



Journal of Liberal Arts and Humanities (JLAH)
Issue: Vol. 1; No. 3 March 2020 (pp. 76-81)
ISSN 2690-070X (Print) 2690-0718 (Online)
Website: www.jlahnet.com
E-mail: editor@jlahnet.com

Anthropology and Philosophy: the theoretical concepts feuerbachians

Baltazar Macaíba de Sousa

Associate Professor
Department of Social Sciences
Center for Applied Sciences and Education
Federal University of Paraiba
E-mail: baltazarmacaiba@yahoo.com.br

Gleidimar Alves de Oliveira

Philosophy Teachers and Scholars Association
Socialist Thought Studies Center
E-mail: gleidemaralves@bol.com.br

Abstract

This article addresses the relationship among Ludwig Feuerbach's anthropology and philosophy. Such relationship is unveiled at the time when the Feuerbachian philosophy adopted a critical, consequent position towards Hegel's dialectics, thus overcoming and tearing down Hegel's ancient dialectics and philosophy. Feuerbach's criticism appears under two forms: in a general way, after the German subjective and objective idealism, as well as the Hegelian absolutist idealism. The Feuerbachian anthropology is a landmark in the philosophical theory, when it critically considers his breaking up from religion. From a specific point-of-view, the author of *The Essence of Christianity*, treated the thinking activity as man's essence – his generic life -- presented and represented by love (love among men), as man's freedom towards religious faith, because faith predominance inhibits human's inherent ethnicity. Thus, man's existence, his ideas and subjective actions can be, under such condition, freely and wholly revealed. This relationship is crucial to understand human subject's individuality and affirmation, as well as Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophy.

Key words: philosophy; religion; human; anthropology.

1. Introduction

In this paper, one considers the relationship among Ludwig Feuerbach's anthropology and philosophy. Such relationship is unveiled when the feuerbachian philosophy adopted a critical consequent position facing Hegel's dialectics, overcoming and destroying Hegel's ancient dialectics and philosophy. So, the first conclusions are a bold endeavor, since several authors developed investigations as to the theory of the mentioned philosopher¹.

Looking into feuerbachian philosophy is always a theoretical effort not only for the in-depth coverage of his concepts, but also because, when studying it one has the feeling of "revival" about a great philosopher who, in a way, has been neglected by academy, and sometimes remembered only as to the religious issue, in the light of commentators^{II}. This is not to say that we are denying the author's contribution to the mentioned issue; on the contrary, we are reaffirming it as a theory not exhausted in a sole object; it constitutes root and base for other themes, such as: ethics, human existence, nature's concept and man's freedom condition. When treating the anthropological problem, in no way can we disregard at least three elements: liberty, existence and religion, which practically determine one another. What is evident to them, simultaneously as to support is the concept of man's generic consciousness, representing man's only specificity.

¹ We can highlight: Castro (1975), Serrão (1993) Sartório (2001), Schütz (2001).

^{II} See the book "Ludwig Feuerbach: philosophy, religion and nature" organized by Redyson e Chagas (2011).

Feuerbach explains what comes to be generic consciousness in the *Essence of Christianity*, in order to distinguish man from animal, thus responding to materialists (certainly English empiricists^{III}) that man is defined and distinguished from animals by his capacity to establish a conscious reciprocal relationship between subject-object; the object reflects, externalizes and realizes awareness man has about himself and his kinds, mediated by human sensitivity.

2. The anthropology feuerbachian

The animal in its relationship with nature and the others is driven by species' physiological survival instinct, by its own essence, science element – in the use of reason – that Feuerbach understands as universal, generic consciousness. These are his words:

Man's inner life is life in relation to his gender, with his universal essence. Man thinks, that is, talks to himself. An animal cannot perform any generic function without another individual outside itself; but man can perform generic functions such as think, talk, as these are true generic functions – without another individual. Man is for himself, at the same time me and you; can set himself in the place of the other, precisely because he has as an object, not only his individuality, but also his gender and essence. (2008, p.10).

