

THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION ACCORDING TO LUDWIG FEUERBACH

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1.1. ACCORDING TO LUDWIG FEUERBACH

Feuerbach's thesis about religion was based on a finding about perception. According to him, in order to say that something exists, it was not enough for it to be conceivable. Because this claim is to say that things that are considered to exist can be perceived or heard. Feuerbach's conclusion from this is: God's existence cannot be proved unless it takes a form that can be perceived. Accordingly, Feuerbach says that the proofs of religious science are in fact ineffective and invalid assumptions. Religion is the transfer of man's own thought to a superhuman plan. The belief in God in the human heart is a reflection of the tendency to compare one's own limitations with an ideal being. Beliefs in the immortality of the soul and the manifestation of divine justice are merely the transposition of people's own thirst for justice into an abstract plan. The extraterrestrial is a human aspiration in disguise. According to Feuerbach, this situation reveals an important similarity between religion and dreams: "Emotion is a dream that we see with open eyes, religion is the dream of the awakened consciousness, the dream is the key to the mystery of religions."¹ Feuerbach says that when a person realizes that his religious ideas are a reflection of his inner world, he will no longer look for a yardstick outside his own nature, but will try to realize his own personality. By making this inference through the Christian religion, he states that people no longer just dismiss Christianity from their minds, but that it is a fixed idea that is at odds with their way of life. S. Freud has similar ideas on this subject. Both of these thinkers regarded religion as an illusion; we think that the understanding on which their ideas are based is closely related to the understanding of God in the Christian father-son dichotomy. When asked where God came from, what is his nature, Feuerbach replied, "The object of all emotions is outside man, the object of religion is within man... You know man by his god and man by his god, both of these are identical with each other. Whatever a man's god is, it is his heart and soul; hence God is embedded in nature." Rather than drawing a conclusion from this definition that if a person is cruel, his god is cruel, and if he is good, his god is good, Feuerbach explains that this is an illusion, that there is no abstract reality after the concrete reality of God. Since religion, i.e. God-consciousness, is designed as man's consciousness about himself, there is a sameness between man and God, but man is not conscious of this sameness. This unconsciousness is the nature of religion. Religion, then, is the earliest and at the same time indirect form of human self-consciousness. The necessary conclusion of this information is: "religion is the childhood of humanity."² According to him, the end result of man's ever-changing understanding and beliefs is atheism. Thus, religion is explained as man's relationship with himself, with his own nature.

¹ Mardin, *a.g.e.*, s. 40-42.

² Çalışkan, *a.g.e.*, s.34-35.