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## **Reflections on Feuerbach and anti-Semitism – How to characterize Feuerbach reception of Judaism?**

Was Feuerbach an anti-Semite? This question might appear absurd to most experts and might testify to the circumstance, that a question has been raised to the philosopher and his oeuvre, which would have been alien to the philosopher himself. How come that the radical humanist and philosopher of “corporeality”, representing a real subject turn in the post-Hegelian philosophy, is associated with such a complex, problematic and vague term, which is on the one hand in need of explanation and on the other hand used as a synonym of inhumanity.

Raising this question, we face the fields of reception history, which has been a non-reception history since the *Nachmärz*<sup>1</sup>. Even the science which should have been affected the most, namely theology, seemed to be unimpressed for a long period of time.<sup>2</sup> That might be the case because this science was faced with a vital question concerning its theologian interpretative competences: With Feuerbach, a theologian could only talk about himself, because God could only be understood as an immanence of man.

Reception history, as often experienced by historians, often reveals much about the recipients and their motives, and often reveals very little about the negotiated topics. The debates become “self-referential” very soon<sup>3</sup> – near the extreme positions of apology or condemnation. Exceptional circumspection is always advisable, if one’s own repertoire of intellectual traditions is expected to be unconditionally examined with the best critical and “cathartic” intentions. Even the scientist is subject to the fundamental circumstance, that his

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<sup>1</sup> The epoche after the failed “German Revolution of 1848” is mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Gruhn, Reinhart: Die Wirklichkeit Gottes in Theologie und Theologiekritik. Zur Rezeption L. Feuerbachs in der neueren systematischen Theologie. Zwischenbilanz ein Jahrhundert nach Feuerbach. Bielefeld: B.K. Verlag 1979, 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> c.f. Brosch, Matthias u.a.: „Einleitung“. In: Brosch, Matthias (ed.), Exclusive Solidarität. Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung. Berlin: Metropol Verlag 2007, 9-24; 9.

historical self-identity was socially conveyed by a community of scientists.<sup>4</sup> This fact might favour extreme positions.

Many discourses about the anti-Semitism in the history of philosophy, namely during the era of idealism, which should be identified as discourses about single statements of certain thinkers, convey the helplessness in view of the incomprehensible.

The effort to fathom Feuerbach's relationship with Judaism is only understandable regarding the catastrophe of the Shoa and the human search for any kind of explanation, regarding the search for roots of the eliminatory hate against Jews, before it became part of a horrifying political agenda in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The search for genealogical trees, the search for the geneses of anti-Semitism, attempts to capture an effort of rationalization.

So elucidating it can be to draw lines through the history of ideas, so easy is it to come to the point, where the *telos*, which becomes visible as the wish of the scientist for clear and stringent results, seems to dominate the thoughts and considerations instead of an enormously complex phenomenon: Firstly, the contexts of rationale changed over the centuries. Secondly, productive and pleasant phases of (understanding) and true sharing, a reciprocal process of participation,<sup>5</sup> in short: acculturation, especially in the case of German Jews, are marginalized by the mentioned focus. Querying this axiomatic theory, the following question becomes even more urgent: Scholars have argued, whether hostility against Jews shows itself as a phenomenon of continuity – to put it pointedly with Bauman: the Shoa is inherent in the Modern Age, it is its invention<sup>6</sup> – or whether alteration and discontinuity provide better characterisations,<sup>7</sup> namely the thesis of the eternal hostility against Jews – a thesis which is quite absurd from Hannah Arendt's point of view.<sup>8</sup> To her the shoa was a crime against humankind in toto not a continuation of the well known hostility<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> c.f. Bergmann, Klaus: „Ich-Identität, kollektive Identität, historische Identität“. In: Bergmann, Klaus (ed.), Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik. Kallmeyer 1997, 23 - 29; 25.

<sup>5</sup> c.f. Stern, Fritz: Da bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht. Ein Jahrtausend jüdisch-deutsche Kulturgeschichte. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag 2002, S. 14.

<sup>6</sup> C.f. Bauman, Zygmunt: Ist der Holocaust wiederholbar? In: Polis: Schriftenreihe der Hessischen Landeszentrale für politische Bildung 1994. S.2-11.S.3.

<sup>7</sup> c.f. Volkov, Shulamit: Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert. Zehn Essays. München: Beck 1990, 54ff.

<sup>8</sup> c.f. Bergmann, Werner: Geschichte des Antisemitismus. München: Beck 2006, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Arendt, Hannah: Eichmann in Jerusalem. Ein Bericht von der Banalität des Bösen.7. Aufl. München: Piper. 2013. S.391-392. „Hätte das Gericht in Jerusalem verstanden, daß Diskriminierung, Austreibung und Völkermord nicht einfach dasselbe sind, dann wäre sofort klargeworden, daß das größte Verbrechen, mit dem es konfrontiert war, die physische Ausrottung des jüdischen Volkes, ein Verbrechen gegen die Menschheit war, verübt am jüdischen Volk, und daß nur die Wahl der Opfer, nicht aber die Natur des Verbrechens aus der langen Geschichte von Judenhaß und Antisemitismus abgeleitet werden konnte.“ "Had the

Furthermore, the question is asked whether it might be more sensible to examine the social and historical functions of hate than to construct converging lines, of which Feuerbach is expected to be one.