From the reference above one can adduce that man is distinguished from animal because he is conscious of his species, recognizes himself as a generic being, that is, man is flesh of man himself. The individual sees himself, and discovers himself in the rational, sensitive reality as he sees himself in the other, in the community, when he discovers that “man is man's God” in the other individual, both distinct and identical to him. This is because in the feuerbachian anthropology, individuality overcome is man's essence. Therefore, man distinct from animal condition, is the thinking, emotional and volitional being.

The understanding of man as Feuerbach's generic being, expressed in the generic consciousness, retrieves universal man, not separated from nature, not in the sense of nature science, but overcoming English empiricism and biologism. Nature not only provides data about this man belonging to it, but also evidences that such generic man is not a strange to the natural world. The fundamentals of Feuerbach's anthropological conception consist in that, for him, “consciousness presupposes being; it is the being under the form of consciousness” (Castro, 1975, p.7). This feuerbachian formulation of generic man is assimilated by Marx, as concerned to the critiques to Hegel, as explained about the generic consciousness:

As a generic consciousness, man confirms his real social life, and reproduces in his thoughts his actual existence, only; and conversely, the generic being is confirmed in the generic consciousness, and exists for himself, in his universality, as a thinking being. (Marx, 1989, p. 194).

Another issue that deserves understanding is that, although the formulation of generic consciousness is in a work addressing the relationship between man and religion, both identified as the same essence not found among animals, it is exactly this formulation in which human nature is essentially constituted by reason, heart and willingness (like free willing) that will outline the feuerbachian anthropology, thus distinguishing not only from empiricists but also from the hegelian rationalist conception, for which man is the exacerbated expression of rationality – in which *real is rational*, as one can see, according to Serrão:

Whereas the first works are marked by a model of rationality that sees thought as the only capable activity of overcoming differences among individuals in a universal plan unity, the anthropological project originality is, on the contrary, found in the conception of man as a sensitive individuality. (1993, p.11).

Thus, in the feuerbachian anthropology real man is sensitiveness^{IV}; it is man objectifying himself through his generic consciousness in the relation man-to-man. If earlier the only predominance was reason under an absolute authority, here, the predominance is love among men mediated by heart, and revealing man's excellence in a harmonious trinity: reason, heart and volition.

^{III} The English empiricism start with Francis Bacon and goes to David Hume, the basis for all fundamentals that ideas come from perception (experience).

^{IV} On the concept of “sensitiveness” see Oliveira (2011) and Feuerbach (2005).

When ethicity separated man from the alienating theological faith, the concrete man came into scene, neither theological nor abstract, inserted and determined by concrete human conditions among individuals, starting from man's real existence inside himself, his real needs, and social relationships that have historically defined him as a man's category, as opposed to ideal concepts, spirits and ideas. Now, when Feuerbach defines in his *Essence of Christianity*, that man's real essence is thinking, having science, he is surely denying a false awareness of himself by man, supported by theological illusion of divine supremacy in the face of human existence and nature.

By guiding oneself under real essence, love man dedicated to God (love that comes from faith and belief deposited in a superior being, determiner of human existence), now reveals love among men, as acknowledgement and affirmation of a man, self-conscious and of his freedom, that is, the anthropological essence. So, one must register what Vásquez says (2007, p.100): "Man –as a supreme being – replaces God, and love for man stops being derived, in order to be converted into original, absolute love. The theory now [...] allows his true, anthropological essence to be revealed". Love is shown in this sense, as the necessary and excellent form of social living among individuals. It is also the hotspot of feuerbachian anthropology, since through love, men show in society as a whole, reciprocal and integral determinations of their existence without idealistic and theological covers. Love is the materiality and solidification of uncertainties and imperfect contradictions^v of human feelings and actions, that is, it is the flourishing of both sensitiveness and objectivity of the whole Me/you man. Therefore, according to Vásquez:

What Feuerbach means is: whatever may be the existence of the object in itself, this is to me – to my feelings, my reason, my will – and that, in this aspect, I testify my essence as a sensitive, effective, rational and volitional being. (2007, p.94).

