



## Ludwig Feuerbach and the Formation of the Marxian Revolutionary Idea

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# Ludwig Feuerbach and the Formation of the Marxian Revolutionary Idea

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is a most curious coincidence and one of profound interest that both the chroniclers of western democratic ideas and the father of Communism agree in seeing in the seventeenth century revival of Stoic ideas and of those of the other post-Aristotelian schools a great step in the direction of human freedom. The point of agreement seems to lie in this : that Aristotle's division of the reason into speculative and practical had left the speculative or theoretical reason bound to an order of things which it cannot change or affect : the whole order of nature, for example, including the natural bases of society.<sup>1</sup> In the philosophies of conduct that arose after the death of Aristotle, the chroniclers of western democratic ideas have long professed to see a transforming of the theoretical mind into a practical critique of the mundane reality which exists independently of it. We are told, for example, that the new philosophies of conduct, refusing to see the "natural inequalities" that Aristotle had insisted upon, declared all men to be equal<sup>2</sup>; that unlike, it is alleged, Aristotle's political philosophy which could understand law only in terms of the state, the new philosophies made possible the conceiving of the state in terms of law<sup>3</sup>; that a new sense of human dignity is introduced, a sense which put the limit of human person-

1. It may be well here to clarify very briefly this point of Aristotle's philosophy. The whole of natural science belongs to the order of speculative, not practical science even though sciences such as medicine, the mechanical arts, industrial chemistry, etc., are sciences of operation; for these operative sciences are not classed under physics or chemistry as a part in the sense that physics or chemistry assign the formal reasons of those things about which medicine, industrial chemistry, etc. are concerned, but these operative sciences are classed under physics and chemistry in the sense that the principle or reason of the operation of art ought to derive from the properties of natural things. St. Thomas explains the matter as follows : "... One science may be contained under another as subordinate to it, when, namely, in the higher science there is assigned the formal reason or cause of those things about which, in the lower science, we know only that they are [and not their formal reason] as, for example, the science of music is contained under the science of arithmetic. Thus medicine is not classed under physics as a part; for the subject of medicine [the human body] is not a part of the subject of natural science in the same way as it is a part of medical science. Although the curable body is a natural body, it is not, however, the subject of medicine inasmuch as it is curable by nature, but as it is curable by art. Since, however, in the healing which is effected by art, art is the minister of nature (because some natural power, aided by art, is the cause of healing), the principle or reason of the operation of art ought to derive from the properties of natural things. And thus medicine is subordinated to physics; and in the same way ... the science of agriculture, and all other sciences of the same order.

Thus it remains that physics in itself and in all its parts is a speculative science; although some operative sciences are subordinated to it" (*In de Trinitate*, q.5, a.1, ad 5).

2. R. W. CARLYLE and A. J. CARLYLE, *A History of Mediaeval Political Theory in the West* (Edinburgh and London, 1930), Vol. I, p.9.

3. CHARLES H. MCILWAIN, *Constitutionalism, Ancient and Modern* (Cornell University Press, 1940), p.41.

ality on the moral worth that man by his own judgment attributes to himself.<sup>1</sup>

In the Roman virtue of *humanitas* we have perhaps the most finished expression of the new political philosophy and of its conception of human freedom and dignity. Professor Cassirer has written :

If we study the classical works of Greek ethics, for example, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, we find there a clear and systematic analysis of the different virtues, of magnanimity, temperance, justice, courage, and liberality, we do *not* find the general virtue called "humanity" (*humanitas*). Even the term seems to be missing from the Greek language and literature. The ideal of *humanitas* was first formed in Rome ; and it was especially the aristocratic circle of the younger Scipio that gave it its firm place in Roman culture. *Humanitas* was no vague concept. It had a definite meaning, and it became a formative power in private and public life in Rome. It meant not only a moral but also an æsthetic ideal ; it was the demand for a certain type of life that had to prove its influence in the whole of man's life, in his moral conduct as well as in his language, his literary style, and his taste.<sup>2</sup>

We can get an understanding of the meaning of this virtue if we inquire why it is missing in Aristotle. It had been Aristotle's teaching that the intellectual nature as it is found in man is extremely weak, a weakness which is in part consequent upon the contrariety of the reason and the senses in man. It is because of this that Aristotle in the first book of the *Metaphysics* remarks that "the possession of Wisdom might be justly regarded as beyond human power ; for in many ways human nature is enslaved."<sup>3</sup> The speculative life is not as proportionate to human nature as is the practical life, but it is nonetheless the better life because it is concerned with things that are better than man.<sup>4</sup> The Roman virtue of *humanitas* precisely emphasized those elements in man that are most proportionate to his nature ; and because practical knowledge, as Aristotle observes, has to do with things operable by man, the virtue of *humanitas* included, as Professor Cassirer notices, not only a moral but an æsthetic ideal ; and when Professor Cassirer says that *humanitas* was a demand for a certain type of life that had to prove itself in the whole of man's life, in his moral conduct as well as in his language, his literary style, and his taste, he very rightly and significantly omits any reference to the life which Aristotle called "too high for man."

It is the revival, in the seventeenth century, of these ideas that scholars seem agreed to consider the birth of modern democratic philosophy, because for the first time the political significance of these ideas emerges.<sup>5</sup>

1. ERNST CASSIRER, *The Myth of the State* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1946), pp.169-170. Professor Cassirer writes : "Stoic philosophy could not help man to solve the metaphysical riddles of the universe. But it contained a greater and more important promise : the promise to restore man to his ethical dignity. This dignity, it asserted . . . rests exclusively on the moral will — on the worth that man attributes to himself."

2. *Ibid.*, p.102.

3. *Metaphysics*, I, chap.2, 982b28.

4. *Ethics*, VI, chap.7, 1141a20.

5. Professor Carlyle's (*op. cit.*, p.9) statement is that "There is no change in political theory so startling in its completeness as the change from the theory of Aristotle to the later

The special character of seventeenth century political philosophy becomes clear, says Professor Cassirer, "if, instead of analyzing its first principles, we look at its general method."<sup>1</sup> And what is this method?

The doctrine of the state-contract becomes in seventeenth century a self-evident axiom of political thought . . . This fact marks a great and decisive step. For if we adopt this view, if we reduce the legal and social order to free individual acts, to a voluntary contractual submission of the governed, all mystery is gone . . . If we can trace the state to such an origin, it becomes a perfectly clear and understandable fact.<sup>2</sup>

And Professor Sabine agrees that the surpassing importance of the modernized theory of natural law in the seventeenth century was due not to its content but to the methodology. "The importance [of it] was methodological . . . It was essentially an appeal to the reason, as the ancient versions had always been, but it gave a precision to the meaning of reason such as it had not had in an equal degree in antiquity."<sup>3</sup> What does this mean? We have called attention to Aristotle's remark that the life of the speculative reason is "too high for man"; because of this there is in man a tendency to accord primacy to what Aristotle called the practical reason — the reason that is concerned with human things, with morals and art. Now in practical knowledge — insofar as it is practical and prescind-ing from its dependence on the speculative reason — the intelligence is the measure of its object. The "precision" which is given to reason by the seventeenth century theoreticians (to which Professor Sabine alludes) is the independence that is recognized for it from the "givenness" of things: It will no longer need in any sense to "find" the nature of man and of society: it will make a world of its own.<sup>4</sup> The idea of contract is well suited to express a naturalness which demands an innate social propensity which is raised to the level of a sufficient explanation of social groupings in such a way as to leave no law to be observed which in any sense is imposed from without, but to leave only a "natural law" which the moral subject gives to himself. And this is what Professor Cassirer means when he says that the rejuvenation of Stoic ideas restored man to his "ethical dignity": the dignity is ethical in the sense that it comes not from the worth that man can by his nature achieve, but simply from the worth that man attributes to himself.

The acceptance of these ideas by Marx is equally as hearty as is their acceptance by scholars in the democratic tradition; but his appreciation of them is perhaps more astute. The post-Aristotelian philosophies were, according to Marx's view, a natural outcome of the Aristotelian system

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philosophical view represented by Cicero and Seneca"; for it is here that "we are indeed at the beginnings of a theory of human nature and society of which the 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' of the French Revolution is only the present-day expression."

1. *Op. cit.*, p.172.

2. *Ibid.*

3. GEORGE H. SABINE, *A History of Political Theory* (New York, 1937), p.425.

4. It may be observed that eighteenth century Rationalism is fundamentally "practical"; for the "givenness" of nature is considered to be perfectly attainable by unaided human reason, which therefore substitutes its reasons for the Divine *logoi*, by which the universe is made.

which "closes itself into a completed, total world" and which thereby forces its heirs to turn against their age. Professor Sabine calls these post-Aristotelian schools "philosophies of revolt and escape"; and Marx observes that "it is a psychological law that the theoretical mind, when it becomes free in itself, is transformed into practical energy, and as *will* turns against the mundane reality which exists independently of it."<sup>1</sup> This is an important step, but it results in an intolerable attitude of half contemplation and half action.<sup>2</sup> The bourgeois revolutions and their rights of man, inspired as they were by the revival of post-Aristotelian philosophy, particularly of the Stoic conception of the *autarky* of human reason, retained, Marx observes, the same spirit of individual revolt against mundane reality that had characterised all the post-Aristotelian schools. The achievement of man's political emancipation in the eighteenth century "constitutes a great progress," but it is not "the final form of human emancipation but (only) the last form . . . within the actual social order."<sup>3</sup> Marx points out that "None of the pretended rights of man goes beyond the egoistic man, man such as he is, a member of bourgeois society, that is to say, an individual separated from the community, folded back on himself, uniquely occupied with his own private interests."<sup>4</sup> The final emancipation of man (which Marx calls "human" as distinguished from merely "political") can be achieved only with the resolution of the conflict between the theoretical mind (which, though it has assuredly won its independence from the "givenness" of things, remains frustrated) and the mundane reality which exists independently of it. If philosophy is to be made capable of advancing beyond the theoretical declarations of the seventeenth century philosophers, the Aristotelian division of speculative and practical reason needs to be corrected by transposing into practice an attitude toward the whole of nature that Aristotle had reserved to the speculative intellect. This means that man must come to see that he *is* all that he knows, and that he is the act whereby all things are made — all things humanly significant, which becomes the totality of significance. The Stoic principle of the *autarky* of human reason remains frustrated because in turning against mundane reality which exists independently of it, the theoretical mind alienates properly human forces, as we see in those declarations of independence which left the egoistic man separated from the community, from the political community which is allowed to substitute for the true life of man. A more radical independence is to be found only on condition that philosophy pass into the world itself, as a radical critique, that it be transposed into practice.