Feuerbach cannot be classified as a part of the genealogical tree of the incomprehensible, although the efforts to identify his thoughts in this set of hate are comprehensible. There was and there is a “repertoire of motifs” (“Motivvorrat”)<sup>10</sup> of anti-Semitism, which one can trace back – e.g. the very-same phrases of host desecration, well poisoning, child murder – and which appear and disappear in various forms of manifestation in European history.

It still seems to be an intellectual trend to search for suspicious quotations, e.g. if one finds Kant’s saying about the Jewish “usury spirit” and therefore states that this is not a part of the Kantian system of thought but a “socialisationally”<sup>11</sup> acquired (generated) prejudice. One might well wonder why this perception – a version of the well-known commonplace “He was a child of his time.”- belongs to discourses about the enlightenment itself. “It sells” would be one explanation, another one would be: It is about discourse hegemony (at the cost of an ahistorical, dualistic comprehension of history).

Why should Kant be free from prejudices? What does the statement mean, that he as a person does not (entirely) represent the Idea of Pure Reason entirely?<sup>12</sup>

Is it allowed to call Kant’s philosophy “anti-Semitic” because he talks about “usury” without reflecting it socio-historically? Should one conclude, that he regards usury as the Jewish determination?

A meta-issue should be mentioned here: Who speaks with which intention?

Classics like Kant have not become classics because they were once consistent thinkers, but because their ideas still contribute to the orientation in presence. One can find references to

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Court in Jerusalem understood that discrimination, expulsion and genocide are just not the same, then it would immediately become clear that the greatest crime, with which it was confronted, was the physical extermination of the Jewish people, that it is a crime against humanity, perpetrated against the Jewish people, and that only the choice of victims, but the nature of the crime could not be derived from the long history of anti-Semitism.

<sup>10</sup> c.f. Bergmann, W.: Loc. cit., 8.

<sup>11</sup> c.f. Homann, Ursula: „Nicht immer waren deutsche Philosophen Juden wohl gesonnen. Bücher über judenfeindliche Tendenzen der Aufklärung“. In: Philosophischer Literaturanzeiger .

<sup>12</sup> c.f. Kant’s anthropological estimation :“...aus so krummem Holze, als woraus der Mensch gemacht ist, kann nichts ganz Gerades gezimmert werden. Nur die Annäherung zu dieser Idee ist uns von der Natur auferlegt.“ Kant, Immanuel: „Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht.“ In: Berlinische Monatsschrift. November 1784, S. 385-411.

topical issues (e.g. pedagogical questions) in Kant's oeuvre, and regard his theorems, there is still the chance not to fall behind the acquired knowledge.<sup>13</sup> If one wants this voice to fall silent, the discrediting of the speaker is an option. That is by no means sweet talk, but it should be understood as a clear plea for the transparency of discussions: Is one interested in the courses of life and the socialisation of thinkers or is one interested in their "heritage"? Discussants should name their interest clearly, even though the two spheres of life and heritage are hard to distinguish as the spheres of history, politics, philosophy and life penetrate each other.

Anti-Semitism is a term that helps to establish discourse hegemony and the power to define, in short: a knock-out-argument. The one who is called an anti-Semite, is ruled out: An anti-Semite is *legitimately* disqualified and he cannot claim to participate in the discourse anymore, he leaves the normative "Substance of Modern Age"<sup>14</sup>.

Nevertheless, the catchy word "anti-Semitism" is a term of political rhetoric which is incredibly complex, blurred and vague. In the following, I want to advocate a concept of anti-Semitism which is historically framed, which accepts terms to be "woven into an institutional web of discourses"<sup>15</sup> and avoids simplifying parallelizations and quibbling. This leads us to look for Feuerbach's connection's with the contemporary discussions about anti-Semitism, and it means to determine and to define the function of the Jews in Feuerbach's oeuvre.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was – not only with regard to the ideologemes of the anti-Semitism – the pool of ideas for the national socialism. The roots of the whole ideological conglomerate can be explored here.

The reception of Feuerbach during the time of the National Socialism is not to be ignored, although he does not belong to the major sources of that time. One of the authoritative sources of many national socialist anti-Semites was, besides Gobineau and Chamberlain, the "Antisemiten-Katechismus" by Theodor Fritsch, published in 1887,<sup>16</sup> in which one can find excerpts taken from Feuerbach's "Wesen des Christentums". Streicher's "Stürmer" vulgarized

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<sup>13</sup> c.f. Koch, Lutz: Kant lesen? Über „Klassiker“-Lektüre in der Pädagogik. In: Götte, P. und Gippert, W. (ed.): Historische Pädagogik am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts. Bilanzen und Perspektiven. Essen 2000. 21-31; 1-3.

<sup>14</sup> c.f. Habermas, Jürgen: Eine Art Schadensabwicklung. Kleine Politische Schriften VI. Frankfurt a.M 1987, 68.

<sup>15</sup> c.f. Konersmann, Ralf: „Wörter und Sachen. Zur Deutungsarbeit der Historischen Semantik“. In: Müller, Ernest (ed.), Begriffsgeschichte im Umbruch? Sonderheft Jg. 2004 des Archivs für Begriffsgeschichte. Hamburg: Meiner 2005, 21 -33; 27.

