

Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska  
Poznan University of Medical Sciences

## ***Parousia of Sensuousness (on the Conception of Sinnlichkeit in Ludwig Feuerbach's Writings)***<sup>1</sup>

Es gibt keinen anderen Weg für Euch zur *Wahrheit* und *Freiheit* als *durch Feuerbach*. Der Feuerbach ist das Purgatorium der Gegenwart.

(K. Marks, F. Engels, *Luther als Schiedsrichter zwischen Strauß und Feuerbach*, [in:] Werke, Bd. 1, Berlin 1857, p. 27.)

**T**hat, which Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo did for the earth more than three centuries ago, by finding its place in the universe via examining earth's relations towards the sun and other stars, Ludwig Feuerbach did for *human*, for humanity,<sup>2</sup>

Carl Scholl, the pastor of *Freien Gemeinden* in Nürnberg and a great friend of the philosopher, stated in 1872 at Feuerbach's grave. For Feuerbach work was the rehabilitation of sensuousness,<sup>3</sup> formerly dislodged from the philosophical discourse by both rationalistic and idealistic approach of Descartes, Kant and Hegel, to name the few only. By revealing that the secret of theology was anthropology,<sup>4</sup> and, simultaneously, by re-introducing

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<sup>1</sup> The essay was first circulated in 2005 (seminar: *Secular Humanism of Ludwig Feuerbach*, FU Berlin) with no updates since then.

<sup>2</sup> Citation after: H.-M. Sass, *Feuerbachs Prospekt einer neuen Philosophie*, "Revue Internationale de Philosophie" 1972, No. 101, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> Metaphore used by P. Kondylis, *Die Aufklärung im Rahmen des neuzeitlichen Rationalismus*, Verlag Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1981, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> By *anthropology* Feuerbach understood new *Weltanschauung*. In essay *Weder Dualismus von Leib und Seele, Fleisch und Geist* (WDLs), he states: "Wahrheit ist weder der Materialismus noch der Idealismus, weder die Physiologie noch die Psychologie; Wahrheit ist nur die Anthropologie, Wahrheit nur der Standpunkt der Sinnlichkeit, der Anschauung, denn nur dieser Standpunkt gibt mir Totalität und Individualität" (p. 179).

sensuousness—an un-cancellable dimension of human’s existence—into the contemporary German philosophical discussion, Feuerbach initiated the onto-epistemological revolution rejecting the strongly stigmatised by speculative approach thought of his predecessors. Sensuousness, due to the two aforementioned aspects: ontological and gnoseological, turned out to be the vehicle of revolutionary consciousness as well as revolutionary praxis.<sup>5</sup>

But it was Kantian heritage that enabled the philosopher to adopt his critical stance. *Nihil privativum* allowed Feuerbach to set in his writings the limits on philosophical tradition which, since Descartes, saw in negation merely the revelation of nothingness and void. The concept of a transparent point, where *one’s end* and *beginning of the other* are anchored, originally appeared in *Essay on Philosophy of Negation*, in which Kant stated, that “the vanishing marks antithetical beginning, which consequently means that sublation of positiveness demands principles which are as real and as genuine as those that can create a thing previously un-existing.”<sup>6</sup> “Where you are finished, is where I begin, and my beginning would be your end.” (GTU, 31) Thus, in contrary to *nihil negativum* which is present in formal logic,

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<sup>5</sup> On revolutionary potential of Feuerbach’s work see e.g.: E. Thies, *Die Verwirklichung der Vernunft. Ludwig Feuerbachs Kritik der Spekulativ-systematischen Philosophie*, „Revue Internationale de Philosophie” 1972, No. 101, pp. 275–307; C. Ascheri, *Feuerbachs Bruch mit der Spekulation. Einleitung zur kritischen Ausgabe von Feuerbach: Notwendigkeit einer Veränderung (1842)*, Europ. Verl.-Anst, Frankfurt 1969; A. Schmidt, *Emanzipatorische Sinnlichkeit. Ludwig Feuerbachs anthropologischer Materialismus*, C. Hanser, München 1973. The radical thought of Feuerbach found its continuation in oeuvres of such thinkers as K. Marx, F. Nietzsche, Z. Freud or M. Foucault. On the connections of Feuerbach with the three masters of suspicion see, e.g.: C.P. Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 3 Vol., Hanser, Frankfurt 1978–1979, *passim*; M. Kim, *Feuerbach und Nietzsche. Eine religionsphilosophische Studie zu ihrer Christentumskritik*, Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades, Berlin 1995 (manuscript); M.G. Lange, *Einleitung „Ludwig Feuerbach und der junge Marx“*, [in:] L. Feuerbach, *Kleinere philosophische Schriften (1842–1845)*, Felix Meiner, Leipzig 1950, pp. 5–26; A. Van Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1995. Unfortunately, there could be found no book or paper on the connection of Feuerbach with M. Foucault. Foucault himself mentioned Feuerbach few times only in auto-exegetic interviews from *Dits et écrits*. In my opinion, however, there is a visible similarity between the thought of both philosophers, which can be smoothly extended upon the broader French philosophical thought of the twentieth century (f.ex. J. Derrida, G. Deleuze, M. Blanchot, F. Lyotard, G. Bataille). The premises for such an operation may be Feuerbach’s undeniable affinity with the French philosophy of the Enlightenment (f.ex. P. Bayle, La Mettrie, C. Helvetius, P.-H. Holbach).

