

instance, after the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice.

5. Feuerbach, not satisfied with abstract thinking, wants contemplation; but he does not conceive sensuousness as practical, human-sensuous activity.

6. Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence, but the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations. Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled: To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something by itself and to presuppose an abstract - isolated - human individual. Essence, therefore, can be comprehended only as “genus”, as an internal, dumb generality which naturally unites the many individuals.

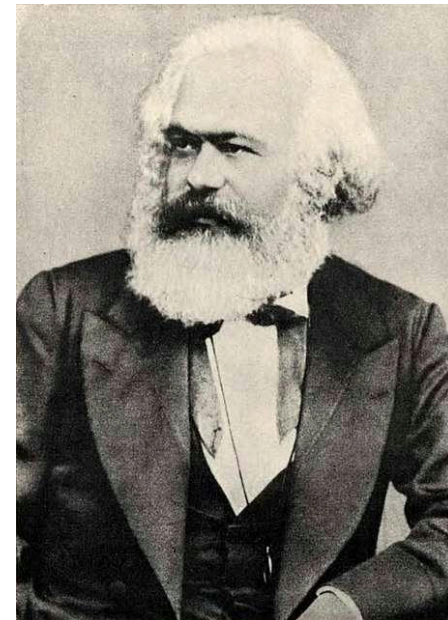
7. Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the “religious sentiment” is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs to a particular form of society.

8. All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

9. The highest point reached by contemplative materialism, that is, materialism which does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is contemplation of single individuals and of civil society.

10. The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or social humanity.

11. The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.



Karl Marx

Notes from Prairie Fire Publishing

The “Theses on Feuerbach” serve as a militant manifesto against the complacency of both vulgar materialism and idealism, demanding a revolutionary practice that is deeply rooted in the material conditions of our time and in history. This is crucial for those committed to dismantling the entrenched systems of capitalism and exploitation by imperialism in the USA and abroad. Marx’s declaration that “the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it” is not merely a call to action but a clarion for collective mobilization. It urges activists and theorists to unite in a concerted effort to overthrow oppressive societal structures, emphasizing the necessity of a dialectical approach that integrates the material conditions with the collective agency of the masses in making history. This approach is indispensable for forging a socialist movement that is attuned to the political, economic, and cultural struggles of the Proletariat. Mao Zedong’s elaboration on Marx’s ideas, particularly his focus on contradictions as the engine of development, demonstrates the imperative of addressing these contradictions through organized revolutionary action.

The “Theses on Feuerbach” also demonstrate the critical role of collective education and

2. The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth – i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question.

3. The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances, and of human activity or self-changing, can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice.

4. Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, of the duplication of the world into a religious world and a secular one. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. But that the secular basis detaches itself from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavages and self-contradictions within this secular basis. The latter must, therefore, in itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionized in practice. Thus, for

This document was written by Karl Marx in 1845 as a prepared outline for the eventual publication of “A Critique of the German Ideology”. The theses were independently published, later, in 1888 as part of the effort by Friedrich Engels to preserve and build the work of Marxism as the culminating science of dialectical materialism.

1. The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism - that of Feuerbach included - is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was developed abstractly by idealism – which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity. Hence, in *The Essence of Christianity*, he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-Judaical manifestation. Hence he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary”, of “practical-critical”, activity.

transformation in revolutionary praxis. Marx challenges the notion that individuals are merely products of their circumstances, asserting instead that they must actively participate in their own transformation through revolutionary struggle. This is particularly pertinent for socialist movements in the USA, where collective education and consciousness-raising are vital for building a resilient and unified movement based on the conditions faced by the Proletarian class. This aligns with Mao’s principle that individuals must engage in continuous self-criticism and collective learning to propel change. The emphasis on education as a tool for both personal and societal transformation is integral to the broader objectives of socialism. By collectively understanding and addressing societal contradictions, education becomes a powerful means to foster both personal advancement and collective advancement in the class struggle.

Suggested Reading:

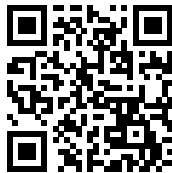
- *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx (1875)
- *State and Revolution*, Lenin (1917)
- *On Practice*, Mao (1937)
- *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Stalin (1938)



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