<sup>16</sup> c.f. Just, Dieter: „Einleitung.“ In: Der Krieg der Geister um die Werte. Die Philosophie des antisemitischen Hetzblatts „Der Stürmer“. Taken from: <http://www.d-just.de/text8.htm>. Acc:10.01.2008.

the “catechism” in the well-known obscene way and created phrases like “Brecht die Judenmacht, dann erhöht ihr die Menschheit.” (Stürmer, November 1935)<sup>17</sup>

Here, you find a concept which illustrates, that the anti-Semitism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century does not only refer back to Christian traditions and patterns of anti-Judaism anymore, but that it follows up on the idealistic criticism of religion on purpose. The Christian anti-Judaism, as we face it in the European Middle Ages, was based on theological premises, which had to be overcome rationally.

The historically and theologically inconsistent “Christ-killer”-argument was – like all the other biblically legitimated anti-Judaisms – to be principally questioned, due to the early historical-critical attempts at the deconstruction of the Bible. Although early representatives like Reimarus experimented and operated with quite dubious theses – e.g. that the empty tomb could be explained with the help of the disciples’ body-snatching -, the educational and enlightened impetus of that time is undoubtedly and unmistakably the subject of the criticism of verbal inspiration (of biblical texts).<sup>18</sup>

The protestant theology, radicalized by Luther’s strong anti-Jewish late works, was not unattached by such developments.

The lutherian Trias consisting of sola scriptura, sola fide and sola gratia was diametrically opposed to concepts of *Praise as Law Enforcement*, expressed and outlined in the Old Testament. The one who does not attach any value to the Gospel – which is the entity to make justification by grace possible – is disqualified from salvation. However, some changes took place ...<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> „Break the Jews’ power, then you exalt the humankind.“ (Stürmer, November 1935)

<sup>18</sup> c.f. Baumotte, Manfred: Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus. Texte aus drei Jahrhunderten. Gütersloh: Mohn 1994, 11: Reimarus’ differentiation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of belief is still valid as well as the revolutionary integration of Jesus into his Jewish environment, which has influenced the modern Life-of-Jesus-research. Motivated by fears of repression, Lessing published Reimarus’ “Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes“ after his death. The objective theory of fraud (“objektive Betrugstheorie”) was disproved by Hegel’s disciple D.F. Strauß. C.f. Vgl.: Theißen, Gerd und Merz, Annette: Der historische Jesus. Ein Lehrbuch. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2001, 23f.

<sup>19</sup> See Kaufmann, Thomas: Luthers Juden. Stuttgart 2014 for detailed information. Elements of biologistic antisemitism can be identified in Luther’s oeuvre as he blusters about the presumed „nature“ of the Jews (Kaufmann 2014: 10).

Thus, according to Kaufmann, Luther went beyond the religious antisemitism and presented an „early modern variant of antisemitism“ (Kaufmann 2014: 45). Luther’s rather philosemitic / pro-Jewish theses from his beginnings should pave the Jews’ way to Christianity. These early views gave way to the later / subsequent views as the expected conversions failed to appear. Luther’s “pleasant” early writing „Dass Jesus ein geborener Jude sei“, follows this pattern and is therefore no call for tolerance. Luther stresses the condition of a succeeding mass conversion even there (Kaufmann 2014: 71).

These early forms cannot be separated from the primacy of religion: On the one hand, religion remains the central unchallenged reference and the necessity to justify antisemitism or racism following a pseudoscientific approach did not exist. On the other hand, Luther’s approach was part of central theological discourses:

The “argument of stubbornness”, according to which Jews were unable to find the right faith and to accept the saviour, appeared increasingly remote or stopped being unconditional and absolute because of the affirmative, social practice of conversion through baptism.<sup>20</sup>

The devaluation of the theologems – due to the philosophy of Enlightenment – led to a paradigm shift at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: The modernization of hate (as a process of pseudo-objectification of affects), needed a new argument, because the old arguments, motifs and patterns had become fragile. That does not mean that the Christian tradition of Anti-Semitism was discontinued. The old “glasshouses” of anti-Semitism still existed and its influence on the traditional environments which were marked by their denominations survived,<sup>21</sup> but: Polemicizing religious leaders and politically active anti-Semites of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>22</sup> like the court chaplain Adolf Stöcker, obviously knew that they had to detach themselves linguistically right now, because their hate needed a new fundament, which was documented with the term “anti-Semitism” for the first time – a term that gained currency with the help of Wilhelm Marr in 1879.<sup>23</sup> The theological “stubbornness of the Jews” was no longer of interest to the anti-Semites, they needed a new, secularistic peg in order to talk politics: The “biology” turned out to be this peg, and this science owed its boom to the enlightenment itself.<sup>24</sup> Pseudo-scientific methods to determine the “race” experienced a boom in the same manner as the abbreviated and corrupted reception of Darwin. Looking back now, a double-edged result of the emancipatory effects of the enlightenment remains: On the one hand, they paved the way of the emancipation of Jews, on the other hand, they contributed to the modern Anti-Semitism.<sup>25</sup> The fact that some representatives of the Haskala made it their business to remind the Christian scholars of universality of their own postulates, might serve

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Luther took a public stand against Christian Hebrew studies specialists, like Münster, (Kaufmann 2014: 114) and Jews, as his Christian interpretation of the Old Testament as an announcement of the Messiah was not accepted. Luther’s theological core concept thus appeared to be in danger.