<sup>6</sup> I. Kant, *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (1763). See: id., *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy*, trans. by D. Walford R. Meerbote, [in:] Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 207–41.

the *negation of the order of reality* emerges only when it possesses gravity of thing.<sup>7</sup> Feuerbach writes:

meine Position des Menschen ist also nichts weniger als eine assertorische, sondern durch die Negation der Negation vermittelte. . . . Die wahre Philosophie besteht darin, nicht Bücher, sondern Menschen zu machen. (FChCV, 226–27)

By approving of such a premise, the battle for human's material essence could be initiated. Feuerbach's project of emancipating, *aufklärerisch* in spirit, *philosophy of the future*, was finally launched.

One of Feuerbach's most acute criticism was aimed against abstractions, especially God and Trinity. When Feuerbach speaks of Trinity (WdCh, Chapt. 25), he presents it as a purely relational, inter-discursive play of *signifiants* without their *signifiés*. In such a game the corresponding definition of truth set up by Aristotle cannot work anymore, as we are dealing purely with the autoreferential discursive practice. The autopoietic machinery of apparitions taken for factuality/regarded as reality, the *perpetuum mobile* of phantoms (or, more precisely, incorporeal *objects* without the reference), becomes a reality-simulating device. The *Truth*, therefore, results not from the correspondence of words towards things, but from the self-inducted operations of intellect inside the system of the abstract meanings. In consequence,

the most important [as emancipating—K.P.] moment is to realise that the ABSOLUTE THOUGHT, that is, a thought which is isolated and separated from sensuousness, CANNOT GET BEYOND FORMAL IDENTITY—THE IDENTITY OF THE THOUGHT WITH ITSELF; for although a thought or a concept is determined as the unity of opposite determinations, the fact remains that these determinations are themselves only abstractions, thought-determinations—hence, are always REPETITIONS OF THE SELF-IDENTITY OF a thought, only *multipla* of identity understood as an absolutely true point of departure. (PPF, §48; distinguished by K.P., comp. WDLs, 334)

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<sup>7</sup> Feuerbach offers a very interesting expression of *nihil negativum* in *Fragments to Characteristics of my Philosophical Curriculum Vitae*, where he states: "Laß mich in Frieden! Ich bin nur so lange *etwas*, solange ich *nichts* bin" (p. 218), or in description of his mode of writing, where—just as later Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*—he says: "Oh, die scharfsinnige Kritiker! Sie wollen das Wesen meiner Schriften beurteilen und kennen nicht einmal ihre formellen Eigenschaften; sehen nicht, dass ich in der Behandlung meiner Patienten die *homöopathische* Kurmethode befolge, dass ich aber die Grundsätze, die mich leiten, nicht in Worten, sondern in Handlungen, nur in Anwendung derselben ausspreche; sehen nicht, dass ich sehr häufig das Positive negativ, mich überhaupt uneigentlich, enigmatisch, ironisch ausdrücke und meiner höchsten Triumph gerade darein setze, zum Ärger aller philosophischen Pedanten und gelehrten Philister den Erst der Notwendigkeit ins Spiel des Zufalls einzukleiden und den Stoff von Folianten in den Duft eines Epigramms zu verflüchtigen" (p. 219).

Therefore, each abstraction is tautological, as our cognition gets caught in the vicious circle of false representations: duplicates (*Doppelgänger*) or phantasms (*simulacrum*).<sup>8</sup> From that point on, we are dealing with the complete autopoietical shutdown of intellect (*Geist, ratio*) against *space of external (espace exterieur)*.<sup>9</sup> The limits of reason suddenly become the limits of what is possible, *ergo* thinkable; and that is why reproduction and proliferation of inter-discursive procedures can neither be decelerated, nor rejected, nor cancelled.<sup>10</sup> *Ratio* becomes the instance in charge of *replication*, and hypostases of the intellect stand for the source of all realities, because they supply the *real* condition, complete determination for the whole condition of the reality (which is—as we know—barely *nothing but* inter-systematic, semantic, virtual existence).

