? "I am more than a person," says the unique one. But are you also more than a man? Is your essence or rather - because the word essence is spurned by the "egoist", although it immediately says the same thing - your ego not a male? Can you separate masculinity even from what is called spirit? Isn't your brain, the most sacred, highest-placed entrails of the body, determined by men? are your feelings, your thoughts unmanly? But are you an animal male, a dog, a monkey, a stallion? So what is different from your "unique, incomparable", your consequently sexless self, as an undigested remainder of the old Christian supernaturalism?" - "Follow the senses! you are a man through and through - the ego, which you separate in your thoughts from your sensual, masculine being, is a product of abstraction that has just as much or as little reality as the platonic table-ness in distinction from the real tables. But as a man you essentially relate necessarily to another ego or being - to a woman. So if I want to recognize you as an individual, I must not only limit my recognition to you, but at the same time extend it beyond you to your wife. The recognition of the individual is necessarily the recognition of at least two individuals. But two has no end and meaning; two are followed by three, and the woman is followed by the child. But unique one, incomparable child? No! love drives you inexorably beyond this one. Even the sight of the child is so lovely, so powerful that it irresistibly creates in you the desire for

3 ['Hündin', meaning 'female dog', i.e. a bitch - Tr.]

several of its kind. There is only one thing that egoism wants, but love wants a lot."-

Follow your senses! then you have the simple sheer truth i.e become sensuality, become a stick and you are the truth. Follow your senses! and you have the truth, you are a finished, a past, a rotten person. Follow your senses! and you don't need to work any more, because you have the truth, you are one with the divine, needless nature. - But, good Feuerbach, the unique one will answer, do you no longer see with your senses either? Do you not see that feminine beauty is different from masculine and masculine from feminine totally? Do you not see that both beauties have no point of unity and do not tolerate any comparison and that whoever compares them only finds a Platonic tableness, nothing more in both than the abstract, dead, meaningless word: beauty? Are not all traits of feminine beauty different from those of masculine? Doesn't the beauty of women lie in the delicate, the soft, the feminine, and that of the man in the strong, in the mighty, in the masculine? Do not swelling, rounded limbs and a swaying, undulating physique alone form the beauty of women, while that of men consists in the muscular, grainy, bony, pithy? - "I only love this one," says the unique. And Feuerbach? "Me too, but only the human woman. Because is this only woman you love an ape, a donkey, a dog?" - No, she is not, the unique one opposes him, but also a human woman only insofar as one of her predicates is also being human. She is a woman, nothing more, the woman, this particular, this only woman from head to toe. Communist, why do you love this woman in particular? Say why this? Shouldn't you love everyone, everyone, in the sense that it doesn't matter to you which of the women you embrace, because they are all "women"? You only love this one, because you are an egoist, because she is one, because you can only form an association with one person. You only enclose this unique one - not this one - because you are an egoist, because the like does not need to enclose itself first, but is always encased because only the exclusive must enclose itself. So stay at home with your pathetic, pulpit eloquent phrase: "In the name of man they refute their exclusivity by enclosing each other." No, not in a name, in any name, just because they want it to, are mutually exclusive. - "I am more than a person" says the unique one. And Feuerbach? Are you more than a man too? he asks curiously. But also more than a man, is the only answer. My ego is also masculine, but it also has several characteristics, it is also a feeling and a thinking one. And even if feeling and thinking are male determined, then masculinity is again determined by feeling and thinking, namely by the unique feeling and thinking of this single person. And if this person were a man through and through and nothing more, how can and how can Feuerbach compare male beauty with female beauty? - Your unique, incomparable self is consequently sexless, - concludes Feuerbach. Who entitles you to this conclusion? calls Stirner. As if my ego, I, this unique one, did not also have this specific, and above all other, unique sex and these specific, unique sexual organs. As if I weren't the unique one because of this particular gender. Feuerbach, follow your senses! then you will find that your ego cannot be separated from your sensual, masculine nature, but that your manhood is also only a determinateness, a quality of your ego, which it embraces and encloses, and with which it is only for that reason to the other, only I, to this only woman - not to another I, not to the woman - because she wants to, because she sees

one single I, another single I outside of herself. - You mean, in order to recognize me as an individual, you also have to recognize my wife. Yes, but only because she is my wife; whether you acknowledge woman at all is all the same to me, only "mine" you should and must acknowledge, because you must acknowledge "me". And you deduce from this, because you must recognize my wife as she is mine, that the recognition of the individual is necessarily the recognition of at least two individuals? - Feuerbach, have you really read me, the unique one, completely? And when you have read me, you have really understood me so badly that you think I only have to deal with the number one and therefore, without being ridiculous, you have to go from one to two, from two to three, from three are allowed to count on to four etc.? - Not one thing does egoism want in general, but uniquely: every specimen.