<sup>20</sup> The figures about conversion range. 5000 convertites is the figure being quoted for the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main share is allotted to Prussia. The conversion did not guarantee full acceptance and participation. Vgl.: Brenner, M. u.a.(Hg.): Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit.Bd.2.Emanzipation und Akkulturation.1780-1871.München 1996. S.187 ff.

<sup>21</sup> c.f. Bergmann, W.: Loc. cit. , 39.

<sup>22</sup> c.f. Bergmann, W.: Loc. cit. , 41.48.

<sup>23</sup> c.f. Just, Dieter: Loc. cit. Vgl. dazu: Marr, Wilhelm: Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum – Vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet. Bern: Costenoble 1879.

<sup>24</sup> The biologicistic line can be traced back to an older tradition, having its roots in the 16<sup>th</sup> century : “The thesis of pure blood“, which was rejected in Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; c.f. Laquer, Walter: Gesichter des Antisemitismus. Von den Anfängen bis heute. Berlin 2008.S.109.

<sup>25</sup> c.f. Laquer, Walter: Loc. cit. ,S.89.

as proof that some Christian Enlightenment philosophers did not want to understand Jews as part of their project.<sup>26</sup>

Jews were not only the marginalised inhabitants of the ghetto, but – more than ever – had become a part of mainstream societies and thus competed with Christians on participation in social life and power. Against all odds, the time between 1848 and 1871 was a time of social advancement in the German-Jewish consciousness.<sup>27</sup>

The promoter of this development was a changed educational comprehension which – as it was reflected by Moses Mendelssohn – was diligent to a reconciliation between idealistic philosophy and religious tradition. Mendelssohn, a leading representative of the *haskala*, did not only contribute to the process of acculturation, but provided decisive impulses for the philosophy of Enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> Education became a tool of social advancement,<sup>29</sup> the rising “Bildungsbürgertum” was comparatively open to any kind of social or ideological recruiting. On the other hand, the non-Jewish “Bildungsbürgertum” put up more and more resistance against these apparent intentions.

It is a well-known and sad fact that hostility against Jews was a matter of (bourgeois) taste for a lot of educated people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mommsen’s advocacy against Treitschke’s seemingly sober Anti-Semitism, with which he tried to detach himself from the radical hubbub-Antisemitism, was an exception – hate and racial prejudices were adequately accepted in the intellectual milieu.<sup>30</sup> During the process of national states coming into existence (especially during the process of German nation-building), the “Volk-ohne-Heimat”<sup>31</sup>-argument came along and it could be raised against both cosmopolitan thinkers like Kant and the well-known postulates of liberty and emancipation in general. “1789” became a negative slogan for both anti-Semites and nationalists who had often appeared in personal union since 1871. Measures for Jewish emancipation cannot blind to the fact that the social and intellectual reality was quite different.

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<sup>26</sup> c.f. Schulte, Christoph: *Die jüdische Aufklärung*. München 2002. 25f; c.f. Laquer, W.: *Loc. cit.*, 88ff.

<sup>27</sup> c.f. Brenner, M., *Loc. cit.*, S.325.

<sup>28</sup> c.f. Lohmann, Ingrid: „Über die Anfänge bürgerlicher Gesprächskultur – Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) und die Berliner Aufklärung“. In: *Pädagogische Rundschau*. 46/1 (1992), S. 35-49.

<sup>29</sup> c.f. Volkov, Shulamit: „Die Verbürgerlichung der Juden in Deutschland. Eigenart und Paradigma“. In: *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich*. Hrsg. v. Kocka, Jürgen u.a. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht 1995, S. 105-133; hier: S.111ff.

<sup>30</sup> c.f. Lenk, Kurt: „Der Antisemitismusstreit oder: Antisemitismus der ‚gebildeten Leute‘“. In: Horch, Hans Otto (ed.), *Judentum, Antisemitismus und europäische Kultur*. Tübingen: Francke 1988, 23-35; 31ff.

<sup>31</sup> This slogan could be translated as: A People without Home.

Especially in view of this sketch, the following question becomes important and decisive: Did Feuerbach adapt intellectual motifs of the contemporary Anti-Semitism, did he even found a new kind of “rational-philosophical Anti-Semitism”? Which function do the Jews perform in Feuerbach’s philosophy?

When trying to keep Feuerbach’s main concerns and purposes to the point, one issue becomes strikingly apparent: the radical break with the monotheist belief *in toto*. From Feuerbach’s point of view, the criticism of Judaism serves a clearly delimited and clearly defined heuristic function: He aims at the deconstruction of religion and he offers no connection with the contemporary anti-Semitic discourses. The (final) addressee of his criticism is Christianity.

Feuerbach’s alleged anti-Semitism is often constructed on the basis of his religion criticism.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it is rewarding to cast a glance at his efforts to deconstruct religion.