The Other, as counter posed to the Idea, but posited by the Idea itself, IS NOT TRULY AND IN REALITY DISTINGUISHED FROM IT, and is not allowed to exist outside of the Idea, or if it is, then only *pro forma*, only in APPEARANCE to demonstrate the liberality of the Idea. (Ibid.)

Michel Foucault in the essay *Theatrum philosophicum* would describe such an ontology as *phantasmaphysical*.<sup>11</sup> But before it is explained what *phantasmaphysical* actually means, the concept of *representation* needs to be specified.

As Kant has noted, there are (at least) two sorts of representations (*Vorstellungen, representationes*): those that belong to the realm of sensuousness (*sinnliche Anschauung; intuitus*) and those that are located in the intellect (*Verstand; intelligentia*). *Anschauung (intuitus)* means concrete, *anschaulich*, direct representation; *Begriff (conceptus)*—abstract, *unanschaulich* and indirect one. Accordingly, representation is a name for all sorts of depictions, as it presents either the re-presented object or certain verbal contents of the object (*Inhalt*). The duality results from the inability to have simultaneous insight in appearances as well as in ideas, since eyes of body look at

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<sup>8</sup> On *simulacrum* see: P. Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. D.W. Smith, Althone, London 2000; id., *Sprachen des Körpers: Marginalien zum Werk von Pierre Klossowski*, Marve Verlag, Berlin 1979.

<sup>9</sup> On *space of external* see e.x. M. Blanchote, *Die Literatur und das Recht auf den Tod*, übersetzt von Clemens-Carl Härle, Merve, Berlin 1982; G. Bataille, *Die innere Erfahrung nebst Methode der Meditation und Postskriptum* 1953, Matthes & Seitz, München 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Comp. ÜV, p. 52: “Vernunft kann eine andere Vernunft, d.h. die Grenzen, die Negation ihrer selbst nicht fassen ... Es ist ganz unmöglich, dass sich die Vernunft selbst als endlich setzen können; denn sonst müsste sich die Vernunft als Vernunft und Nicht-Vernunft zugleich denken.” Thus, intellect acting on basis of its own codas, is limited merely by itself.

<sup>11</sup> M. Foucault, *Theatrum philosophicum*, “Critique” 282, novembre 1970, published in: id., *Dits et écrits*, vol. I, Gallimard, Paris 1994, pp. 75-99.

appearances/idols (*eidolon*), and eyes of intellect (or soul)—at ideas/icons (*eikon*). In consequence, idol and icon are diametrically contradictory models of representation—the dualism is firmly established.

As a result of the bifurcation, as well as of dichotomy of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, YEARNING FOR PRESENCE strongly stigmatises European culture. This longing is embodied in two utopias: 1) IDEALISTIC, and 2) AESTHETICAL. The idealistic variant was developed in two basic versions: Platonic, which consists in a movement from visible objects towards intelligible *ideas*, and Cartesian, which shifts us from visible objects to those which are graspable only by intellect. The aesthetical utopia, in contrary, takes for its object barely the realm of the perceptible/visible; its aim then, is to replace the world of incorporeal forms through unmediated sensuous, physical experience.<sup>12</sup>

The whole history of representation depends on variable relations between a pattern and a copy, and the extent of implementation of one of the utopias. When inadequacy between a model and a copy is present, and the pattern is ungraspable through visual presentation, we enter the realm of Platonism, which marks out the ontological asymmetry between icons and idols. When the asymmetry inclines towards the copy, we have to deal with the autonomy of representation. When both the icon and the idol are settled in harmony, epiphany of being occurs.

By breaking off with the dual order of abstract representations via stepping into the realm of tangible, corporeal signs, Feuerbach encouraged his contemporaries to accomplish the second variant of the presence-project, for “truth is only the totality of man’s life and being” (PPF, §58), for “truth, reality and sensuousness are one and the same thing” (*ibid.*, §32). The adage: *throughout-me-writing, throughout-me-creating*, so often labelling Foucault’s oeuvre, became the motto of Feuerbach’s thought, in view of the fact that his steps, initially only in sensuousness, were later converted into the effort of reconnecting both of the oppositions. In consequence, Feuerbach committed the *hybris* of *flesh’s redemption*. The empty space between matter (*Körper*) and spirit (*Geist*) was suddenly filled with reflexive *Leib*<sup>13</sup>—*the thinking matter*, realization of hylozoic dream of pre-Socratesians. Dissolution of duality between body and soul, matter and spirit, word and existence became target of the genuine philosophy of the future, the chance of its realisation: philosopher-artist.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> One of the consequent realisation of such an aesthetical utopia, aimed towards search for authenticity, is e.g. Austrian *actionism*.