1. KARL MARX, *Über die Differenzen der demokratischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie* (Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*), Sec.I, Vol.I, Pt.I, p.1. It has been pointed out that Marx expressly mentions the fact that the subject for his doctoral dissertation was suggested by his awareness of the parallel between the post-Aristotelian philosophy and the post-Hegelian philosophy. Vd. ERIC VÖGELIN, "The formation of the Marxian Revolutionary Idea," in *Review of Politics*, July, 1950, p.275.

2. *Ibid.*, p.131.

3. *Die Judenfrage* (Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*), Sec.I, Vol.I, Pt.I, pp.585-86.

4. *Ibid.*, p.595.

The conception basic to this final step is the conception of the "generic being of man." What does Marx understand by this notion?

## II. MARX AND THE GENERIC BEING OF MAN

All hitherto existing forms of society are manifestations of the fundamental conflict between the theoretical mind and the mundane reality which exists independently of it. In a philosophical system such as Aristotle's, the theoretical mind, free in itself, "closes itself into a completed total world," emancipates itself from the real world and devotes itself to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, etc. But, as we have observed, it is a psychological law, says Marx, that the theoretical mind, when it becomes free in itself, is transformed into practical energy, and as *will* turns against the mundane reality which exists independently of it; the heirs of a system such as Aristotle's naturally turn toward a philosophical practice and critique of the age. This is a step forward, and indeed the only step possible if philosophy is to be made capable of advancing in a straight line. But as long as the theoretical mind remains critical from the outside, it perpetuates a radical opposition between itself and material reality. What remains to be solved is precisely this "antagonism between man and nature . . . the struggle between origin and being . . . between liberty and necessity, between the individual and the species."<sup>1</sup> The solution lies in understanding that "the relation of man to nature is directly his relation to man, just as the relation of nature to man is directly his own relation to the origin of his own natural determination."<sup>2</sup> This is what Marx calls the generic natural relation," in which man is "a conscious generic being, . . . a being which relates itself to the species as to his own proper being, or which relates itself to itself as a generic being."<sup>3</sup>

The relation of man to nature is directly his relation to man, and once this is understood the antagonisms between man and nature, origin and being, liberty and necessity, individual and species cease to exist. It is necessary, then, to see that man's relation to nature is directly his relation to man if we are to understand man's total independence; for "a being . . . is his own master only when it is to himself that he owes his existence."<sup>4</sup> Marx writes:

A man who lives by the grace of another considers himself as a dependent being. But I live completely by the grace of another when I owe to him not only the maintenance of my life but when it is he who, moreover, has *created* my life, who is the source of my life, and my life has necessarily its reason outside of itself if it is not my own creation.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Ökonomische-philosophische Manuskript 1844* (Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*), Sec.I, Vol.III, p.114.

2. *Ibid.*, p.113.

3. *Manuscrit économique-philosophique*, XXIV. Cited in *De Marx au Marxisme*, éd. Flore, p.95.

4. *Ökonomische-philosophische Manuskript*, *op. cit.*, p.124.

5. *Ibid.*, p.124.



It is, Marx says, understandably difficult to eradicate from the popular conscience the sense of dependence : understandably difficult because, as Marx admits, man's self-existence and self-dependence are conceptions that go " against all the *given evidences* of the practical life." If this is the case, then it is obvious that we must proceed in a fashion at once extraordinarily subtle and extraordinarily blunt. Contrary to all the given evidences of the practical life we must offer " evident and irrefutable proof of [man's] birth of himself, of his origin." How does Marx present the " evident and irrefutable proof " ?

It is in working upon inorganic nature, says Marx, that man proves that he is a conscious generic being. Nature and man are each " their own master," but man is a kind of " master chef " ; for in the achievement of human nature the whole of nature finds its achievement. Animals other than man are producers too, but they produce only their immediate needs, for themselves and their offspring. The bee, the ant, the beaver, all produce their shelters, but they produce " unilaterally " while man produces " universally. "

The animal works only within the limits of and following the needs of the species to which it belongs, while man can produce beyond the limits of any species and apply to the object the measure which is inherent in him. That is why man can also fashion things according to the laws of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, while " the animal only produces himself . . . man reproduces the whole of nature. He proves himself in this way a conscious generic being, for he thus relates himself to the species as to his own proper being, and relates himself to himself as a generic being. " <sup>2</sup> We must see at once, and quickly, that both nature and man are their own masters because nature achieves itself in man who " reproduces the whole of nature." Man produces most properly when he is free from physical need, and when he sets himself up freely in the face of his production. Man differs then, from the animal in this, that he is not limited to the satisfaction of primary needs. In *The German Ideology* we read :

We must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence, and therefore of all history, the premise namely that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to " make history. " But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life . . .

The second fundamental point is that as soon as a need is satisfied (which implies the action of satisfying, and the acquisition of an instrument), new needs are made ; and this production of new needs is the first historical act . . .

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship. By social we understand the cooperation of

1. *Manuscript économique-philosophique*, XXIV, *op. cit.*

2. *Ibid.*

several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a "productive force." Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence that the "history of humanity" must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange.<sup>1</sup>

It is then apparent that

... since, for the socialist man, all the pretended history of the world is nothing but the production of man by human work, ... the development of nature for man is the ... evident and irrefutable proof of the *birth* of himself, of *his origin*. From the fact of the *substantiality* of man, from the fact that man becomes practically sensible ... in nature ... it becomes impossible practically to ask if there exists a being outside of man, a being placed above that of nature and man. This question implies the non-essentiality of the nature of man ... Socialism ... takes its departure from the *theoretically and practically sensible conscience* of man in nature, considered as *being*.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that man works in the face of natural matter as a natural force. But we must see that his own "natural forces" are put in movement by him in order that he may "appropriate for himself natural matter under a form which can serve his own life," that is to say, under a form specifically human. Thus,

Work is first of all a phenomenon which unites man and nature ... In working upon nature which is outside of him, in the course of this movement and in transforming nature he changes also his own nature. He develops powers that are latent in him, and he submits the play of their forces to his own authority. We are not here speaking of the first, instinctive, animal forms of work; there is an immense gulf between the stage at which the worker prepares his merchandise for the market as a seller of his power of work, and the stage where human labor has as yet not gotten rid of the primitive forms of instinct. We are supposing work under a form specifically human. A spider accomplishes operations which resemble those of a weaver; a bee, by the construction of its cells of wax resembles more an architect. But that which before all else distinguishes the worst architect from the most skilled bee is that the former has constructed his cell in his head before he has put it in wax. At the conclusion of his work a result is brought about which from the very beginning already existed in the representation of the worker in an ideal manner. It is not merely a modification of forms which he brings about in nature; it is also a realization in nature of his ends. He knows that end, which defines itself as a law of the modalities of his action, and to which he must subordinate his will. This subordination is not an isolated act. Besides the effort of the organs which perform the work, there is required throughout the whole duration of the work an adequate will, which manifests itself under the form of attention ...<sup>3</sup>

From these considerations the root difference between man and brute becomes evident: human work is superior to that of the animal because by his intelligence and will (even though these latter are only products of matter

1. MARX and ENGELS, *The German Ideology* (International Publishers, New York), pp.16-17; 18.

2. *Ökonomische-philosophische Manuskript*, op. cit., p.125.

3. *Capital*, Pt.III, chap.7; Eng. trans., Mod. Lib., pp.197-198.



completely deprived of intelligence and will) man is more profoundly the cause of his work. In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels observes :

Man too arises by differentiation. Not only individually, by differentiation from a single egg cell to the most complicated organism that nature produces — no, also historically. When after thousands of years of struggle the differentiation of hand from foot, and erect gait, were finally established, man became distinct from the monkey and the basis was laid for the development of articulate speech and the mighty development of the brain that has since made the gulf between man and monkey an unbridgeable one. The specialization of the hand — this implies the *tool*, and the tool implies specific human activity, the transforming reaction of man on nature, production. Animals in the narrower sense also have tools, but only as limbs of their bodies : the ant, the bee, the beaver ; animals also produce, but their productive effect on surrounding nature in relation to the latter amounts to nothing at all. Man alone has succeeded in impressing his stamp on nature, not only by shifting the plant and animal world from one place to another, but also by so altering the aspect and climate of his dwelling place, and even the plants and animals themselves, that the consequences of his activity can disappear only with the general extinction of the terrestrial globe. And he has accomplished this primarily and essentially by means of the *hand*. Even the steam engine, so far his most powerful tool for the transformation of nature, depends, because it is a tool, in the last resort on the hand. But step by step with the development of the hand went that of the brain ; first of all consciousness of the conditions for separate practically useful actions, and later, among the more favoured peoples and arising from the preceding, insight into the natural laws governing them. And with the rapidly growing knowledge of the laws of nature the means for reacting on nature also grew ; the hand alone would never have achieved the steam engine if the brain of man had not attained a correlative development with it, and parallel to it, and partly owing to it. . .