Feuerbach’s criticism of religion is first and foremost based on the argument that Christianity, as he experienced Christianity at his time, seemed to be nothing but institutionalized, dogmatized, hardened. This was an observation which could be supported by controversial formula of the “Age of the Second Confessionalism”. Despite the dictum of the secular, liberal and bourgeois 19<sup>th</sup> century, the controversies between the denominations broke up in the strongest dogmatic terms, so that his criticism reads quite plausibly against the background of this contemporary context.<sup>33</sup>

The focus on the after-life, which might alienate the human in reality, as this orientation could only be practised by an atomised and isolated human being, was the starting point for his criticism.

Feuerbach, who is known to start as a historian of philosophy,<sup>34</sup> and who searches for solutions in historical systems of thought, regards some relations as central issues, which will be outlined in the following:

Feuerbach, whose criticism of Hegel sparked off by the concept of system, consequently criticised Hegel’s concept of spirit. He opposed to Hegel’s conception of single cultural forms as absolute spiritual forms one thought which became his central solution, namely the

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<sup>32</sup> c.f. Reitemeyer, Ursula, Tomasoni, Franceso und Shibata, Takayuki: „Einleitung“. In: Ludwig Feuerbach (1804 - 1872). Identität und Pluralismus in der globalen Gesellschaft. Münster: Waxmann 2006, 14.

<sup>33</sup> c.f. Blaschke, Olaf: „Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?“ In: Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Zeitschrift für Historische Sozialwissenschaft. 26. Jg. (2000), S. 39-75; hier: S.64ff.

<sup>34</sup> c.f. Weckwerth, Christine: Ludwig Feuerbach. Zur Einführung. Hamburg: Junius 2002, S.35.



“anthropological turn”. The concrete and corporal human being is positioned in the centre, the focus is no longer on the spirit.

Feuerbach, who wants and claims a critical phenomenology of religion, debates two of his main theses with regard to the mosaic belief. The main thesis that “God is the enunciated and vocalized Self of the human being” is from his point of view evident with regard to the belief in miracles, which is said to be the essence of wonder itself.

Feuerbach wants to change and transform theology into anthropology, although he is not known for his theological astuteness: Therefore, his efforts to anthropologize symbols of love and friendship used in the bible (e.g. Maria as symbol of mother-love) are often helpless, because he forgets to appreciate the peculiarities of biblical texts: Agape-motifs cannot be anthropologized easily.

At least in such cases, his radical efforts of making faith worldly must fail – he was no (brilliant) theologian and he was not interested in such differentiations, because he just cared about the doctrinal ballast of Christianity.

He could have observed the worldly orientation of the Old Testament, where the enforcement of faith and the (inner) relationship with God has its place in the Here and Now.

Apart from some pericopes of the Jesaja-Apocalypse,<sup>35</sup> the Scriptures of the Old Testament and its environment did not elaborate any concepts of afterlife which could be compared to Christianity. Regarding his attitude to Judaism, one should say: regarding his attitude to the mosaic spiritual doctrines taken up by Christianity, this means:

Feuerbach claims that the “utilism” is the supreme principle of Judaism and the supreme principal of faith in general.<sup>36</sup> Nature becomes the object of arbitrariness and a benefit for the indication of the divine election of the people of Israel – which leads to the necessary exclusion of all the other peoples.

Herein, he sees the basis of the intolerance and regards it as the “secret of monotheism”<sup>37</sup> – not only with regard to the mosaic belief. And yet, whether one supports this thesis or not, it is essentially neither anti-Semitic nor outdated. In December 2006, “Der Spiegel” reported on the correlation between monotheism and violence. There, the thesis was expressed that the

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<sup>35</sup> <sup>35</sup> Jes.26, 19: „Aber deine Toten werden leben, deine Leichname werden auferstehen.“ Although God rules over the death in the world of Old Testament beliefs, the realm of the dead, the sheol, and the sphere of the possible relationship between humanity and God are completely separated in life. There is no elaborated theology of resurrection in the Old Testament – c.f. Jüngel, Eberhard: Tod. Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag 1990 (erstmalig 1971), 101ff. Eberhard Jüngel is one of the few theological recipients of Feuerbach.

<sup>36</sup> c.f. Feuerbach, Ludwig: Das Wesen des Christentums. Hrsg.v. Schuffenhauer, Werner in zwei Bänden. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1956, 189.

<sup>37</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit.

focus on the one and only God could lead to the exclusion of other deities and cultures and meant violence.

Monotheism, from Feuerbach's point of view, only serves its own purpose and negates the environment.<sup>38</sup> In Feuerbach's opinion, who was searching for a new form of sociality, this meant a negative fixed-point. The sensuality is the key to the anthropological turn and becomes the constitutens of scientific thinking, which should be based on polytheism because polytheism provides fertile soil for diversity and sensual perception.

There is no thought without sensuality. His dialect basic structure – the communication between the I and the You, which was only rediscovered by philosophers of dialogue like Martin Buber (but now in reflected theological terms) – had to do without God. His equation of reality and sensuality, his coupling of recognition and emotion, is radically and dramatically subject-orientated and therefore antithetically positioned towards Judaism.