<sup>13</sup> Comp. Helmuth Plessner’s philosophical anthropology.

<sup>14</sup> J.-F. Vuarnet, *Der Künstler-Philosoph*, aus d. Franz. von Brunhilde Wehinger, Merve-Verlag, Berlin 1986; Feuerbachs states that “der Philosoph muss die Dinge nicht bloß erkennen, er muss sie vor allem erleben” (FChCV, 210), therefore, “genius is immediate sensuous knowledge.

Feuerbach, just as Antoine Artaud one century later, did not allow his readers to hear the word that had been whispered through DISTANCE *of body*,<sup>15</sup> for he was writing with his wholly essence. As long as hypostasis was the procedural leap beyond the legitimate boundaries of corporeal experience and its categorical structure, the cognitive attitude and intrinsic logic could undergo pitfalls of misappropriation.<sup>16</sup> Only by sublation of dichotomy between rationality and sensibility, only by re-discovery and absolutisation of corpse, might the plausibility of simulacrum, the plausibility of unauthentic life have been destroyed.

### ***Phantasmaphysics of the world***

As Feuerbach noticed, the evolution of man was parallel to the evolution of religion and mind: the intensifying process of socialisation was accompanied by expansion of abstract thinking. Distinctive shift from the so called metonymical relation towards the metaphorical one could be observed, as contiguity (tangential points) of word and world at last fall apart. The history of this division, that stigmatises so strongly human's development, was sketched in *The Essence of Religion*.<sup>17</sup>

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Talent is merely head, but genius is flesh and blood" PPF §38. Comp. WDLs, pp. 171–72, where Feuerbach introduces his concept of writing by blood and sweat.

<sup>15</sup> Com. J. Derrida, *The theatre of cruelty and the closure of representation*, [in:] *Mimesis, Masochism & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. T. Murray, The University of Michigan Press, Michigan 1997, pp. 40–62; id., *La parole soufflée*, [in:] *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass, Routledge, London 1981, pp. 169–95. The main difference between the two thinkers lays in the modus of cognition they would apply in their approaches. Artaud uses cruelty and violence, while Feuerbach turns in the direction of pain and pleasure (that is, however, stigmatised through pain). He states: "Aber welche Verkehrtheit, auf eine dem Wesen des Lebens absolut widersprechende, je feindliche Weise das Wesen desselben erforschen, durch Torturwerkzeuge das Geständnis der Wahrheit erzwingen, durch das Messer das Rätsel des Lebens auflösen zu wollen! Jeder Gegenstand setz, um verstanden zu werden, dass man sich erst mit ihm befreunde, erst bei ihm insinuiere ... Bist du nicht dem Leben gegenüber der leibhafte Tod, wenn du es der Tortur deiner Vivisektionen unterwirfst?" (WDLs, 178) In my opinion, it is a proposal of ambiguous "friendship" towards external things, because the philosopher is always conscious that, even though we desire to live in symmetrical world, only asymmetry is fruitful.

<sup>16</sup> See: N. Rotenstreich, *Anthropology and Sensibility*, "Revue Internationale de Philosophie" 1972, No. 101, p. 342.

<sup>17</sup> What is worth mentioning, the process of mankind's development (ontogenesis) is simply repeated in development of an individual (filogenesis). As George Herbert Mead states, at the beginning a child, like primitives, uses material meanings, thus a thing is the meaning itself for a child, but in the process of learning, through invention of mirror-self I and through

The thought of primitives, as Feuerbach stated, was syncretic, since it considered the world as the universe of occurrences tied altogether via connections which were compound from metonymic and symbolic (metaphorical) element at once:<sup>18</sup> matter and word pervaded each other, *langue* saturated thing, thing saturated *langue*. Consequently, *processual*, *material* language gained the magic power: it could change objects, which led to the emergence of taboo. However, because of emancipation of individual from prime-community through invention of state<sup>19</sup> and personality,<sup>20</sup> (WdCh, Chap. XII) that which was connected with the release of *signifie* as the atom-subject and the atom-letter—the process of transformation of human's *milieu* through separation of the two up till then un-detached, amorphic reality-levels—finally began.<sup>21</sup> Meanings, adjacent to objects, step-by-step started to become separate from the substance. Hitherto one-dimensional, plain world began to differentiate and, due to the first *Entzauberung der Welt*, sedimentation of the two autonomic layers of reality occurred. But these were Greeks not Jews, which Feuerbach meticulously passed over in silence, who finally elevated *langue* to the level of *ideality* (*Idealität*) attached to exterior through intellect only.<sup>22</sup> It was not until Greeks then that the gradually deepening process of man's alienation could have been observed: initially