But if animals exert a lasting effect on their environment, it happens unintentionally, and as far as the animals themselves are concerned, it is an accident. The further men become removed from animals, however, the more their effect on nature assumes the character of a premeditated, planned action directed towards definite ends known in advance. The animal destroys the vegetation of a locality without realising what it is doing. Man destroys it in order to sow field crops on the soil thus released, or to plant trees or vines which he knows will yield many times the amount sown. He transfers useful plants and domestic animals from one country to another and thus changes the flora and fauna of whole continents. More than this. Under artificial cultivation, both plants and animals are so changed by the hand of man that they become unrecognisable.

But all the planned action of all animals has never resulted in impressing the stamp of their will upon nature. For that, man was required.

In short, the animal merely *uses* external nature, and brings about changes in it simply by his presence ; man by his changes makes it serve his ends, *masters* it. This is the final, essential distinction between man and other animals, and once again it is labour that brings about this distinction.<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely in these profound differences between human work and that of the animal — differences which define “historical materialism” — that there arises the fundamental conflict to which we have adverted — the conflict between the theoretical mind and the mundane reality which exists independently of it. Because of the fecundity of his thought in work and in organizing work, man is exposed to the delusion that spirit (or mind) is

1. *Dialectics of Nature*, pp.17-18; 290; 291.

the primordial reality ; the relation of man to nature becomes, under this delusion, something other than his relation to man, and the relation of nature to man becomes something other than his own relation to the origin of his own natural determination. Man begins to cut himself off from the real world, to "manufacture" "pure" theory, theology, philosophy and every ideology. He "emancipates" himself from social life, and this emancipation begins with the division of work into manual (or material) and intellectual.

Division of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. From this moment onward, consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it is really conceiving something without conceiving something real ; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world, and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even if this theory, theology, ethics, etc., comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur as a result of the fact that existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production . . . <sup>1</sup>

When Marx speaks of "pure" theory, theology, etc., as efforts of man to emancipate himself from social life, this implies an alienation of man's generic being ; and this will be understood if we recall that "by social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner, and to what end," so that even forms of alienation (the state, religion, law, morals, science, spirit), are particular modes of social life, for they are modes of production and fall under its general laws. <sup>2</sup> It is therefore clear that since any form of human cooperation is a manifestation of social life, the emancipation from social life, of which Marx speaks, is to be understood properly as applying to any social form in which there takes place an alienation of man's generic being. That is to say, man loses his initial independence — the independence of "man's birth of himself, of his origin," the independence which resolves the antagonisms between man and nature, origin and being, liberty and necessity, individual and species because it asserts the "essentiality" of man, "the theoretically and practically sensible conscience of man in nature, considered as *being*." <sup>3</sup> The proper form of society is necessarily one in which each man is a "totality," is considered a generic being, and in which the common good of the whole universe is for each man his own self :

Man — to whatever degree . . . that he may be a particular individual and even though it may be precisely his particularity which makes of him an individual and the real common *individual* being — is as much at the same time the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of society thought and felt for itself . . . <sup>4</sup>

We must notice, then, that when Marx insists that man is a social being he is saying that "the individual life and the generic life of man are not

1. MARX and ENGELS, *The German Ideology*, p.20.

2. *Ökonomische-philosophische Manuskript*, op. cit., pp.114-115.

3. *Ibid.*, p.125.

4. *Ibid.*, p.117.

*different*”; the true social life means “a complete, conscious return, accomplished within the interior of the whole wealth of past development, of *man for himself*, as a social being, that is, insofar as man is human” (not animal or merely natural).<sup>1</sup> It is true that “the *mode* of existence of the individual life may be — and this necessarily — a more particular or a more general mode of the generic life, or the generic life may be an individual life more particular or more general”; for each of man’s human relationships — to see, to touch, to will, to act, to love, to taste, to think, in short, all of the organs of his individuality, which are immediate in their form of common organs, are, in their objective relationship, or in their comportment *vis à vis* the object, the appropriation of this object, the appropriation of the human reality. Thus the senses become human, from the subjective point of view as well as from the objective point of view when their objects become “human social objects: The eye has become a human eye when its object has become a human social object, coming from man and destined for man . . .”

From the fact that everywhere in Society the objective reality becomes for man the reality of human forces, human reality, and consequently, the reality of his own forces, all *objects* become for him the objectification of himself, objects which manifest and realize his individuality, *his* objects, i.e. the object of himself.<sup>2</sup>

The most general mode of the generic life is to be found in the activity of the general conscience “which is, as such, my *theoretical* existence as a social being,” or “the *theoretical* form of that of which the *real* common being is the living form.”<sup>3</sup> Thus,

As a generic conscience man manifests his real social life and simply restates his real existence in thought, as, inversely, the generic being manifests itself in the generic conscience and is, in its generality, as being thinking for itself.<sup>4</sup>

We have said above that the separation of the individual from his generic being begins with the division of work into intellectual and manual. “From this moment onward consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practise”; in other words, the general conscience flatters itself that it can conceive something other than itself as the theoretical form of that of which the real common being is the living form. The first alienation, therefore, which arises out of the division of work into intellectual and manual is a general or abstract form of alienation. The first alienation which operates in the domain of the conscience is that of religion. It is for this reason that

communism begins as soon as atheism begins; atheism is, at the beginning, still very far from being communism, all atheism holding . . . at the beginning, a preference for the abstract. The philanthropy of atheism is only then, at first, an abstract philo-

1. *Ibid.*, p.114.

2. *Ibid.*, p.119.

3. *Ibid.*, p.116.

4. *Ibid.*, p.117.

sophical philanthropy, while that of communism is immediately *real* and leads to action at once.<sup>1</sup>

We can see very immediately the significance of this if we recall that the generic being of man asserts the theoretically and practically sensible conscience of man in nature considered as being"; and therefore the true form of human society is not achieved until the *sensible* expression of human life alienated is also overcome. The material and sensible expression of human life alienated (private property) and its movement — production and consumption — are the sensible manifestations of the movement of all anterior production, namely, religion, the family, the state, law, morals, science, spirit, etc., which are only particular modes of production and fall under its general laws.<sup>2</sup> And thus it is that the ruling ideas of every epoch are simply "the *ideal expression* of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas."<sup>3</sup>

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, that is, the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it... The individuals composing the ruling class possess, among other things, consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in their whole range, hence among other things, rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age; thus, their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an "eternal law."<sup>4</sup>

It is easy to see that if "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas," the last form of human emancipation within the framework of the actual social order will be a political emancipation: the precise understanding of which is the emancipation not absolutely of man, but of the *State* from the ideas of a ruling class, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are no longer subject to the ruling class. This is the situation in the fully-developed political state. "Political" emancipation is accomplished by the "theoretical" and "political" suppression of religion and private property and of all the distinctions constituted by birth, social position, education and occupation. These are suppressed in the state which affirms itself purely and simply *state* by ignoring these illusions for purposes of voting and holding office.

In this kind of emancipation man achieves his liberty only through the *intermediary* of the state.

1. *Ibid.*, p.115.

2. *Ibid.*, pp.114-115.

3. *The German Ideology*, p.39.

4. *Ibid.*

The state is the intermediary between man and the liberty of man. Just as Christ is the intermediary whom man charges with all his [own] divinity, with all of his religious limitation, so the State is the intermediary which man charges with all of his humanity, with all of his human limitation.<sup>1</sup>

There must be no "intermediary" between man and the liberty of man; he must be his own master, find the independence which resolves the old antagonisms between origin and being, freedom and necessity, man and nature, individual and species. The "political emancipation" of man constitutes a great progress, but it is not the final form of human emancipation. For in the fully-developed State every man is equally considered as an isolated monad, not as a generic being. "Quite the contrary, the generic life itself, Society, appears as a frame external to the individual, as a limitation on his initial independence."<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, it is by the mediation of the state, it is politically, that man frees himself from a barrier by raising himself above this barrier, in contradiction with himself... The perfect political state, according to its essence, is the generic life of man by opposition to his material life. All the suppositions of this egoistic life continue to subsist in civil society outside of the political sphere, but as properties of bourgeois society. There, where the political state has reached its full development, man leads, not only in his thought, in conscience, but in reality in life, a double existence, celestial and terrestrial, the existence in the political community, where he considers himself as a general being, and the existence in civil society, where he works as a mere part, sees in other men simply means, is himself swallowed up in the role of a simple means, and becomes the plaything of forces extraneous to himself.<sup>3</sup>

The perfection of the state, then, is in no way opposed to all the suppositions of the egoistic life which continue to subsist in civil society outside the political sphere. Speaking of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1791) and of the Declaration of the Rights of Man (1793), Marx observes that "none of the pretended rights of man goes beyond the egoistic man, man such as he is, that is to say, an individual separated from society, fallen back upon himself, uniquely preoccupied with his own personal interests and obedient to his own *privé arbitraire*."<sup>4</sup> If political emancipation is, as Marx says, the last form of human emancipation within the actual social order, there is required for the complete return of man to his generic being the destruction of that civil society wherein all the suppositions of the egoistic life continue to subsist. "The complete, conscious return, accomplished within the interior of the whole wealth of past development, of man for himself, as a social being" requires the suppression not only of those alienations that operate in the domain of conscience — religion, the family, morals, science, spirit, the state — but it requires the suppression of the material and sensible expression of human life alienated. We have already observed that Marx considers private property to be "the

1. *Die Judenfrage*, op. cit., p.583.

2. *Ibid.*, p.595.

3. *Ibid.*, pp.582; 583; 584.

4. *Ibid.*, p.595.



sensible manifestation of the movement of all anterior production, that is to say, the realization of the reality of man."