To view nature without (a) specific purpose and to be devotedly religious – this combination could only be provided by the pagan conception of nature. The fact that this was declared to be “idolatry” from the “Jewish and Christian God's point of view”,<sup>39</sup> served as proof for the hostility against sensuality of both religions. This was also regarded as a reversal of the natural order. God orders (simply by word) that something should come into existence – in Feuerbach's opinion, the man is the first entity, the Second only the representational and objective creation of man: God!<sup>40</sup>

Feuerbach's circle of argumentation ends referring back to his criticism of the belief in miracles, in which utilism and egoism become important because the miracles are only “for the Good of Israel”.<sup>41</sup> His word of “egoism”<sup>42</sup> as the “principle” of the creation theory, which had radicalized in Judaism from his point view,<sup>43</sup> meant something different from the insinuated issue: With reference to the late Feuerbach, it should be considered that the egoism of creation receives a positive connotation – as the concreteness of corporeality.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit. , 190.

<sup>39</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit. , 193.

<sup>40</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit. , 195

<sup>41</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit. , 196.

<sup>42</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit. , 187.

<sup>43</sup> c.f. Kneer, Markus: „Rationalistischer Antijudaismus im 19. Jahrhundert. Das antijüdische Vorurteil bei Hegel, Feuerbach, Bauer und Marx.“ In: Exclusive Solidarität. Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung. Hrsg.v. Brosch, Matthias u.a.Berlin: Metropol Verlag 2007, 27-49; 36.

<sup>44</sup> See Shibata in this book.

Paraphrasing these lines and quotations, one thing becomes clear and obvious: Feuerbach needs the first monotheism for the depth interpretation of his religion criticism and as a kind of negative foil for his advocacy for sensuality. Under no circumstances can hostile attitudes or resentments typical of that era be found in Feuerbach's oeuvre: Neither stubbornness in view of the Christian message of salvation nor hostility against the Gospel. Tendencies of a biologicistic or nationalist anti-Semitism cannot be found there either. From his point of view, Judaism is "the root of monotheism", although it must be admitted that the variety of terms used for one context indicates that he did not know precisely whether to speak of a cohesive religious group, ergo of a "group" in a sociological sense, or "just" of doctrines: "Israel's need is the omnipotent universal law, Israel's misery of the fate of the world."<sup>45</sup> Sentences like these can easily be used as reference for racist or nationalist neuroses of conspiracy – as it happened in the mentioned case (but at the price of decontextualization). Nevertheless, Feuerbach needed the rejection of the oldest monotheism for his counter-concept and his deliberate and fundamental flouting of Christianity. One might claim, that Feuerbach removed the basis on which Christian anti-Judaism could exist – indirectly.

The few contributions to the discussion about Feuerbach's attitude towards Judaism could neither expose a racist approach nor a theological rationale,<sup>46</sup> but simply claimed that the mosaic belief meant threat to Feuerbach's ideal of system because of its particularity.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the attempt to classify Feuerbach as a system thinker must fail, because Feuerbach emancipated himself from the system philosophy, which glorified terms and concepts, he is a philosopher of life<sup>48</sup> who does not pursue any ideal system, although he did not want to advocate any "anything goes".<sup>49</sup> On the contrary: He calls for the real-life orientation of philosophy. Thus, his project or corporeality can be associated with a moral philosophical rationale,<sup>50</sup> therefore he cannot do without such a rationale.<sup>51</sup> It is remarkable that he referred to the Jewish Kabbala to prove the Jewish and monotheistic claim to totality and entirety.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit. , 196.

<sup>46</sup> c.f. Brosch, Matthias u.a.:Loc. cit. , 13.

<sup>47</sup> c.f. Kneer, Markus: Loc. cit. , 46.

<sup>48</sup> c.f. Habermas, Jürgen: Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen.3. Aufl. Frankfurt a.M. : Suhrkamp 1991, 66.

<sup>49</sup> c.f. Reitemeyer, Ursula: Umbruch in Permanenz. Eine Theorie der Moderne zwischen Junghegelianismus und Frankfurter Schule. Münster: Waxmann 2007, 114.

<sup>50</sup> c.f. Reitemeyer, Ursula: Umbruch in Permanenz, 114.

<sup>51</sup> c.f. Reitemeyer, Ursula: Umbruch in Permanenz, Vorwort.

<sup>52</sup> c.f. Tomasoni, Francesco: „Materialismus und Mystizismus. Feuerbachs Studium der Kabbala“.

In the debate with the left Hegelian successors, the baby seems to be thrown out with the bathwater and the mentioned focus on single passages and quotations is not a proof of a view of the whole. Feuerbach's attitude towards Judaism differs from Marx's "Zur Judenfrage" (1843) with regard to function and purpose. On the one hand, Marx sees the claimed Jewish pursuit of accumulation endangering the emancipation of mankind<sup>53</sup> and criticises worldly evils which he supposes to exist. On the other hand, Feuerbach wants to catch the expected and claimed dangerousness of monotheism *in nuce*, he wants his argument of the atomised man and his "Entleiblichung" to appear plausible. A consequent and (in a literal sense) radical criticism of religion is only possible if one takes Judaism into consideration. Therefore, no intellectual consequences can be used against Feuerbach and could prove his anti-Semitism. Additionally, for reasons concerning the history of concepts, we could only call it anti-Judaism at the most. But even this is not to be claimed in the case of Feuerbach, as his criticism did not deal with Judaism itself, but dealt with monotheism in general.

What remains of the criticism of Feuerbach?