From such considerations, a reflection is necessary: can we estimate that Feuerbach changes philosophy – logic – into anthropology? We agree with Castro (1975) when he affirms that, in the feuerbachian anthropology, man is the explanatory nucleus of both theology and religion. So, theology changes into philosophy insofar as reason has substantiated God, making Him universal, and man particular. Feuerbach's anthropology treads the path of his ideas: theology, philosophy and anthropology. The abstract theology comes down "from Heaven to Earth" firstly finding philosophy that will be overcome by anthropology. Castro (1975) says this feuerbachian line of thinking is already announced in his PhD thesis (1828) "De ratione una, universali, infinita" (Castro, 1975, p.18). Feuerbach himself clarifies that his path was God (theology), reason (philosophy) and man (anthropology). Therefore, one can list that abstract theology is giving way to philosophy that, afterwards has been replaced by anthropology (Castro, 1975).

Anthropology or *new philosophy* begins when delimiting the anthropological essence of religion^{vi} as a condition of assertion of human existence. Man now is, in the feuerbachian anthropology, a being species, assertive in recognizing himself as community by means of reason. Each individual recognizes himself as part of mankind, meaning that community (in which gender overcomes individual) is man's defining condition, separating man of faith element when reveals him facing the sensitive, creative reason.

Feuerbach in his *Lectures on the Essence of Religion* defines man's anthropological condition as belonging to nature:

The being that for me, assumes to be man, the being who is the cause or fundamentals of man, to whom he is in debit for his rise and existence, is not God for me – a mystic, indefinite and ambiguous word – but nature – a thing and a clear, sensitive unquestionable word. But the being in which nature becomes a personal, conscious and intelligent being is for me, man (...). Such a doctrine of mine, having nature as a starting point, appealing to truth, establishing it against theology and philosophy, is presented by the work shortly before cited, though allied to a positive, historical object: nature's religion; because I don't develop my doctrines and ideas in abstraction's haziness; they are based on real, historical objects and phenomena, independent from my thought, thus basing my point of view or religion doctrine on nature's religion. (2009, p. 27).

^v Perfection is a theological predicative of God, inserted therefore, in imagination and illusion sphere.

^{vi} *The Essence of Christianity*.

Man's definition as belonging to nature has a relationship with the explanation Feuerbach's advocates on religion (Mourão, 1988). Religious objectivity, according to him, above all the Christian religion, is the revelation of affectivities, as well as the corroboration of man over the divine, since, according to his theory, "the secret of theology is anthropology". (Castro, 1975). Therefore, in his *new philosophy* theology is reduced to anthropology, a fact resulting from logical development of religion rationalization carried out by the idealistic philosophy. Such a rationalization has allowed religion to find its last refuge in reason (Alves, 1992,3); thus in the new philosophy there will be a total absolute dissolution of theology into anthropology, one can conclude that for him, religion will not find shelter in the *new philosophy*, because it will not be a new rational dissolution, but a real dissolution, since it will take place in heart, "real man's essence". Here, there is an original contribution in Feuerbach's thought, as philosophy and theology must be overcome by anthropology, that has man as an understanding object.

3. Marx on new philosophy of Feuerbach

Let us have a look at Marx's reading identical to the one by the author of *The Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, as concerning man:

Man is straightly a nature's being. As a natural, living being is, on the one hand, gifted with natural capacity and faculties existing in him like tendencies and capacities, such as impetus. On the other hand, as a natural, bodily, sensitive, objective being, he is the one who suffers, conditioned and limited, such as animals and plants, i.e., his impetus' objects do exist outside him as independent objects; however such objects are resulting from his needs, essential objects, indispensable to the exercise and confirmation of his faculties. That man is a bodily being, endowed with natural power, living, real, sensitive, objective, means he has real objects, sensitive as objects of his own being, or that he can only externalize his own existence in real sensitive objects. Being objective, natural and sensitive, and at the same time, having an outside object, nature, the sense towards person, is the same thing. (1989, pp. 249-251).