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interactions with significant others, its mind is raised to the level of abstractive thinking. On the problem of other and otherness in Feuerbach's writings see e.g.: Ch.A. Wilson, *Feuerbach and the Search for Otherness*, P. Lange, New York 1989, where author *implicite* applies Mead's theory into the analysis of Feuerbach's early writings. On the problem of development of mind see also: J. Piaget, *Mechanisms of perception*, Basic Books, New York 1969.

<sup>18</sup> It is believed that Feuerbach saw only metonymical relation in primitive cultures. In my opinion, however, these stance is implausible. When the philosopher in the essay *Das Geheimnis des Opfers oder Der Mensch ist, was er isst* speaks of salt, he implies the concept of symbolic thinking in the analysis of primitives' mode of perceiving the world. On metonymical relation see: B. Malinowski, *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages*, [in:] Ch.K. Ogden, I.A. Richards (eds.), *The meaning of meaning; a study of the influence of language upon thought and of the science of symbolism*, Brace & World, New York 1946, pp. 146–152; J. Kmita, *Kultura i poznanie*, PWN, Warszawa 1985; J. Kristieva, *Language, the Unknown: An Initiation into Linguistics*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London 1989, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> As human beings are dependant on human needs, they have to unify in the form of state (complex, multifunctional organism) to survive the pressure of external nature. Therefore the state is the content of all human realities, it is the embodied man.

<sup>20</sup> Personality means being for-myself only, thus, being egoistic, being detached from the community (universality) of tribe.

<sup>21</sup> Comp. J. Kristieva, op. cit., p. 94, pp. 100–101, 106; J. Needham, *Science in traditional China: a comparative perspective*, Chinese University Press, Honk Kong 1981; P. Levinson, *The Soft Edge*, Routledge, New York 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Comp. J. Kristieva, op. cit., p. 106.

de-coagulating corporal world started to disappear steadily, since it was inhabited by products of reason.<sup>23</sup>

Stage by stage humans were losing their locality, particularity, materiality, multiplicity and concreteness, so that in the end there was scarcely anything left but abstractions. Things were replaced by symbols; the era of concepts came in (WdCh, Chap. 8). The aforementioned process of vanishing (incorporealising) of world was apparently extended in Feuerbach's times, accelerated by Hegelian speculative thought: concepts finally won meanings which pertained to substances; *phantasmaphysics* arose.<sup>24</sup>

Between the idea and the reality, between the motion and the act felt the shadow, for *Thine was the Kingdom*. Between the conception and the creation, between the emotion and the response felt the shadow, and *life was very long*. Between the desire and the spasm, between the potency and the existence, between the essence and the descent, felt the shadow, for *Thine was the Kingdom*.<sup>25</sup>

The author of *The essence of Christianity* made thus an attempt to save the plunging-in-shadows world<sup>26</sup> from products of the mind, by basing it back on *physis*, that is, through transfiguration of absolute *Geist* into *flesh* that feels. (BH, 354) The methodical battle against matter-negating spiritual, supernatural ontology began.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Comp. P. Virilio, *Die Eroberung des Körpers. Vom Übermenschen zum überreizten Menschen*, aus dem Franz. von Bernd Wilczek Hanser, München 1995.

<sup>24</sup> When Feuerbach criticises speculative philosophy and its followers, he uses arguments similar to those which Parmenides of Elea applied in his tractatus *On Nature*. Speculative philosophers together with theologians are as "the knowing nothing mortals, two-headed, deaf and blink alike, dazed, uncritical tribes, for whom being and not-being are thought the same and yet not the same." Comp. e.g. WdCh.

On connections between reason and speech, see e.g. WdCh, p. 147; FChCV, p. 203.

<sup>25</sup> T.S. Elliot, *The Hollow Man*.

<sup>26</sup> I assume that Feuerbach did not take up the *universal* project of world's salvation. He especially wanted to rescue his compatriots, Germans, as "die Deutschen sind und haben alles im Wort, aber nichts in Tat, alles in Gedanken, aber nichts in den Sinnen, alles im Geiste, aber nichts im Fleisch, d.h. alles auf dem Papier, aber nichts in der Wirklichkeit." (FChCV, 224)

<sup>27</sup> That process of human emancipation went hand in hand with the process of secularisation. On the problem of secularisation in German philosophy see e.g.: H. Blumenberg, *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung. Erweiterte und überarbeitete Neuausgabe von Die Legimitat der Neuzeit*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1974.