Undoubtedly, Feuerbach illustrates his opposition of particularism and universalism first and foremost through the example of Judaism, and he quotes Christian anti-Semitic writers like Eisenmenger – but the turn against Christianity always follows promptly. This usually happens when Feuerbach refers to Christian authors.<sup>54</sup>

What is more: he regards the highlighted Christian motif of Agape<sup>55</sup> as a remnant of hellenistic tradition, he interprets it anthropologically, not theologically: "Liebe befiehlt nicht."<sup>56</sup> He later associates this crucial motif of agape with Jewish traditions: There, Jakob and Achilles are parallelized. "Das Judentum tritt in ein günstigeres Licht."<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless,

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In: Sinnlichkeit und Rationalität. Der Umbruch der Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ludwig Feuerbach. Hrsg. v. Jaeschke, Walter. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1992, S.57-68; 66.

<sup>53</sup> From Marx's point of view, the emancipation of Jews should mean their exemption from the practice of haggling, which was manifested in Judaism. Thus, the Jew had to overcome his own identity as "money-man": "The social emancipation of Judaism is the emancipation of society from Judaism." See: Marx, Karl: Zur Judenfrage. In: MEW. Hrsg. vom Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED. Berlin: Dietz 1976, Bd.1, 347 - 377. [http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me01/me01\\_347.htm.vom.10.05.2008](http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me01/me01_347.htm.vom.10.05.2008). Only the surmounting of money economy could make the emancipation complete. Then, the Jewish religion would become obsolete.

<sup>54</sup> c.f. Tomasoni, Francesco: „Heidentum und Judentum: Vom schärfsten Gegensatz zur Annäherung. Eine Entwicklungslinie vom >>Wesen des Christentums<< bis zur >>Theogonie<<.“ In: Ludwig Feuerbach und die Geschichte der Philosophie. Hrsg. v. Jaeschke, Walter. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1998, S.148-167; 156.

<sup>55</sup> It has often been claimed that Feuerbach regarded Christianity as a categorically superior entity. But that would presuppose that Feuerbach accepted Hegel's model of epochs ("Epochalmodell"). Nevertheless, especially the re-established "theo-logic" of the Hegel's "Epochalmodell" was pure metaphysic from his point of view. Therefore, he attacks the phrase of the "higher form of consciousness" used for Christianity.

<sup>56</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit., 205.

<sup>57</sup> c.f. Tomasoni: Heidentum und Judentum, 163.

Feuerbach claims: „Wo Wünsche entstehen, erscheinen, ja entstehen die Götter.“<sup>58</sup> Therefore, both monotheism and polytheism use the same construction of god and theologize the anthropological reality of the human wish. Here, the qualitative advance of the polytheism has been levelled significantly.

If one interprets the mere fact, that Feuerbach deduces an exceptional position of the Jewish Religion as a “prima causa” from the development of monotheism, as a theoretical contribution against Jews in general, then the discussion drifts away and negates or ignores purposes and historical contexts. Take Max Weber’s phrase of the “Selbstkonstituierung als Paria- oder Gastvolk”<sup>59</sup>, with which his brother Alfred Weber, a recognised philosemite, agrees, for example: This phrase would become a heavily charged notion and this interpretation would not do any justice to the speaker.

Ugly formulations like the catch-phrase about the “Mineralienhändler”<sup>60</sup> can be found in the “Wesen des Christentums”. But these words, phrases and formulations cannot be considered as evidences of hostility against Jews which had been legitimized in a rational and philosophical manner. Most of all, these formulations are not *in line* with the upcoming racist rationales of Feuerbach’s environment.<sup>61</sup> The self-reliance of anti-Jewish argumentation within the “Wesen des Christentums” (a relevance of architecture apart from the methodological consequences) should be questioned – Feuerbachs positive references are evident and can be observed in the text and sources.

Additionally, a banal observation makes sense for all patterns of explanation about anti-Jewish stereotypes: Like the Christian Anti-Judaist needs the positive reference of “Christian”, the Anti-Semite needs the positive reference “Arian”, “Germanic” or similar constructions, the nationalist is in need of the construction of a “German nation” or a “French nation” etc...All these world views share a radical dualism, the definition of exclusion and inclusion.

And what about Feuerbach?

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<sup>58</sup> c.f. Feuerbach, Ludwig: Theogonie nach den Quellen des klassischen, hebräischen und christlichen Altertums. In: Gesammelte Werke. Hrsg. v. Werner Schuffenhauer. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag. 1985, Bd. 7. 33.

<sup>59</sup> c.f. Weber, Alfred: Der Beitrag der Juden zur Menschheitsgeschichte (erstmalig 1957). In: Alfred-Weber-Gesamtausgabe. Hrsg.v. Bräu, Richard. Marburg: Metropolis 2000, Bd. 8: Schriften zur Kultur- und Geschichtssoziologie (1906-1958), 657 - 705; 659.

<sup>60</sup> c.f. Tomasoni: Heidentum und Judentum, 154ff.

<sup>61</sup> c.f. Brosch, u.a.: Einleitung, 11.