The unique one: "F. escapes from faith into love." - Feuerbach: "Oh how wrong! F. moves with firm, secure steps from the realm of speculative and religious dreams into the land of reality, from the abstract being of man into the real whole being of the same, but love alone does not exhaust the whole being of man. To love also includes understanding, the "law of intelligence;" an unconscious love does not differ in its effects from hate, because it does not know what is useful or harmful, useful or inappropriate. Why does F. emphasize love in this way? Because there is no other practical and organic transition from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of man, presented by the object itself, than love, for love is practical atheism, the negation of God in the heart, in the mind, indeed." - "Every love is selfish, because I cannot love what contradicts me; I can only love what satisfies me, what makes me happy; that is, I cannot love anything else without loving myself at the same time. But nevertheless is a well-founded difference between what is called selfish, egoistic and what is called disinterested love. Which? in brief: in selfish love the object is your courtesan, in unselfish love your lover. There I satisfy myself, as here, but there I subordinate the essence to a part, here the part, the means, the organ to the whole, the essence, there I satisfy only a part of myself for that very reason, but here I satisfy myself, my whole, whole being. In selfish love I sacrifice the higher to the lower, consequently a higher enjoyment to a lower, in unselfish love I sacrifice the lower to the higher." -

Feuerbach fills the Christian gospel with his gospel of love: Christianity is love in its conception and essence. But love is "the primordial philistine" of humanity, the perfection of calmness, the climax of the emptying and hollowing out of man. Love is a product of weakness, of man's indolence and helplessness in and with himself: it is produced by the need to look for something other than oneself, to go beyond oneself. It is a testimony that man cannot determine himself, but is determined from outside, through and for others. It is the objectively posed lack of self-confidence and personality. It is the sign that man has no will, i.e. H. that he is not human. Love has to go beyond itself, surrender and surrender, surrender and give up - an uninterrupted festival of sacrifices. Before love, everything that makes man human must disintegrate and "lifted high on the shoulders of slaves proclaims the sole rule of - willlessness." "Not my will, but yours be done." - The bride of Corinth utters those cruel words with which the horrific crime of love against freedom is exposed:

"Victims fall here
 Neither lamb nor bull,
 But unheard of human sacrifices! "

Love is not "without understanding," but also not understanding, because it only knows its laws, not those of the understanding. Love is not "atheistic", but the reason for all worship. Love is not egoistic, but communistic, because it does nothing for its sake, everything for the sake of others. The accent for love rests on the higher, on the other to whom it has to surrender. Love is selfish only insofar as man cannot endure it in himself and with himself, the poor, the low, surrendering himself to something higher - but is this still self-interested? - otherwise she is unselfish: she gives herself up, - gives up. The real, personal, self-confident man is not love because there is nothing for him but himself, only he determines himself, because he owes his existence to no external impetus, to anything higher, but to himself, because he is creator and creature in one. The real, personal, self-confident man has love, he consumes it, not it him, it is his quality; He surrenders himself to the other because he wants, not because he has to, he lives for the other because he has made himself worthy of him, because he deserves it; in a word: for him love does not exist because it does not impress him. - Feuerbach's love is love "in the fantastic, supranaturalistic sense." Because if he also says: "To be means to love oneself." "No being can negate himself" - does he not distinguish between selfish and unselfish love? And what can disinterested love, which is for him the only love, be otherwise than giving up and surrendering to oneself for no benefit, as an undemanding absorption in the higher? Doesn't every unselfish love have to know something "higher" for which it is unselfish? But can man still love this higher one, or must he not rather show him love? Does the higher not have the lower, but can the lower also have the higher? - As long as man knows something "higher", love has him, and love "in the supranaturalistic sense" - there is no other.