## Rehabilitation of matter

As I have already mentioned, for Feuerbach abstractions were merely products of alienated-from-matter intellect/reason. The shadows and ghostly appearances, however, began to congeal as they became objects of man's daily praxis (f.ex. god worshiped in religion).<sup>28</sup> Forms without content, shapes without filling, started to colonise material world, as they grasped density (process of reification) and—after attaining their freezing point—squeezed out physical concreteness. But not only the world faded away; also human—world's constituent part, began to be pushed out of reality-bracket. And "this was the way the world ended not with a bang but a whimper."<sup>29</sup>

Sublated by the externalisation, which was not one's explication and continuity, but placing oneself outside his material essence, human being began to vanish. For only a poor man had a rich god, (WdCH, 134) for only a gutted-from-himself man could live in the world of spookies / phantasms. Detached from itself, cut off from its physical core, an external, abstractive person, having faith in Descartes' principle that the reason delivers the truth only when separated from sensuousness, the man began to search for *his presence* by use of intellect only. That operation, however, turned out to be the most alienating and pervert one. The vicious circle of false cognition enclosed the man and twisted around him by placing him in the realm of pseudo-objectivity, since

the being that only thinks and thinks abstractly, has no idea at all what being, existence, and reality are, purely and simply unmediated, that is, undetermined; in other words, there is nothing to distinguish and nothing to think of in being . . . . Being in thought, being without objectivity, without reality, without being for itself was nothing, of course; in terms of this nothing, however, man finally expressed the nothingness of his own abstraction. (PPF, §26)

Therefore, the autonomic sphere of intelligibility, legitimated through *common* reason and the tool of *langue*, became quickly the sphere of man's peak alienation, as it pretended, that eidetic being, *ens rationis*, to be the only real one. Language allied with denaturalised (speculative) reason<sup>30</sup> created existence through invention of rhetoric truth. Even though there was ONE sun, perspective cognition may have occurred, (WdCh, 41-42, 66) because human's subjective mind, separated (abstracted) from outer reality, suddenly

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<sup>28</sup> On problem of praxis see: P. Vayne, *Foucault: Die Revolutionierung der Geschichte*, aus dem Französischen von G. Rossler, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1992.

<sup>29</sup> T.S. Elliot, *The Hollow Man*.

<sup>30</sup> On connections between reason and speech, see e.g. WdCh, p. 147; FChCV, p. 203.

became the only measuring rod.<sup>31</sup> But it was the objectively-existing nature—as the philosopher stated—that could falsify reason’s misappropriation: thus, “all doubts that theory could not lose/loosen, were lost/loosened by praxis.”<sup>32</sup> (FChCV, 225; comp. WDLS 177) Consequently, the dissolving physical body was converted into the last bulwark of *real reality* protecting the human from fallacious world. After a long wait, head was reconnected with blood and nerves. (WDLS, 190)

### **Towards re-union?**

In Feuerbach’s writings, flesh, as carrying unmediated meaning, flesh as the meaning itself, was developed into *principium philosophicum et metaphysicum*, the basis of all reality, because it was able to provide elliptic knowledge,<sup>33</sup> independent from human’s autoreferential mind, language and self-consciousness.

The being that is spoken or thought—the philosopher stated,—is just as far from being real being as the word is from being the object. Being, grounded as it is altogether on such non-verbalties, was therefore itself something non-verbal. Indeed, it was that which could not be verbalised. WHERE WORDS CEASED, LIFE BEGAN AND BEING REVEALED ITS SECRET. If, therefore, non-verbality was the same as irrationality, than all existence was irrational because it was always and forever only this existence. But irrational it was not. (PPF, §28)

Resistant, tough matter did not require any proof of its real presence. Even though it was mute, it *was*.<sup>34</sup> Hence, if there was a visible illogical moment of nature within cognition, if nature was indifferent, inexpressible and unknown, it barely meant nothing but that the knowledge was neither

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<sup>31</sup> Here occurs one of the inconsistencies of Feuerbach’s writings. On one hand, the philosopher says that speculative reason is autoreferential, on the other, he argues that it can be the measuring rod of *space of external*. All of discrepancies and contradictions in Feuerbach’s thought may be the result of both dialectical method he applies, and the epigrammatic, aphoristic style that he uses. Thus, in my opinion, it is impossible to construct consistent, unilinear narration on his entire thought. Comp. f. vi.