Here, the multiplicity of Gods as the epitome of a human and universal concept for the human species is opposed by monotheisms. As there is no “Systemideal” in Feuerbach’s philosophy, the exclusion itself cannot be a valid entity either. Feuerbach traces e.g. the principle of national exclusion back to Judaism. This principle, which could only serve as the decisive counterpart to his universal and unconditional principle, was not overcome by Christianity, because Christianity accepts the human being only “on condition of their limitation to Christianity”<sup>62</sup> ... Nevertheless, from Feuerbach’s point of view, there is no *conditio sine qua non* of the human being, exclusion remains exclusion, thus the excluding Christianity could not be morally better than Judaism because of its greater *Einschlussmenge*.

In contrast to the Marxist equation of Capital and Jews,<sup>63</sup> a concept which became politically effective and operative even in the left wing camp – one might think about the clichés in the Communist KPD-newspaper “Rote Fahne” of the 1920s<sup>64</sup> – Feuerbach does not use such an overall scheme. The question of Feuerbach’s potency and influence remains to be unsettled as well as the question about his influence on anti-Semitic recipients. It is still to be examined, whether anti-Semitic recipients did what usually do: To search for the benefit for their prejudices and affects in a highly selective way. One should at least consider these typical trends and tendencies when trying to observe and identify historical and intellectual movements and developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The reception of Feuerbach’s oeuvre has always been quite poor and weak with regard to its relationship with Judaism. However, he is not of major interest like Kant or Marx, thus the discussion about his work is often observed as a discussion about quotations, available in the secondary literature. It cannot be denied that anti-Jewish clichés and anti-Semitism existed in the left camp<sup>65</sup> and still exist<sup>66</sup>, whether they are encoded as criticism of capitalism or as

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<sup>62</sup> c.f. Feuerbach: Loc. cit., 199.

<sup>63</sup> It should be considered that this discussion was aroused to fuel a very exclusive interpretation of Marx. Take the internet-magazine EXIT for example, which tries to surmount the whole system with the pattern of Anti-Semitism: There, Marx is said to focus only on another distribution of the added value, while he himself remained trapped in the paradigms of the commodity and the thing and ontologised these entities like the bourgeois. A systemic kind of anti-Semitism is constructed out of this accusation: The Marxist criticism of sexism, racism and Anti-Semitism does not get beyond the untrue universalism of the bourgeois enlightenment. Further it says: “The modern sexism, racism and anti-Semitism is principally a part of Enlightenment thought, as it refers to the real metaphysical manufacturing system assimilating its contradiction in a deconstructive way.

<sup>64</sup> c.f. Kistenmacher, Olaf: „Vom „Judas“ zum „Judenkapital“. Antisemitische Denkformen in der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands der Weimarer Republik, 1918-1933“. In: Brosch, Matthias (ed.), *Exclusive Solidarität. Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung*. Berlin: Metropol-Verlag 2007, 69-87.

<sup>65</sup> c.f. Laquer, W. Loc. cit., 192ff.

<sup>66</sup> c.f. Schleicher, Regina, *Kleine Geschichte des Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken*, in: Newsletter des Fritz Bauer Instituts Nr. 30, Frühjahr 2007, S. 61f.; auch online unter URL: <[www.fritz-bauer-institut.de/rezensionen/nl30/02-Schleicher.pdf](http://www.fritz-bauer-institut.de/rezensionen/nl30/02-Schleicher.pdf)>.acc.: 26.06.2008.

criticism of Israel's current policies. One might only wonder about these findings if he or she understood and regarded so-called, alleged, pretended or declared left groups as a monolithic block. Anti-Semitism was and is present. According to Hannah Arendt, one is only safe from it on the moon, but not in a certain political camp.

Apart from these political play of colours, anti-Semitism serves a clear function, namely to make a contribution to inhumanity.

In these terms, the effort to search for a Feuerbach's "specific contribution a the Anti-Jewish theory formation"<sup>67</sup> has so far remained fruitless, because Feuerbach's contributed to the criticism of religion and ideology in order to

He was not a loyal partisan, but remained a thinker *sui generis* and belonged – as Habermas put it – to the periphery of the washed-up outside lecturers<sup>68</sup> of the post-Hegelian era: His new philosophy of corporeality was neither compatible with the post-Hegelian materialism nor with a subject-orientated transcendentalism, in which the isolation of the reflecting and acting subject could not really be overcome.

If monotheism is an excluding and exclusive religious construction, which still influenced post-enlightenment philosophy (take Hegel for example), the desirable reformation of philosophy can only be managed through a radical purification from its exclusive, monotheistic, atomizing and isolating basic principles. This is indeed the reform project tackled by Feuerbach<sup>69</sup>, this effort was meant to decouple theology from philosophy. Calling it an early form of anti-Semitism is not only artificial and unverifiable with regard to the history of his ideas, theories and concepts. This attempt also ignores that Feuerbach's project was far beyond the assumed early forms of anti-Semitism of his era.

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<sup>67</sup> c.f. Kneer: Loc. cit. , 28.

<sup>68</sup> c.f. Habermas, Jürgen: Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen.3. Aufl. Frankfurt a.M. : Suhrkamp 1991, 66.

<sup>69</sup> c.f. Feuerbach, Ludwig: Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie (1843) u. Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft (1843). In: Gesammelte Werke. Hrsg. v. Werner Schuffenhauer. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag. 1970, Bd. 9.