The positive suppression of private property, as an appropriation of *human* life is therefore the positive suppression of every alienation, and thus the return of the man of religion, of the family, of the state, etc., to his *human* existence, that is to say, his social existence . . . Economic alienation is that of the *real life* — its suppression, therefore, embraces both [the theoretical and the practical] sides.<sup>1</sup>

In private property "all the physical and intellectual senses have . . . been replaced by the simple alienation of all the senses, the sense of *having*." And this is so because "private property has rendered us so foolish and inactive that an object is [considered to be] ours only when we have it and . . . exists for us only when it is immediately possessed, eaten, drunk by us, carried by us, worn by us, etc., in short, used by us."<sup>2</sup> It is for these reasons that the suppression of private property brings with it the complete emancipation of all human properties and senses.

Since, Marx observes, economic alienation is that of the real life and its suppression therefore embraces both the domain of the theoretically sensible conscience as well as that of the practically sensible conscience, the emancipation consequent upon the suppression of private property is such "precisely because [all the human] qualities and senses have become human, from the subjective point of view as well as from the objective point of view."

The senses are thus become directly, in practise, *theoreticians*. They relate themselves to the thing for love of the thing, but the thing is itself an *objective human* relation with itself and with man and vice versa. The need or the spirit has thus lost its egoistic nature, and nature has lost its simple utility from the fact that the utility has become a *human* utility . . .

From the fact that everywhere in Society the objective reality becomes for man the reality of human forces, human reality, and consequently the reality of his own forces, all *objects* become for him the objectification of himself, objects which manifest and realize his individuality, *his* objects, that is to say, the object of himself.<sup>3</sup>

And thus the suppression of private property brings with it the restoration of man's initial independence and the resolution of the antagonisms between nature and man, origin and being, freedom and necessity, individual and species.

As an achieved naturalism, this form of communism is true humanism, and as an achieved humanism it is true naturalism. It is the true solution of the antagonisms between man and nature, between man and man, the true solution of the struggle between origin and being, between objectification and subjectification, between liberty and necessity, between the individual and the species. In this generic natural relation the relation of man with nature is directly his relation with man, just as the relation to man is directly the relation at once of his own natural determination . . .<sup>4</sup>

1. *Ökonomische-philosophische Manuskript, op. cit.*, p.115.

2. *Ibid.*, p.118.

3. *Ibid.*, p.119.

4. *Ibid.*, pp.116-117.



But the suppression of private property, as much as the suppression of religion, is a negation which communism poses as a negation. We must remember that there can be no intermediary between man and the liberty of man. We have seen that the "theoretical" and "political" suppression of religion and private property and of all the distinctions constituted by birth, social position, education and occupation, left the state as an intermediary which man charges with all of his humanity, with all of his human limitation. We must see now that the *real* suppression of all these alienations is not, *as a mere negation*, the true fulfillment of man's generic being. The real life of man is no more the reality of man based on the suppression of private property than is the theoretically and practically sensible conscience of man in nature, considered as *being*, a conscience which has need, as an intermediary, of the suppression of religion.

Socialism, insofar as it is socialism, has no more need of [the mediation of atheism] ; it takes its departure from . . . the *conscience* that man has of himself, a *positive* conscience which no longer has need, as an intermediary, of the suppression of religion, *just as the real life is no more the reality of man based on the suppression of private property.*

... Communism poses the negation as a negation ; it is consequently the *real* element, and indispensable to the historic development of the future, to human emancipation, and the recovery of human dignity. Communism is the necessary form and an organic principle of the immediate future, but communism is not in itself the goal of human education, — the *form of human society*.<sup>1</sup>

What Marx calls the *real* life of man is the life of sensible activity as opposed to the *theoretical* life of man which is the "activity of the general conscience." As we have pointed out, the activity of the general conscience is "the theoretical form of that of which the *real* common being is the living form."<sup>2</sup> And just as the activity of the general conscience, by affirming the "essentiality" of man has no need of atheism (which does not yet go beyond the non-essentiality of man) so the *real* life of man has no need of the suppression of private property, for this implies the need for suppressing the need for "having" — a need which implies the poverty of man's own substantial forces, the interior riches of himself. Thus in the last phase of social development, work will be not only a mere means to existence, but, in accordance with the principle earlier adverted to, — the principle that man is most properly a producer when he is free from physical need and sets himself up freely in the face of his production — work will itself be the first need of life. All the needs which man produces, and which augment endlessly, are mere means to existence, but the *work* itself by which man transforms nature and produces *himself* is no longer a means ; it is the supreme good. Man's generic being is thus seen as universal activity, pure act. We may here recall Marx's observation that

since for the socialist man, all the pretended history of the world is nothing but the production of man by human work, it follows that the development of nature for man

1. *Ibid.*, pp.125-126.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

is therefore the evident and irrefutable proof of the *birth* of himself, of his origin. From the fact of the *substantiality* of man, from the fact that man becomes sensible . . . and practically sensible in nature . . . it becomes impossible practically to ask if there exists a being outside of man, a being placed above that of nature and man. This question implies the non-essentiality of the nature of man.<sup>1</sup>

The socialist man is forbidden to ask such questions : the speculative order has been transposed into practice, and hence it " is impossible practically to ask " such questions.

And what is the " form of human society " ?

*Society* is the achieved consubstantiality of man with nature, the veritable resurrection of nature, the realization of the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature.<sup>2</sup> Man is the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of society thought and felt for itself.<sup>3</sup>

And for this man, " the necessity of observing the simple and fundamental rules of human society will pass very rapidly into a state of habitude. " <sup>4</sup> The common opinion that Marxism is essentially collectivism is thus refuted, and Marxism is rightly seen to be an extreme form of personalism. Far from wishing to submerge the individual in a collectivity, Marxism on the contrary looks toward the total emancipation of man from the state ; the state represents for the Marxist an extraneous force whose " common good " is essentially opposed to the good of the person. When the common good of the entire universe becomes identified with each man, man will have come into the possession of his generic being.

### III. FEUERBACH'S DOCTRINE OF THE GENERIC BEING OF MAN

It is to Ludwig Feuerbach that Marx is indebted for the extraordinary conception of the generic being of man. In his essay on Political Economy and Philosophy Marx says that " the positive and general critique [of political economy and philosophy] owes its true foundation to the discoveries of Feuerbach. It is Feuerbach alone who has provided the positive humanist and naturalist critique. " <sup>5</sup> And Friederich Engels, in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, expresses this indebtedness with the greatest enthusiasm :

1. *Ibid.*, p.125.

2. *Ibid.*, p.116.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

4. V. LENIN, *The State and Revolution* (The Marxian Educational Society, Detroit, Michigan), chap.5, p.108.

5. *Ökonomische-Philosophische Manuskript*, op. cit., p.34. " Who has annihilated the dialectic of concepts, the war of the gods which the philosophers alone knew ? Feuerbach. Who has put man in place of the old lumber, and in place of the infinite consciousness as well ? Feuerbach, and no one else. Feuerbach, who completed and criticized Hegel from a Hegelian standpoint, resolving the metaphysical absolute spirit into the real man standing on the foundation of nature, was the first to complete the criticism of religion — inasmuch as, at the same time he undertook a critique of Hegelian speculation, and thereby sketched the great and masterly outlines of all metaphysics. " Quoted by OTTO RÜHLE, *Karl Marx, His Life and Work* (London, 1929), p.33.

Then came Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* . . . The spell was broken, . . . and the contradiction, shown to exist only in our imagination, was dissolved. One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book, to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general ; we all became at once Feuerbachians.<sup>1</sup>

What are the "discoveries" of Feuerbach to which Marx alludes ? They may be summed up in the proposition of Marx, to which we have given some consideration, "that the activity of the general conscience is the theoretical form of that of which the real common being is the living form." This is a discovery arising out of Feuerbach's unique "serious and critical relationship with the dialectic of Hegel."<sup>2</sup> The *Encyclopedia* of Hegel had begun, Marx points out, with logic and ended with pure speculative thought and absolute knowledge ; it had ended with the philosophic spirit or absolute spirit, conscious of itself as the absolute spirit. In this conception there were hidden all the elements of a critique of political economy and philosophy, but quite indistinct and bearing a "mystical allure." With Hegel the whole of nature is, it is true, reclaimed for man, but the appropriation of his substantial forces, forces that have become foreign objects, is, with Hegel, an appropriation which operates in the conscience, in "pure thought," and in abstraction, "the appropriation of these objects insofar as they are thoughts, and movements of thoughts."<sup>3</sup> Man does not show himself, with Hegel, except under the form of spirit. Hegel had in a measure grasped the notion of human alienation — "that religion, wealth, etc., are only the reality of man's objectification alienated" ; but the reclamation of the material world for man is, "with Hegel, under this form, that materiality, religion, the power of the state are spiritual beings . . ." For Hegel, "the human character of nature and of nature produced by history, the products of man, appear in this, that they are products of the abstract spirit, and therefore *spiritual* elements, *ideal* beings."<sup>4</sup>

The reason why Feuerbach alone discovered the elements of a true critique was that he was able "to furnish proof" that the alienation with which Hegel begins ("in popular terms, religion and theology") is first suppressed by Hegel who poses the "real, sensible, the finite and the particular" and then afterwards revived by the assertion that the human character of nature and of nature produced by man, the products of man, are *spiritual* elements, *ideal* beings. Thus Hegel first negates religion by reducing it to philosophy (the real, sensible, finite) and then negates the negation by reaffirming abstract thought, spirit, the infinite. The contribution of Feuerbach was to have seen that the negation of the negation by Hegel is *philosophy negating or contradicting itself*, that is to say, philosophy affirming itself as "nothing else than religion put into thoughts and developed by thought."<sup>5</sup> And therefore it becomes clear that it is just as

1. *Ludwig Feuerbach* (International Publishers, New York, 1941), p.18.