It is the appropriation of Feuerbach's thoughts by Marx that has a relationship with the critiques carried out by the latter concerning the "critical school" (young Hegelian leftists), particularly when Marx draws the attention to the fact that the Hegelian youths were unable to "critically discuss the source itself, the Hegelian dialectics" (1989, p. 249). For the author of *The Capital*, Feuerbach was the only one who had a critical, consequent position towards Hegel's dialectics, overcoming and tearing down the old dialectics and philosophy^{VII}. So, the Feuerbachian anthropology is the negation of the former philosophy, which was abstract and scholastic, that should be self-destructed, in order to achieve real, wholly man.

Marx, under the influence of Feuerbachian ideas^{VIII}, highlights mankind's issue:

But man is not solely a natural being; he is a generic, natural being and as such, has to authenticate and express himself, both in being and in thought. Thus, not even human objects are natural objects, as they present themselves directly, nor does human sense, just like it is immediately and directly given, constitutes human sensitiveness and objectivity. Neither the objective nor the subjective nature is immediately presented to human being in an adequate way. So, like everything natural must have its origin, man also has his genesis process, history; this however, constitutes for him, a conscious process and so, as an act of origin with consciousness surpasses itself. History is man's truth.(1989, p.251).

What Marx exposes is the conception of Feuerbach's *new philosophy* about man and nature, i.e. about the unique and universal object of the new philosophy, anthropology. For Feuerbach's new philosophy, the subject-object identity as proposed by the Hegelianism is full evidence of the incapacity of speculative, metaphysical philosophy in going from itself in the direction of the being, the reality. According to Castro, for the Feuerbachian anthropology "the proper laws of reality are laws of thinking" (1975, p.7). It is not thought that creates the relation cause-effect; this phenomenon does exist and thought only expresses it. (Castro, 1975). Marx (1973) correctly passed sentence on what he had assimilated from Feuerbach: "It is not about the things of logic, but the logic of things"

^{VII} As to the influence that Marx undergoes of Feuerbach see Sousa (2011). In relation to the criticism that makes after the Feuerbachian thought consult Marx and Engels (2007) and the study of Labica (1990).

^{VIII} Engels evidences the impact of Feuerbach's ideas on his thoughts and the ones of Karl Marx.

Therefore, reason is the reflection of being, so it cannot violate reality; generic consciousness is the reflection of generic man and not otherwise, such as theology is the affirmation of man as a generic being, in which man is the universal and God the particular, the finite.

By precisizing that through his objects (sensitive and spiritual) man knows himself, Feuerbach places as the center of his anthropology, man's existence based not only on reason, i.e., man acknowledges his existence in the otherness through and by the community, thus constituting as the humane project of the real man of reason, of passion.

The relationship between anthropology and human existence is presented in idealism, as well as the Hegelian absolutist idealism, feuerbachian anthropology is the first philosophical theory to separate man from religion; under the specific point of view, the philosopher in question approached the thinking activity as man's essence – his generic life – presented and represented in the feeling of love (love among men), as man's liberation towards religious faith, because faith predominance inhibits man's own ethnicity. Man's existence, his ideas and subjective actions can be fully and freely revealed, under such condition as a generic life. The relationship mentioned above is crucial to understand individuality and the affirmation of human subject in Ludwig Feuerbach (Oliveira, 2010).

4. Conclusion

The generic consciousness, specific of human species, and religion are identified in their essence, since this appears as an expression of man's particular ideas, his fantasies and thinking. Religion is the first thinking form of man; it is a moment in which essence is objected from its own subject, under a not yet conscious stage. Man places his essentiality in the religious object, especially the feeling and understanding, which are constituting elements of his generic life, as, according to Feuerbach – “the objective essence of religion, especially the Christian one, is nothing but the essence of the same human affective faculties, particularly the Christian ones.; the secret of theology is, therefore, anthropology”. (2008, p.325).

One can firstly conclude this study by pointing out that thinking capacity is what defines man; however, it is a peculiarity that drives him into a complex human existence, determined by contradictory elements or subjects. When driven by faith, man goes out of universality into isolation, and induced to separate man from himself and from humanism.

