

The Subjective Essence of Religion

Interpretation and Examination of L. Feuerbach's "The Essence of Christianity"

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Abstract

This text presents an interpretation of the chapters 26, 27 and 28 in Ludwig Feuerbach's "The Essence of Christianity". The examination focuses on Feuerbach's critique of sacraments such as his critique of baptismal water as a symbol of salvation or wine and bread as the Body of Christ at the Last Supper. Feuerbach contests the supernatural attributes ascribed to these objects as they are immediate products of nature. The author argues that Feuerbach's focus on an ontological interpretation of Christianity blots out its messianic dimension. The messianic dimension has the capability to open the world to meaning that transcends the separation of subject and object. Through Hegel's early theological writings, the author shows that objects are never only objects but signs in an intersubjective framework. Furthermore, he argues that the event of transsubstantiation is bound to a two-fold lettering through which nature is transformed into the messianic corpus of Jesus, that is an event of historical, contemporary and future compassion which transcends causal-chronological time. With reference to Agamben, the author argues that messianic language is no longer denotative but the result of de-centering the subject and a shift of existing conventions. Feuerbach's argument that religion has heteronomous character is countered by the author's claim that faith cannot be reduced to an objective content but is itself a process of interpretation, whose criterion is the openness of the logos and the key to this openness is a reference to the radical freedom of the other.

Keywords:

Feuerbach
Agamben
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