2. *Ökonomische-Philosophische Manuscript*, *op. cit.*, p.151.

3. *Ibid.*, p.155.

4. *Ibid.*, p.155.

5. *Ibid.*, p.152.

necessary to condemn philosophy which turns out to be simply another form and another existing mode of the alienation of the being of man. The affirmation of the self and the manifestation of the self are indeed in a measure implied by the negation of the negation, but with Hegel this position "is considered as a position not yet certain of one's proper self, and consequently still afflicted by its contrary, doubtful of itself, and therefore incomplete, not yet proving its existence..."<sup>1</sup> With "unobtrusive simplicity" Feuerbach opposes to this hesitant position "the position materially certain and founded on itself," establishing "*true materialism* in *real science* by making theory take its fundamental principle from the social relation of 'man with man'."<sup>2</sup>

We are now possibly in a position ourselves to enter into "a serious and critical relationship" with the notion of the generic being of man, and to uncover the "true" discoveries of Feuerbach.

By way of a prefatory consideration we may recall that the Marxian transposition into practise of the whole order of things which Aristotle had reserved to the theoretical intellect is regarded as necessary by Marx if philosophy is to advance in a straight line, and that such a transposition follows from what Marx considered to be "the psychological law" by which the theoretical mind when once it becomes free in itself is transformed into practical energy. If, then, Aristotle "freed" the theoretical mind, it makes little difference that he closed himself in it and devoted himself to the formation of "pure theory," theology, philosophy, etc.; and, from Marx's standpoint, it is understandable enough because the alienation of the true substantial forces of man arises precisely out of the fecundity of the intellect. The really important thing to observe is that a certain disengagement of the theoretical mind is necessary before the material world can be reclaimed for man. The difference between Aristotle and Hegel is that Aristotle's "pure theory," theology, philosophy, etc., had not reclaimed the material world for man; the material world existed, indeed, but independently of the theoretical mind; Hegel's "pure theory," theology, philosophy, etc., had reclaimed the material world for man, but this reclamation operated only in "pure thought" and in abstraction, so that mundane reality was in effect negated. There remained, therefore, the need to reclaim *practically* and not merely speculatively, the material world for man; and the transition from Hegel's speculative conquest to a practical conquest required some return to a theoretical mind that recognized the reality of the material world. It is therefore not surprising to find Feuerbach entering into a "serious and critical" relationship with the Aristotelian order of ideas as well as the Hegelian. The fact is that Feuerbach presents his thesis on the generic being of man as the natural outcome of the great doctrines of the past and depends fully and explicitly on the doctrines of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. The exact point which Feuerbach reaches in the transi-

1. *Ibid.*, p.152.

2. *Ibid.*, p.152.

tion toward the full Marxian position is the point where the generic being of man is taken to be a life of universal sensible passivity, belonging to what Marx called the *real* life but, because it is a *passive* sensible life, retaining at the same time a "contemplative" attitude: philosophy considered as universal passive feeling rather than material power and revolutionary action.<sup>1</sup>

In speaking of Marx's use of the conception of the generic being of man, we have seen that man's consciousness of himself is allegedly a consciousness in which he relates himself to the species as to his own proper being and relates himself to himself as a generic being. It is this conception which Ludwig Feuerbach in *The Essence of Christianity*<sup>2</sup> evolves out of a curious use of many texts of both Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Feuerbach begins his task by a very bad but clever allusion (it is scarcely an analysis) to the self-awareness which reveals to man certain activities which set him apart from all other things surrounding him. *The Essence of Christianity* opens abruptly with the observation that brutes have no religion; and, with that unobtrusive simplicity of which Marx speaks, Feuerbach immediately gives as the reason for this absence of religion in the brute the fact that the brute has no consciousness of itself as a species; consciousness of oneself as a species is the very ground of religion, Feuerbach argues, inasmuch as religion is the consciousness of the infinite, and the consciousness that man has of himself as a species is a consciousness of the infinity of his own nature.

Feuerbach's own statement on man's consciousness of himself as a species is as follows:

But what is this essential difference between man and the brute? The most simple, general, and also the most popular answer to this question is — consciousness: but consciousness in the strict sense; for the consciousness implied in the feeling of self as an individual, in discrimination by the senses, in the perception and even judgment of outward things according to definite sensible signs, cannot be denied to the brutes. Consciousness in the strictest sense is present only in a being to whom his species, his essential nature, is an object of thought. The brute is indeed conscious of himself as an individual — and he has accordingly the feeling of self as the common centre of successive sensations — but not as a species: hence, he is without that consciousness which in its nature, as in its name, is akin to science. Where there is this higher consciousness there is capability of science. Science is the cognizance of species. In practical life we have to do with individuals; in science, with species. But only a

1. This is the "contemplative" attitude attacked by Marx in the *Theses on Feuerbach*. Feuerbach passes from the abstract conscience of Hegel to the sensible conscience, but he remains "contemplative" because the life of man is a life of universal sensible passivity and not of productivity and action — it is measured by sensible reality but does not transform it.

2. *Das Wesen des Christentums*, FEUERBACH'S (1804-1872) principal work, first appeared in 1841. In 1849 (Leipzig) Feuerbach published a revised and augmented edition, in the body of which as well as in the appendices, he attempted to show the Christian origins of his anthropotheism by numerous citations from St. Thomas. The final German edition is the Stuttgart edition of 1903. The work was translated into English from the second German edition by MARIAN EVANS (pseudonym: GEORGE ELIOT, 1819-1880) as *The Essence of Christianity*. The references hereinafter made are to the third edition (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd, 1893).



being to whom his own species, his own nature, is an object of thought, can make the essential nature of other things or beings an object of thought . . .

Consciousness, in the strict or proper sense, is identical with consciousness of the infinite ; . . . in the consciousness of the infinite, the infinity of one's own nature is the object of consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

Feuerbach's "authority" for the many difficult points that he has thus rapidly set forth is the following text of St. Thomas Aquinas, which appears on the second page of Feuerbach's appendix :

. . . Knowing beings are distinguished from non-knowing beings in that the latter possess only their own form ; whereas the knowing being is naturally adapted to have also the form of some other thing, for the species of the thing known is in the knower. Hence it is manifest that the nature of a non-knowing being is more contracted and limited ; whereas the nature of knowing beings has a greater amplitude and extension. That is why the Philosopher [Aristotle] says that *the soul is in a sense all things*. Now the contraction of a form comes through the matter. Hence, as we have said above, according as they are the more immaterial, forms approach more clearly to a kind of infinity.<sup>2</sup>

The first requisite of a criticism of Feuerbach is to examine very carefully what he says and what he does not say on the matter of "consciousness of species." And this becomes at once a task of clearing up the ambiguity in Feuerbach's use of the terms "consciousness" and "species" ; for what has to be done is to distinguish the doctrines which he draws upon from the misunderstanding that Feuerbach has of these doctrines.

Feuerbach says that where there is consciousness in the strict sense there is capability of science, and that science is the consciousness of species. The translator of the English edition of *Das Wesen des Christentums* translates "consciousness" (*Bewusstsein*) here by "cognizance." Presumably Feuerbach means that science is about universals, universal being understood in opposition to the mere individual. This understanding is justified by the fact that Feuerbach opposes the brute, who is conscious merely of the individual, to man, who is conscious of the species. It is also plain from what he shall say later on, that a man is both an individual and the species to which he belongs. All this is confirmed by what he says in the same paragraph : "In practical life we have to do with individuals ; in science, with species." This verifies our interpretation of individual and species, for whether speculative or practical, the object of science remains universal. It is in the practical virtues, art and prudence, that we reach the individual.

Feuerbach goes on to say, however, that it is precisely man's consciousness of himself as a universal that makes him capable of science. We must note the meaning that Feuerbach gives to consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) in the strict sense by referring to the etymology. What he says of the German is also true of the Latin : *cum* and *scientia* compose the word.

1. *Ibid.*, pp.1-3.

2. This citation will be found in the Stuttgart edition (1903) of the *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. VI, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p.337. The quotation is from the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part I, q.14, a.1, c.



Now, if he takes *scientia* in the strict sense, it does of course require intellect and the capacity for reflection. And so we may say that Feuerbach speaks of intellectual consciousness, something the brutes do not have. But when Feuerbach goes on to say that the brute does not have its own species for an object, we must not forget the ambiguity of the term "species" or *Gattung*. That this proposition is not clear may be seen from the following consideration: No man identifies himself with the human species. What he may well know is that he is a man, but not that he is *man*. It is true that the species has no existence except in individuals, in Socrates, or in Plato, etc. But Socrates is not the species (anymore than is dog the species brute); he belongs to the species, he is of the species. It is only when we consider the abstract species that we have a "one toward many." This "one" is universal in the sense that it is predicable of many: man can be said of Socrates, of Plato, etc. But we cannot say that man is Socrates, nor that man is Plato. A man may know the species to which he belongs, but he does not know himself as the species itself. When Feuerbach goes on to say that "only a being to whom his own species is an object of thought can make the essential nature of other things or beings an object of thought," he has made use of the ambiguity in the terms "species" and "consciousness" in such a way as to suggest that man's capacity to grasp the universal proceeds from an intuition of himself as a universal. I say "suggest," because that is precisely what Feuerbach is doing; he is using the ambiguity of the terms in order to establish a very extraordinary thesis. How extraordinary his thesis is may be seen by observing that although he says that in the consciousness of the infinite the infinity of one's own nature is the object of consciousness, he is nonetheless, as Marx says, putting "man in the place of the old lumber and of the infinite consciousness as well."<sup>1</sup> This operation is the parallel of Marx's "irrefutable proof" of man's birth of himself, of his origin; and the procedure is, in the same fashion, at once extraordinarily blunt and subtle.