Secondly, feuerbachian anthropology establishes a new cycle for mankind through a new philosophy that bursts and surpasses man's concept, who was under a false theological consciousness, or by determination of an absolute reason. In the *new philosophy*, man is a unique universal being, together with nature, from this thought created by Ludwig Feuerbach.

References

- ALVES, Rubem (1993). Presentation. In. Ludwig Feuerbach. Lectures on the Essence of Religion. Campinas: Papiros.
- ALVES, Rubem (1992). Presentation. In. Ludwig Feuerbach. The Essence of Christianity. Campinas: Papiros.
- FEUERBACH, Ludwig (2008). The Essence of Christianity. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- FEUERBACH, Ludwig (2005). Philosophy of Sensitiveness, Writings (1839 – 1846). Trad. Adriana Veríssimo Serrão. Lisboa: Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa.
- FEUERBACH, Ludwig (2005a). Principles of the philosophy of future. In. Ludwig Feuerbach. Philosophy of Sensitiveness, Writings (1839 – 1846). Trad. Adriana Veríssimo Serrão. Lisboa: Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa.
- FEUERBACH, Ludwig (2005b). Towards the criticism of Hegel's Philosophy. In. Ludwig Feuerbach. Philosophy of Sensitiveness, Writings (1839 – 1846). Trad. Adriana Veríssimo Serrão. Lisboa: Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa.
- FEUERBACH, Ludwig (1989). Lectures on the Essence of Religion. Campinas: Papiros.
- CASTRO, Manuel Cabada (1975). El humanista premarxista de Ludwig Feuerbach. Madrid: Editorial Católica.
- ENGELS, Friedrich (1982). Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of German Classical Philosophy. In: Marx e Engels. Selected writings. São Paulo: Alfa-Omega.

- LABICA, Georges (1990). "Theses on Feuerbach" of Karl Marx. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor.
- MARX, Karl (1973). *Critica de la filosofia del estado de Hegel*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Claridad.
- MARX, Karl (1989). *Economical Philosophical Manuscripts*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- MARX, Karl e ENGELS, Friedrich (2007). *German Ideology*. São Paulo: Boitempo.
- MORÃO, Artur (1988). Presentation. In: *Principles of the philosophy of future*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- OLIVEIRA, Gleidimar Alves (2009). *Alienation Concept in Marx*. João Pessoa, Dissertação de Mestrado, UFPB.
- OLIVEIRA, Gleidimar Alves (2011) *Criticism reflections on the sensitivity concept in Ludwig Feuerbach, in writings Principles of the philosophy of future*. In: REDYSON, Deyve e CHAGAS, Eduardo F. *Ludwig Feuerbach: philosophy, religion and nature*. São Leopoldo: Nova Harmonia.
- REDYSON, Deyve e CHAGAS, Eduardo F (2011). *Ludwig Feuerbach: philosophy, religion and nature*. São Leopoldo: Nova Harmonia.
- SARTÓRIO, Lúcia Aparecida Valadares (2001). *Feuerbach Anthropogy - a few outlines on a possible influence in Marx's thoughts*. São Paulo: Dissertação de Mestrado, PUC-SP.
- SCHÜTZ, Rosalvo (2001). *Religion and Capitalism: a Reflection from Feuerbach and Marx*. Porto Alegre: Edipucrs.
- SERRÃO, Adriana Veríssimo (1993). *From Reason to Man or the Systematic Place of The Essence of Christianity*. In: *Feuerbach thought - Colloquium commemorating the 150th anniversary of the publication of The Essence of Christianity*. Lisboa: Edições Colibri.
- SOUSA, Baltazar Macaiba (2011). *UNITY AND DIVERSITY: humanism in Feuerbach and Karl Marx*. In: XI Encontro Humanístico. São Luis: Edufma.
- VÁZQUEZ, Adolfo Sanchez (2007). *Praxis Philosophy*. São Paulo: Expressão Popular.