"'We are always perfect' says the unique one true and beautiful; but at the same time we feel limited and imperfect because we are necessary - necessary, because we are reflecting beings - we do not only compare with others, but also with ourselves, by holding together what we have become with what we could possibly have become under different circumstances, where should we free ourselves from this feeling of limitation, if not in the thought of the unlimited species, that is, in the thought? Other people, other happier times? Whoever does not, therefore, substitute the species for the deity leaves a gap in the individual which is necessarily filled by the idea of a god, that is, the personified nature of the species. Only the species is capable to abolish and to replace the deity at the same time. To have no religion means to think only of oneself; to have religion: to think of others. And this religion is the one that remains alone, at least as long as there is not a 'single' person on earth; for just as we only have two people, like man and woman, we already have religion. Two, difference is the origin of religion - that you are the God of I, for I am not without you; I depend on you; no you - no me."

Can we defend Feuerbach if he wants to be religious? No. Each person is what he can be and becomes what he can become, because everyone is his own creature, his own creation. We cannot and do not want to defend him, but we

can tell him that he is not a human being and that he cannot create human beings, but only religious creatures, believers. The real man is enough for himself. He is not changed and transformed by any passion. He cannot be determined, but determines himself from himself. "He hears himself and finds in this self-understanding the drive to self-determination: he only acts by hearing himself." It is his absolute privilege to use his own strength to reconcile all conflict within and around himself. He releases himself from all fetters and - is released. He is always and himself the greatest and can be the greatest through himself and in himself and with himself. That is why he does not depend on any you, on any god or person - only on himself. - The true man only knows what he has become, not what he will become, - he does not ask for it either. He has no goal and no longing for a goal; for he is perfect on every point because he is what he could and could only become - man. He could not become anything other than man, than this man, because for him there are no other conditions than those in which he became, for him therefore no path than that on which he has walked. Reflection on and about what one could have become if this and that and that etc. had become and came is - religion. - The religious Feuerbach has that. He can draw on his: Follow the senses! only in the thoughts of the unrestricted species, to save and flee into eternal bliss, rather he has remained what he was, because his: Follow the senses! is and was just a thought. - He must immediately put something when he takes something, again to cover the place where he clears with rubble - that is his destiny - He has one, - his profession, his task; his sense of limitation forces him to do so. - In this he agrees with the unique; for the uniqueness that he sets up is also only the flight from science and the love for something fixed and definite. Feuerbach and the sole therefore only quarreled in their mutual criticism. "O how wrong!" "Yes." "No" - the testimonies of powerlessness and weakness - both refute each other, because with it everyone withdraws into his egoism, into his slowness.

The unique one: "Feuerbach dresses his materialism with the property of idealism." - Feuerbach: "Oh, this claim is out of thin air. F., the unique one! is neither an idealist nor a materialist. For F. God, spirit, soul, I are mere abstractions, but his body is just as good, Matter, the body are mere abstractions. Truth, essence, reality are only sensuality to him. But have you ever felt or seen a body, a matter? You have only seen and felt this water, this fire, these stars, these stones, these trees, these animals, these people: always and always only very specific, sensual, individual things and beings, but always neither bodies nor souls, neither spirits nor bodies. But still less is F. an idealist in the sense of absolute identity, which the two abstractions are united in a third abstraction. So F. is neither a materialist, nor an idealist, nor a philosopher of identity? Well, what then? He is with thoughts what he is in deed, in spirit, what he is in flesh, in essence, what he is in senses - man; or rather, since F. only transfers the essence of man to the community -: common man, communist."

Feuerbach presents himself and hereby faces the unique one. He is and wants his communist, this is and should be his egoist; He the saint, this the profane; He the good, this the bad; He the God, this man; Both - dogmatists.

While Stirner with his abstract egoism does not get any further and does not move, but at the beginning is already at the end because a "Hurrah!" occupies

and matters his whole life, a "Hurrah!" - all the burdens of his life are shooed away, "a jolt" provides him with the most careful thought, "a stretching of the limbs" shakes off the torments of thought and "a jumping up" hurls the alp of the religious world from his chest: Feuerbach's dogmatism is one thing going on and capable of development. He is already kept the same.⁴

Translated by E.G., October 2020

4 'Er hat dieselbe bereits erhalten.'