What precisely is this species, this essential nature that man is said to have for an object? We can begin to grasp the point by recalling that, as Marx points out, "the most general mode of the generic life is to be found in the activity of the general conscience," which is, as such, "my theoretical existence . . . the theoretical form of that of which real common being is the living form." Or, to put it in another way, the generic being of man as it manifests itself in the generic conscience is "being thinking for itself."<sup>2</sup> From the moment that this generic conscience begins to flatter itself that it knows something other than itself as the theoretical form of "real common being," it alienates itself on to a "religious essence," which it takes to be universal existence apart from real common being. Now the only really universal nature that exists is man's generic being which, inasmuch as it manifests itself in the generic conscience as "being thinking for itself," is only the theoretical form of real common being. Now it is as being-

1. Cited in OTTO RÜHLE, *op. cit.*, p.33.

2. *Ökonomische-Philosophische Manuskript*, *op. cit.*, p.117.

thinking-for-itself that man's generic being has its own nature for object, but since this being-thinking-for-itself is only the theoretical form, the theoretical existence of man's generic being, of which the living form is material, sensible being, it follows that the *real* universal that man has for an object is his general human nature individualised in itself — man is a kind of universal in concretion.

We must try to see what is the nature of the experience by which man perceives himself as a universal in concretion. The experience, Feuerbach points out, is not a direct one ; indeed, it is precisely the indirectness of the experience that misleads the ordinary man into supposing himself only an individual and not at the same time the species.<sup>1</sup>

Man is nothing without an object . . . But the object to which a subject essentially, necessarily relates, is nothing else than this subject's own, but objective nature. The *absolute* to man is his own nature. The power of the object over him is the power of his own nature. Thus the power of the object of feeling is the power of feeling itself ; the power of the object of the intellect is the power of the intellect itself.<sup>2</sup>

We shall have to observe in some detail this process by which "the absolute metaphysical being is reduced to the real man standing on the foundation of nature." In the following sequence, Feuerbach adduces feeling as an example of what he says is applicable to all human activities ; and since he says in another passage that what is true of feeling is "infinitely more" true of intellect, we shall substitute "thinking" for "feeling" in the following passages.<sup>3</sup> Feuerbach observes that if "thinking" is taken as the "essential organ" of religion, then it follows that "the *object* of religious thinking is become a matter of indifference, only because when once thinking has been pronounced to be the subjective essence of religion, it in fact is also the objective essence of religion, though it may not be declared, at least directly, to be such." Hence the first step is this : "Thinking is pronounced to be religious, simply because it is thinking. The ground of its religiousness is its own nature — lies in itself. But is not thinking thereby declared to be itself the absolute, the divine?" "But suppose," Feuerbach goes on, "that notwithstanding, thou wilt posit an object of thought, but at the same time seekest to express thy thinking truly . . . without introducing by thy reflection any foreign element, what remains to thee but to distinguish between thy individual thinking and the general nature of thought : to separate the universal in thinking from the disturbing . . . influences with which thinking is bound up in thee under thy individual conditions? Hence what thou

1. The indirect nature of this experience is what accounts for the way in which religion has historically developed, Feuerbach tells us : "But when religion — consciousness of God — is designated as the self-consciousness of man, this is not to be understood as affirming that the religious man is directly aware of this identity ; for, on the contrary, ignorance of it is fundamental to the peculiar nature of religion. To preclude this misconception, it is better to say, religion is man's earliest and also indirect form of self-knowledge. Hence religion everywhere precedes philosophy . . . Man first of all sees his nature as if *out* of himself before he finds it in himself" (*The Essence of Christianity*, p.13).

2. *Ibid.*, p.4.

3. *Ibid.*, pp.9-10; 15. Cf. "feeling is only acted on by . . . itself, its own nature. Thus also . . . and infinitely more, the intellect" (p.6).

canst alone contemplate, declare to be the infinite . . . is merely the nature of thought." But now, does not the subject precede the predicate? The predicate is nothing without a subject; the subject is a human being, a sensate nature. Hence, "the antithesis of the divine and human is altogether illusory [and] is nothing else than the antithesis between the human nature in general and the human individual."<sup>1</sup> Thus in that plenitude of being which is identical with thought, it is general human nature that the individual has for object. And thus are wonderfully joined the man who is conscious of his infinite self and the man who is "put in the place of the old lumber and of the infinite consciousness as well"; this is the "real man standing on the foundation of nature," a generic being, a universal in concrection.

The confusions here are as incredible as they are clever. They can be cleared only by a consideration of the correct doctrine on the points of which Feuerbach has availed himself.

It is quite true that man does not have a direct experience of his nature. "The science of the soul is very certain," says St. Thomas, "insofar as each one experiences in himself that he has a soul and that the operations of the soul are in him. But as to knowing what the soul is — that is very difficult."<sup>2</sup> This experience is described by St. Thomas in the following fashion :

One perceives that one has a soul, that one lives and that one is because one perceives that one thinks or that one exercises vital operations of this kind; this is why the Philosopher says, in the IX<sup>th</sup> book of the *Ethics* : . . . he who sees perceives that he sees, and he who hears, that he hears, and he who walks, that he walks, and in the case of all other activities similarly. So that we perceive that we perceive, or we know that we know. And by that very knowing that we know and perceiving that we perceive, we perceive and we know that we are. For to be is, for man, to sense and to think. But no one perceives that he thinks except by thinking something, for one thinks something before knowing that one thinks; this is why the soul arrives at the actual perception that it is by means of the thing that it thinks or that it senses.<sup>3</sup>

Those things which are in the soul by their essence are known through experimental knowledge, insofar as through his acts man has experience of his inward principles. For example, we perceive our will by willing, and by exercising the functions of life, we observe that there is life in us.<sup>4</sup>

We must notice that this internal experience does not have a direct object given : the act which we experience in ourselves is undoubtedly the object of this experience, but it is not an object *au même titre* with the object that allows us to perceive this act. The same is true of every knowledge which we have of ourselves in self-conscious activities. It is one thing to see "this white" or to understand that "the diagonal is incommensurable with the side of the square," and quite another thing to perceive that "I see this white" or that "I understand that the diagonal is incommensurable with

1. *Ibid.*

2. *In I de Anima*, lect.1 (ed. PIROTTA), n.9.

3. *QQ. DD. de Veritate*, q.10, a.8. c.

4. *Ia IIae*, q.112, a.5, ad 1.

the side of the square." It is only in perceiving such an object that one perceives that very act itself by which one is brought to attain it. And when we reflect deliberately upon the act by which we know this white, when in this act of reflection we know, as object, the act of knowing this white, the object of this act of reflection continues no less to be *the act by which we see this white*. It is certainly true that we return to this act of knowing in order to fix upon the act itself and not upon the object of this act, but it remains nevertheless the case that the act which makes the object of this return upon itself is never, itself, directly given as an object all by itself. Thus, too, the internal experience that we have of knowing the universal (I am aware that I know what it is to know — *intellectus meus intelligit se intelligere simpliciter* — as opposed to *intellectus meus intelligit se intelligere*) does not have for its object the universal itself, *but my singular act of knowing the universal*. It is thus useless to look for a pure consciousness without an object other than itself. Now up to a point Feuerbach agrees: "Man is nothing without an object." We must here remember that Hegel's reclamation of the material world for man had operated in "pure thought," in abstraction; it was the "negation of the negation," in which mundane reality was the thing negated. In order to reclaim the material world for man so that the "human character of nature" appears as a material element, a certain disengagement of the theoretical mind is necessary. Hence, "man is nothing without an object" — and as St. Thomas and Aristotle say, the human intellect derives its knowledge from a material nature. But now, continues Feuerbach, is not the power of the object of the intellect the power of the intellect itself? And is not "the power of the object over man the power of his own nature? Thus, while assuredly dependent on an object, man has his own nature for object and in a manner, pre-exists other objects; since, "notwithstanding the positing of an object... there remains nothing further "to thee to distinguish except thy individual thinking... and the general nature of thought," it follows that man by his nature is "being thinking for itself." And what is this "being thinking for itself?" This is the individual man expressing himself in the generic conscience, whose activity is the theoretical form of real common being; the singular, material individual man distinguishes himself from all other things by an awareness of his own individual universality. By a *tour de force* comparable to that by which Marx establishes man's birth of himself, his "substantiality... in nature considered as *being*," Feuerbach has man pre-exist, in a manner, all things that he knows.

Actually there are three kinds of universal,<sup>1</sup> and Feuerbach confuses them: the universal *in re*, the universal *a re acceptum per abstractionem*, and the universal *ad rem*. (a) We oppose the individual man, Socrates, to the universal "man." But "man" is not something besides Socrates, Plato, etc. The universal *in re* refers to the individuals in which the nature

1. In *II Sent.*, disp.3, q.3, a.2, ad 1.

is found, although it is not actually in these particulars as a universal. This is the kind of universal we have in mind when we say that "man" has no existence except in Socrates, or Plato, etc. (b) Insofar as a universal is predicable of many, such as man, or animal, it has no being outside of the reason; for taken as such, that is, taken with the intention of universality, it is neither a principle of existence nor a substance: this is the universal *a re*. No man identifies himself with human nature itself, the species which is the object of science. What he may well know is that he is a man, but not that he is *man*. It is true that the species has no existence except in individuals, in Socrates, Plato, etc. But Socrates is not the species; he is of the species; he belongs to the species. It is only when we consider the abstract species that we have a "one toward many." This "one" is universal in the sense that it is one and predicable of many: man can be said of Socrates, of Plato, etc. But we cannot say that man is Socrates, nor that man is Plato. If we could, then Socrates and Plato would have to be specifically different natures, and in this respect they would cease to have that kind of universality which Feuerbach points out as distinctive of man.