<sup>32</sup> The highest embodiment of such a praxis was physics, as it was able to unify *apriori* and *aposteriori* modes of perception and, later, cognition.

<sup>33</sup> On elliptic and circle knowledge, see: PPF §48, where Feuerbach states that ellipse is the circle corrected by the bodily experience.

<sup>34</sup> We know that the matter is through pain, love, I–Thou relations. See: WDLS.

the basis nor the aim of nature. (FzChCV, 225) The knowledge belonged to the man himself.<sup>35</sup>

So Feuerbach's ONLY AXIOM was irrefutable existence of the speechless matter. Hence, in his epistemology, the philosopher proposed the entrance into the realm of radical, absolute sensuousness, because, he believed, these were senses which created reason and human's cognitive capacities, while ordering the field of experience. Humans, however, were never reduced to animals: they were superior to them as they were absolute sensualists (WDLs, 187–89); they could develop all their senses (a set of senses) and, as a result, experienced with the wholly essence (in other words, with entire *physiologic Geist*<sup>36</sup>). Consequently, the world which was emerging for people was not only visible in pure forms of time and space,<sup>37</sup> but also, and for the most of its part, as a totality of sensuous, physical and bodily qualities. Yet the *aporia* arose.

“That, what was against one's nature, with what no social bounds made one's connected, that could be neither thought, nor felt, nor experienced.”

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<sup>35</sup> If stars are crying to men: “Know Yourself,” not: “Know us,” (WdCh) it consequently means, that the Renaissance metaphor of given-to-us-by-God “the book of nature” is being cancelled, as we do not find God in Nature; by examining nature we learn about ourselves and our (socially conditioned) cognitive capacities (WDLs, 193). A very similar conception of cognition is presented by Edinburgh' School of Sociology of Knowledge, which argues that there exist two, depending on nature, levels of knowledge: private (micro-level) and social (macro-level). At the level of private knowledge, we can think whatever we want to think or imagine, but in the frame of tools given us by society, which is the storage of historical “experience” (Feuerbach's *Gattungswesen*). Nevertheless, both forms of knowledge, even if stigmatised by interpretative capacities of humans, are underpinned by nature's existence. Symbolic changeable meanings are overbuilt on the base of objective physical world. See e.g. D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein and Mannheim on the Sociology of Mathematics*, “Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science” 1973, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 173–91.

<sup>36</sup> Feuerbach shall never be called *behaviourist*, the better way of labelling his thought is: *interactionism*, because he believes that within the process of sensuous cognition, living animals and humans are gaining “meaningfulness” (see WDLs, 191–92). Comp. J. von Uexküll, *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen. Ein Bilderbuch unsichtbarer Welten*, G. Kriszat (ed.), Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Mein 1983, where Jakob von Uexküll, similarly to Feuerbach, came to the conclusion, that living beings are not connected with their environment only through causal-analytical action-reaction mechanisms, but also through signs that are *meaningful* to them. Thus, there would be not one, but several environments, each adequate to each species (and its senses). Each organism creates its own “Schaltkreis” (circuit) with its specific environment. Accordingly, Uexküll shows “how subject and object fit in each other, constituting an orderly ensemble. . . . All animal subjects, from the simplest to the most elaborate, fit in their environment with similar perfection. To the simple animals matches a simple environment, to the polymorphic an equally structured environment.”

<sup>37</sup> For Feuerbach, as for Kant, “space and time were not mere forms of appearance: they were essential conditions, rational forms, and laws of being as well as of thought.” (PPE, §44) On problem of time and space in Feuerbach's writing see: Ch. Wilson, op. cit., index.

(WdCh, 74) All human's cognitive abilities, therefore, were strongly mediated in objectivity of collectiveness (society):

the togetherness of man with the other was the first principle and the criterion of truth and universality. Even the certitude of those things that were existing outside the man was given to him through the certitude of existence of other man besides him. That what was seen by man alone was open to question, but that what was seen also by another person was certain. (PPF, §41)

Thus, it was the objective, communal *ratio* that was transcending every human being in order to build a common level of shared meanings and intersubjective knowledge. (WdCh, 146) The falsifier of social experience, however, resembled physical reality as such.

Hence, in my opinion, Feuerbach was not a naive materialist, but a semi-constructivist, which means that he believed that man in collectiveness can think and imagine whatever he wants to think or imagine (or more precisely, whatever collectiveness enables him to think, whatever is possible *to be thought* in specific context),<sup>38</sup> but nature, the objective reality which was situated somewhere *out there*, will correct his fallacies and all his delusions, through the constant pain, if the knowledge gained by human being would be inadequate to external conditions.

