

RELIGION IN FEUERBACH: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HIS ANTHROPOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This study critically analyzes the epistemological basis of Ludwig Feuerbach's anthropological criticism of religion, especially his interpretation of theology as anthropology and his explanations of projection, objectification, and religious alienation. The study uses a philosophical approach to textual analysis and critical argument, reconstructing Feuerbach's assertion that the predicates ascribed to God are derived from human consciousness and are idealized forms of human essence. The study gives special consideration to his genetical-critical method, which justifies religious concepts by examining them in terms of human nature, psychological requirements, dependence, desires, and aspirations. The analysis recognizes the explanatory power of Feuerbach's criticism in uncovering the anthropomorphic and projective aspects of religious consciousness. It does not, however, follow from any explanation of the human origin or psychological role of a religious belief that the object of the belief has any ontological status. There is a difference between the epistemological and the human origin of the concept of God, and between the existence of an independent reality and the concept of God. The study thus suggests that although Feuerbach's criticism offers an important anthropological and psychological account of religious consciousness, it is not, by itself, proof of God's non-existence without a supplementary philosophical argument. Feuerbach's central legacy is his careful differentiation of the origin, meaning, justification, and ontological referent of religious belief, which compelled philosophy and theology to do the same.

Keywords: Ludwig Feuerbach, philosophy of religion, projection, alienation, religious epistemology