That the universal *a re*, taken as such, is neither a principle of existence nor a substance is clear from the fact that the more universal cause in this order is the most indeterminate and confused; to know "animal" is not to know "man" except confusedly and indeterminately. St. Thomas makes this very clear:

That which is common to many is not something besides those many except only logically: thus animal is not something besides Socrates and Plato and other animals except as considered by the mind, which apprehends the form of animal as divested of all that specifies and individualizes it: for man is that which is truly animal, else it would follow that in Socrates and Plato there are several animals, namely animal in general, man in general, and Plato himself.<sup>1</sup>

The universal *a re* is also called universal *in praedicando* because it can be said of many and predicated as "being in" — "in essendo."<sup>2</sup> But there is another kind of universality, quite different from the universal *in praedicando*. It is universal not because it has its being in many, but because its power extends to many kinds of effects.<sup>3</sup> This universal is called the universal *in causando*. The universal *in causando* belongs to the real order; it is a real universal, a real "one toward many," a being distinct from those things to which it extends as one to many. This universal is not opposed to the singular, for it is taken as existing singularly. Hence this universal is such by reason of its extreme determination which embraces the multiple in its variety and distinction. In the order of causality then, as distinguished from the order of predication, the more universal cause is also more determinate. God is such a cause, for His causality extends to all that is and to whatever anything is. This universal is called *ad rem*.

1. *Contra Gentiles*, I, cap. 26. *Vd. De Ente Et Essentia*, cap. 4.

2. We deliberately write "in essendo" in one word in order to distinguish this universality from that which is called universal "in essendo."

3. ST. THOMAS, *In VI Metaphys.*, lect. 3, nn. 1207-1209.



As predicable of many, then, "man" is a universal *a re acceptum per abstractionem*; in the order of causality "man" is a universal *in re* as constituting the formal principle of the singular (Socrates): But this universal *in re* is not a universal *in act* for the following reason: Only in a being not composed of matter and form — a separated substance — does the essence (*Wesenheit*), the species (*Gattung*) have singular existence. For essence (*quod quid erat esse*) and species actually mean the same thing; but no being that is composed of matter and form is its own *quod quid erat esse*, this being true only of separated substances.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this is that the definition of a thing is not assigned to individuals but to species, and therefore individual matter, which is the principle of individuation, is outside the *quod quid erat esse*: For if the species is communicated to many, no individual of the many can be identified with the species. And therefore every natural thing, although it comprises matter which is part of the species (e.g. bones, flesh, but not these bones and this flesh), and which pertains to the *quod quid erat esse*, has also individual matter which does not belong to the definition. Therefore no natural thing if it has matter is its own *quod quid erat esse*, and is not, in its individual existence, the species itself, but belongs to the species.

Now Feuerbach cites this very doctrine from both the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas.<sup>2</sup> How then does he achieve his gross confusion of the universal *in praedicando* with a material individual who will be at the same time a universal *in causando*? It is,

1. ST. THOMAS, *In VII Metaphys.*, lect. 11, nn. 1520ss; also, lect. 10; *In VIII*, lect. 5.

2. The citation of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* will be found in *Das Wesen des Christentums* (op. cit.) p. 341, and is as follows: "Forms that are not predicated of subsistent things, whether the latter be taken universally or singly, are not single *per se* subsistent forms individualized in themselves. For we do not say that Socrates, or man, or an animal is whiteness, because whiteness is not singly *per se* subsistent, but is individualized by its subsistent subject. Likewise natural forms do not *per se* subsist singly, but are individualized in their respective matters: wherefore we do not say that this individual fire, or that fire in general is its own form. Moreover the essences or quiddities of genera and species are individualized by the signate matter of this or that individual, although indeed the quiddity of a genus or species includes form and matter in general. Now the divine essence exists *per se* singly and is individualized in itself, since it is not in any matter, as shown above. Hence the divine essence is predicated of God, so that we say: *God is His own essence*. Vol. I, cap. 21.

The citation of the *Summa Theologica* will be found on pp. 341-342 in *Das Wesen des Christentums*, and is as follows: "God is the same as His essence or nature. To understand this, it must be noted that in things composed of matter and form, the nature or essence must differ from the *suppositum*, for the essence or nature includes only what falls within the definition of man, for it is by this that man is man, and it is this that humanity signifies, that namely, whereby man is man. Now individual matter, with all the individuating accidents, does not fall within the definition of the species. For this particular flesh, these bones, this blackness or whiteness, etc., do not fall within the definition of man. Therefore this flesh, these bones, and the accidental qualities designating this particular matter, are not included in humanity; and yet they are included in the reality which is a man. Hence, the reality which is a man has something in it that humanity does not have. Consequently, humanity and a man are not wholly identical, but humanity is taken to mean the formal part of a man, because the principles whereby a thing is defined function as the formal constituent in relation to individuating matter. The situation is different in things not composed of matter and form, in which individuation is not due to individual matter — that is to say, to *this* matter — but the forms themselves are individuated of themselves. Here it is necessary that the forms themselves should be subsisting *supposita*. Therefore *suppositum* and nature in them are identified. Since, then, God is not composed of matter and form, He must be His own Godhead, His own Life, and whatever else is so predicated of Him" (*Ia*, q. 3, a. 3).



obviously, not entirely easy to say ; but from what he does we may gather what his procedure appears to be. The universal *in praedicando* has no existence apart from the reason ; on the other hand, understood with the intention of universality, this universal is a principle of knowledge insofar as the intention of universality results from the mode of understanding by way of abstraction. But now, it is accidental to the universal to be abstracted from particulars ; the universal could be knowable either according to the order of causality or according to the order of nature, and, in fact, since the specific nature as existing in the singular has the character of a formal principle in regard to the singular, there would *have* to be an intellect which knows this universal according to the order of causality, and there *could* be an intellect which would know this universal according to the order of nature. But such an intellect would have to be a self-subsisting universal. Now the universal, " man, " which, as a universal *in praedicando* is opposed to the singular but not to matter, can be " converted " into a universal in act (which is not opposed to the singular, but is opposed to matter) on the supposition that matter is the principle of formal division, of individual forms ; on this supposition, which is made by Feuerbach, the universal *in praedicando* becomes a universal in act in all the things of which it is predicated. Thus, when Feuerbach says that existence in general — humanity, for example — is an absurdity, an insipidity, he thinks the absurdity is removed by predicating humanity of Socrates, Plato, etc. ; he quotes St. Thomas to the effect that " forms that are not predicated of subsistent things . . . are not single *per se* subsistent forms individualized in themselves," and takes this to mean, no less, that *unless* humanity is predicated of Socrates, Plato, etc., it is merely an " empty predicate " ; but when humanity is predicated of Socrates, Plato, etc., it is then individualized in itself. He thus makes matter the principle of formal division, and makes each individual to be at once both individual and species. Now, if man were a subsisting species of this kind, he would be a universal *ad rem* — he would be, not merely a univocal cause, but, like every separated substance, an equivocal cause.

It may be helpful for understanding Feuerbach's errors to advert to the error of Plato. Plato too, confused the universal *in praedicando* with the third kind of universality of which we have spoken : he gave to this universal a separate existence : the universal " man " exists, and the individual men which we know through our senses are merely weak participations of the idea Man.<sup>1</sup> Plato's mistake was to suppose that the universal, understood with the intention of universality — which is indeed a principle of knowledge insofar as this intention results from the mode of understanding by way of abstraction — is also a principle of existence. The universal, understood with the intention of universality, belongs, as we have seen, to the logical order and is neither a principle of existence nor a substance. Now Feuerbach confuses the logical and the real in a different way : he identifies the properties of Plato's separate idea with the singular material

1. ST. THOMAS, *In I Metaphys.*, lect. 10, n. 159.

individual, and then goes on to say that man is distinguished from all other things in that he is aware of this universality ; he makes the singular, material individual a universal in act. Feuerbach would have man know himself as a species in the way that the angel, Gabriel, knows himself the species Gabriel. This species is precisely the individual. The angelic species, a separated substance, is its own *quod quid erat esse* and a universal in act. As a universal in act it has its own species, its essence for an object. Such a substance understands himself by his form and understands things other than himself by forms which in a measure will be pre-existing to the things themselves.<sup>1</sup> These substances subsist immaterially and in their own intelligible being, and consequently they attain their intelligible perfection at once with their intellectual nature. The forms of things that are in these higher intellectual substances are called universals *ad rem*, because they are not drawn from things but are connatural to the intelligible substance, and in a measure pre-exist to the things known.<sup>2</sup> It is by a confusion of these three kinds of universal that Feuerbach arrives at the conception of man as a generic being.

The whole of philosophy is abused here-in.<sup>3</sup> Granted Feuerbach's gross total adequation of the various kinds of universality, it is easy to see what the sense is of that plenitude of being, attributed to man, where thought is identical with being. In the philosophy of St. Thomas infinity may be spoken of either in regard to quantity and matter, or in regard to form. Infinity which is taken in regard to forms has the nature of something

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1. ST. THOMAS, *Ia*, q.55, a.2, c.: "The species whereby the angels understand are not drawn from things, but are connatural to them . . . lower intellectual substances — that is to say, human souls — have a power of understanding which is not naturally complete, but is successfully completed in them by their drawing intelligible species from things. But in the higher spiritual substances — that is, the angels — the power of understanding is naturally perfected by intelligible species, in so far as they have such species connatural to them, so as to understand all things which they can know naturally.

The same is evident from the manner of being of such substances . . . the angels are utterly free from bodies, and subsist immaterially and in their own intelligible being ; and consequently they attain their intelligible perfection through an intelligible outpouring, whereby they received from God the species of things known, together with their intellectual nature."