Pain became therefore the most important mode of man's cognition. „Sensuousness was *ultima ratio, summa summarum*, the knowledge of the senses, the knowledge of the ULTIMATE things, where all the secrets were at last revealed.” (WDLs, 182) Yet the lecture-rooms of science were lazarets and infirmaries, which provided authentic knowledge of the essence of human and the essence of the world. For Feuerbach “pain, the sensuous experience was nothing but loud protest against identifying the subjective with the objective.” (PPF §33; comp. WDLs, 185) Thus, Feuerbach was not, as it is usually thought, a philosopher of love and mystical harmony,<sup>39</sup> but that of pain and soreness, as pain gained in his work ontological and metaphysical significance in the sense of old transcendental philosophy.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> In his *Philosophy of the Future* the philosopher states: “The single man in isolation possesses in himself the essence of man neither as a moral nor as thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in community, in the unity of man with the man.” (PPF, §59) In context of that statement, it seems to be clear, why Feuerbach was so strongly interested in Caspar Hauser's case. See e.g. WDLs, 166.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Herbert Marsuse sees in Feuerbach the prophet of (carnal) love.

<sup>40</sup> We can ask provocatively if Feuerbach, because of elevating pain to the mode of cognition, was in a way a sadistic thinker. In my opinion, he definitely was, as he perceived pain as un-detached from love and *Begehrung*. *Passion of learning/knowing* brought pleasure and pain. On sadistic thinkers see: P. Klossowski, *Sade, My Neighbour*, trans. A. Lingis, Quartet Books, London 1992.

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To sum up, Feuerbach is a gloomy thinker; his work is filled with aporias, contradictions and paradoxes, that can not be easily overcome, if we do not want to distort any of the philosopher's views. In my opinion, however, Feuerbach's inconsistent way of thinking as well as his shabby way of writing, is the evident sign of the rise of a new era in European thought. The era in which one thinks with a mallet. Therefore, Feuerbach may be named the genuine father of the contemporary philosophy, as his oeuvre significantly marks the point of detachment with the old philosophic tradition. Actually, in Feuerbach's ontology and epistemology there was neither reference, nor gaps, nor even two distinct ontological domains of reason and nature, but an entirely different and new phenomenon: a constantly circulating point of reference. People never travelled in their cognition directly from objects to words or from referent to sign, but always through the risky intermediary pathway of language. So, did there really, for the philosopher, exist two disjointed spheres separated by the search for correspondence, for reference, between world and word?

I argue that in Feuerbach's writings knowledge does not reside in the face-to-face confrontation of mind with an object, not more than a reference designates a thing by means of a sentence verified by that thing. On the contrary, man has to recognize a common operator at every stage of cognition, which at the same time belongs to both matter (flesh) as well as form (mind), and which is separated from the stage that follows it by a gap that no resemblance could feel / to which there is no comparison. True value circulates like electricity through wire, so long as the circuit is not interrupted. Interrupted by inability to adapt, interrupted by pain or by death.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- WDLS *Wieder Dualismus von Leib und Seele, Fleisch und Geist*, [in:] *Werke* (Hrsg. E. Thies), Bd. 4: *Kritiken und Abhandlungen III (1844–1866)*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Mein 1975, pp. 165-195.
- GTU *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, Verlag von Otto Wiegand, Leipzig 1847.
- FChCV *Fragmente und Charakteristik meines philosophischen Curriculum Vita*, [in:] *Werke* (Hrsg. E. Thies), Bd. 4: *Kritiken und Abhandlungen III (1844–1866)*, Suhrkamp Frankfurt am Mein 1975, pp. 196-227.
- WdCh *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Nachw. K. Löwith, Reclam, Ditzingen 2004.

- PPF *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*; trans. by A. Blunden, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/future>)
- ÜV *Über die eine, allgemeine, unendliche Vernunft*, [in:] *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 1: *Frühe Schriften, Kritiken und Reflexionen: (1828–1834)*, 2. Aufl., Oldenbourg Akademieverlag, 2000.

*Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska*

***Parousia of Sensuousness (on the Conception of Sinnlichkeit in Ludwig Feuerbach's Writings)***

*Abstract*

The objective of the paper is to reconstruct various aspects of Feuerbach's new philosophy based on both sensuousness and empiricism resp. concreteness of reality. As a result, we emphasize the importance of his ontological and epistemological stance for recent philosophical debates.

*Keywords:* sensuousness, representation, philosophical anthropology, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872).