Further, "It is accidental to the universal to be abstracted from particulars, insofar as the intellect knowing it derives its knowledge from things. But if there be an intellect which does not derive its knowledge from things, the universal which it knows will . . . be pre-existing to them : either according to the order of causality, as the universal ideas of things are in the Word of God ; or at least in the order of nature, as the universal ideas of things are in the angelic mind" (*Ibid.*, a.3, ad 1).

2. St. Thomas explains the three kinds of universal as follows : "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod est triplex universale: Quoddam quod est *in re*, scilicet natura ipsa, quae est in particularibus, quamvis in eis non sit secundum rationem universalitatis in actu. Est etiam quoddam universale quod est *a re* acceptum per abstractionem, et hoc posterius est *re* ; et hoc modo formae angelorum non sunt universales. Est etiam quoddam universale *ad rem*, quod est prius *re* ipsa, sicut forma domus in mente aedificatoris ; et per hunc modum sunt universales formae rerum in mente angelica existentes, non ita quod sint operativae, sed quia sunt operativis similes, sicut aliquis speculative scientiam operativam habet" (*In II Sent.*, disp.3, q.3, a.2, ad 1).

3. Does not Marx say that Feuerbach's contribution was to have seen that it is just as necessary to condemn philosophy as it is to condemn religion, since philosophy itself is merely another mode of the alienation of the being of man? Vd. *Ökonomische-Philosophische Manuskript*, op. cit., p.152.

perfect ; for if we consider the fact that form taken in itself is common to many and is not made perfect by matter but is contracted by matter, we can understand that the infinite regarded on the part of form not determined by matter has the nature of something perfect.<sup>1</sup> But matter is perfected by form by which it is made finite, and therefore infinity as attributed to matter has the nature of something imperfect. That Form which is not contracted to any specific nature is its own Being, and is both infinite and perfect. And since by their forms all things are either intelligible or capable of being made intelligible, that form which is not only the essence but existence as well, is also the same as its intelligence : He is that plenitude of Being where Thought is identical with Being. And by reason of not being contracted under a common genus that Form is absolutely speaking proper Being : universal "*in essendo*." This being is without possibility of multiplication, since it neither needs nor can have any addition in order to exist. If now, we consider a form that is not received into matter, is self-subsisting, yet restricted to a determinate nature by genus and species, such a form will be relatively (*secundum quid*) infinite inasmuch as such a form is not terminated by matter. But because such an essence is restricted to genus and species it does not comprise all things in itself : it is not simply infinite. But again, since it is by their forms that things are intelligible or capable of being made intelligible, a self-subsisting form of this kind would understand himself by his form, which is his substance.<sup>2</sup> Finally, suppose a form not in matter, but not wholly separated from matter, so that there would be the separation of an intellectual power in the intellectual soul naturally joined to a body : such is the form of man. It would be proper for such a form to know the forms of other things existing individually in corporeal matter, but not as existing in *this* individual matter. Such an intellect would be the lowest in the genus of intelligible beings, for unlike immaterial substances, it would not be intelligible by its own essence according as the immaterial substance is actual by its own essence ; this intellect would be potential in the genus of intelligible beings. Not actual by its own essence, such an intellect could not even know itself through itself, but only as it is made actual through understanding things other than itself. But because its intellectual power extends to universal being, this intellect is also said to be relatively (*secundum quid*) infinite, but to be, simply, finite.

In Feuerbach's reversal of this philosophical doctrine, form is made perfect by matter ; for being, as St. Thomas says, is the most formal of all things, but being, Feuerbach remarks, is an absurdity, an insipidity, unless determined by matter. Now the human soul is, indeed, the ultimate form to which matter tends.<sup>3</sup> The human soul, therefore, as the first of material forms, becomes, with Feuerbach, the absolutely first form. If, with Feuerbach, matter is the principle of formal difference, and if, as is true, the human soul is the ultimate form to which matter tends, then the human

1. *Ia*, q.7, a.1, Whether God is Infinite ?

2. *Ibid.*, a.2; q.55, a.1; q.56, a.1.

3. *Contra Gentiles*, III, cap.22; also *In II Phys.*, lect.4, n.10.

soul becomes the most material of forms : as such it approaches infinity in the sense that it is not any one thing. Now if, with St. Thomas, we consider the human soul as the least in the genus of intellectual beings, we see that its power of understanding is not naturally complete, but is successively completed by drawing intelligible species from things. But if, on the contrary, we take the human soul to be *intelligible being itself, as the last form to which matter tends*, then this intelligible being will be the first of corporeal substances. Now, if we were to suppose (and it is only as a supposition that St. Thomas mentions this) that the highest bodies have in their nature a potentiality that is fully perfected by the form, then it would follow for Feuerbach that the natural incompleteness of the power of understanding (the pure potentiality of the least perfect of intelligences) being the highest perfection to which matter tends, will be absolutely the highest perfection of being.<sup>1</sup> And, in fact, since Feuerbach makes matter the principle of formal difference, all specific natures will be only accidentally different and hence, formally identical in their differences, and hence *all* of them will be infinite : Feuerbach himself says that "No being is a limited one to itself. Rather, every being is in and by itself infinite."<sup>2</sup> Every nature then, is infinite ; and therefore when Feuerbach tells us that "a really finite being has not even the faintest adumbration, still less consciousness, of an infinite being, for the limit of the nature is also the limit of the consciousness," the meaning that we must attribute to him is that although "every being is in and by itself infinite" (since matter, as the principle of formal difference, makes all things identical in their differences) the nature of man alone may be said to be absolutely infinite : for the form of man is unique among all material forms in that it knows, in a way, all things, and hence is, as it were, *matter present to itself*.

We have now to try to grasp the sense of this impossible perversion. To do so we must first notice that, as St. Thomas makes clear, the first object of the human intellect is a material quiddity under a predicate most confused and indeterminate, namely, being — the being of common predication, a universal *in praedicando*. The being of common predication has no existence, no formal term, apart from the specific natures to which it is attached. Nor is it the cause of the distinction of things, for a thing is not placed in a genus according to its being, because then being would be a genus signifying being itself ; and clearly the being of anything contained in a genus must be beside the *whatness* of the genus, otherwise man and brute animal would be identical species. Further, if being were a genus it would be necessary to find a difference in order to contract it to a species. Now no difference participates in the genus so that the genus be contained in the notion of the difference ; for thus genus would be placed twice in the definition of the species ; but the difference must be something besides that which

1. "Reason, love, force of will, are perfections — the perfections of the human being — nay, more, they are the absolute perfection of being . . ." (*The Essence of Christianity*, p.3).

2. *Ibid.*, pp.7-8.

is contained in the notion of the genus. Now there can be nothing besides that which is understood by being, if being belongs to the notion of those things of which it is predicated. And thus by no difference can being be contracted. And therefore the being which is predicated of all things is, as such, indeterminate and confused. As such, it is said to be the being to which no addition is made, and as such may be said to exist outside of any genus. It was, as St. Thomas says, because of defective reason that some, realizing that the Divine Being is also called that Being to which nothing is added, supposed the Divine Being to be the common being of all, not perceiving that the common cannot be without some addition. Those who were guilty of this error "gave the incommunicable name, i.e. God, to wood and stones.<sup>1</sup>" But Feuerbach, appreciating the fact that the Divine Being is not common by predication, but common only in the sense that the Divine Being is the cause of all things — a universal *in causando* — gives the incommunicable name to man. Now it is necessary to recall the definite relation between man's intellect and the being of pure community (the being which is predicable of all things): the latter is the first object of the human mind. Thus indeed there is a certain adequation between this most indeterminate and confused universal and man's intellect; it is the most purely potential concept which best reflects the pure potentiality of the most imperfect of intelligences. This is the ground of Feuerbach's saying that in the object man has his own nature — his "objective," "infinite," nature — for object. If by negative abstraction we wish to consider this being apart from all determinate existence, and to consider it as if it were itself determinate existence and formally infinite, then because this being (actually most confused and indeterminate) is the first object of the human intellect, it would follow that the human intellect derives all specific differences from this indeterminate being; and thus the intellect of man becomes that plenitude of being itself where thought is identical with being. Feuerbach thus reduces the Being which is properly and formally infinite to the being of pure community, that "real common being" of which Marx speaks, and of which man's general conscience is, Marx says, the "theoretical form." For Feuerbach, as it will be for Marx, the generic being of man as manifesting itself in the generic conscience is "being thinking for itself."<sup>2</sup> We have just seen in what sense it is indeed true that man's "generic conscience" may be said to be the "theoretical form" of "real common being": in the sense precisely that the pure potentiality of the most imperfect of intellectual natures may be regarded as the "theoretical form" of the most indeterminate and confused universal — the being of pure community ("real common being"); this most purely potential concept best reflects the pure potentiality of the least perfect of intellectual natures. It is in this way that Feuerbach resolves, as Marx puts it, "the metaphysical absolute spirit into the real man standing on the foundation of nature."

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1. *Contra Gentiles*, I, cap.25.

2. *Ökonomische-Philosophische Manuskript*, *op. cit.*, p.117.



There is a certain irony in Feuerbach's thesis : he is forced to take that which is least in human intellectual existence and to crown it with the fullness of intellectual existence. But the development of his argument shows a certain genius in the light of his purpose. If the last of the differentiae among natural genera constitutes proper being, how is this kind of proper being (which is part of a common genus) going to rise above all genera and species unless its intellectual power be identified as a universal *in causando* ? But further, having relied on the being of pure community to establish man's nature as a universal *in causando* he will now be able to exploit the indeterminateness of this universal in order to reach the point of hailing universal passive feeling as the truly divine act in man. For it is easy to see that if the activity of the " general conscience " is only the most general mode of the generic being of man, and as such, merely the theoretical form of real common being, then the generic life will find its " living form " in " sensuous contemplation."

CHARLES N. R. MCCOY.

