

# GOD AS THE IMPLICATION OF ALIENATION: A CRITICISM OF RELIGION IN LUDWIG FEUERBACH'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL ATHEISM

YABANCIlaşMANIN TEZAHÜRÜ OLARAK TANRI: LUDWIG FEUERBACH'IN  
ANTROPOLOJİK ATEİZMİNDE DİN ELEŞTİRİSİ

## MUSTAFA KINAĞ

DR. ÖĞR. ÜYESİ., KİLİS 7 ARALIK ÜNİVERSİTESİ İLAHİYAT FAKÜLTESİ  
FELSEFE VE DİN BİLİMLERİ BÖLÜMÜ  
ASSIST. PROF., KİLİS 7 ARALIK UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF THEOLOGY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
KİLİS, TURKEY

[mustafakinag@kilis.edu.tr](mailto:mustafakinag@kilis.edu.tr)

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3333-9425>

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[ilahiyatdersisi@kilis.edu.tr](mailto:ilahiyatdersisi@kilis.edu.tr)



## GOD AS THE IMPLICATION OF ALIENATION: A CRITICISM OF RELIGION IN LUDWIG FEUERBACH'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL ATHEISM

### Abstract

In the history of thought, the effort to get rid of the religious and theological teachings of the Middle Ages, together with the Renaissance and reform movements, causes an evolution in the search and perception of reality. As a matter of fact, it is seen that the questioning about the belief in God increased in the period after the Industrial Revolution, starting with the modern period, and especially during the 19th century. One of these ideas, in which man is put in the center for the sake of independence from God and religious authorities, belongs to the German materialist Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). Contrary to the innate approach of modern thought that became systematized by Descartes, Feuerbach argues that the idea of God is formed in the human mind afterwards and through experiences, and the concept of God is a manifestation and result of man's reflection of his own nature outward. Man, who thinks that he submits to God and loves him, creates a sort of external "other" imagination in order to attribute the features he wants to have but cannot have indeed. In other words, the source of man's vision and belief in God is the weakness inherent in his nature, then the search for an external existence that he can complete this weakness. By attributing the feelings or values that inherently exist in the human-human relationship, to a sacred other, man becomes alienated from himself. Thus, attributing the features that exist in him to God as another being, includes the meanings of man's alienation from himself, denial of his own self or essence. This alienation caused by religion and theology exposes the detachment of man from his own essence and nature, the desire to complete the deficient nature of his self with an absolute other who does not have this deficiency in himself. Alienation, which causes human depreciation, is a result of religious theology's assumption that man is a weak being in the face of God, an external other. Representing the transition from classical German idealism to materialism and positivism, Feuerbach continues to use Hegel's idealism and dialectic as a tool. However, by reading/interpreting it in reverse, he adopts the flow of thought towards the search for truth from the Absolute Spirit to individuality. Hegel, in the problem of the relationship between mental objects and external objects, emphasizes that the thought corresponds to the existence, and the guarantee of this is the Absolute Mind. Hegelian monistic idealism claims that the Absolute mind, which provides the unity between the mind and the external world, existed before the world. On the other hand, Feuerbach argues that general knowledge can be reached from particular minds. Because he argues that the truth can be acquired only if a path is followed from the object to the thought, not from the thought to the object. Thus, Feuerbach, who adopted the inductive method in his criticisms of religion and theology, stated that atheism should essentially be real humanism, therefore, he argues that the being believed to be God is actually nothing but human. Despite the claim that the belief in a perfect God is in human nature and innate, he claims that this belief arises from experiences throughout lifetime. God, when evaluated from an objective point of view, is nothing but a subjective and individual feeling. Theology should be replaced by anthropology and religion should be replaced by philosophy in order to ensure that people have a true understanding of religion instead of their baseless beliefs full of unrealistic speculations. Because, according to him, religion consists of nothing but love, where the human seeks his own truth in the reflection of reality that has become unreal due to theology, but can find it (his own truth) directly in relation between you and me. Thus, any union between two people through love is religion. The aim of our study is to reveal that in Feuerbach's thought, God is a result of hu-

man psychological weaknesses and deficiencies in his nature. It is emphasized that Feuerbach's philosophical background, his views on human nature, and alienation are decisive in the formation of the aforementioned thought. Indeed he argues that God is a fictional being created by man, and that all the characteristics attributed to God are essentially belong to human nature. Therefore, by believing in God and glorifying him, man becomes alienated from his own nature. This shows that Feuerbach clearly adopted an anthropomorphic idea that sublimates human nature instead of a classical idea of God. However, although this approach generally includes serious criticisms of the belief principles of all holy religions, it is based on a body of humanistic principles that specifically and predominantly targets Christian theology, which claiming authoritarianism in the interpretation of belief in God and other principles of Christianity.

**Keywords:** History of Philosophy, Ludwig Feuerbach, Alienation, Human Nature, Anthropotheism, Humanism.

### YABANCILAŞMANIN TEZAHÜRÜ OLARAK TANRI: LUDWIG FEUERBACH'IN ANTROPOLOJİK ATEİZMİNDE DİN ELEŞTİRİSİ

#### Öz

Düşünce tarihinde Rönesans ve reform hareketleri ile birlikte insanın Ortaçağ'ın dinî ve teolojik öğretilerinden kurtulma çabası, gerçeklik arayışında ve algısında evrilmeye neden olur. Nitekim modern dönemle başlayıp Sanayi Devrimi sonrası süreçte ve özellikle 19. yüzyıl boyunca Tanrı inancıyla ilgili sorgulamaların arttığı görülür. Tanrı'dan ve dinî otoritelerden bağımsızlaşmak uğruna/amacıyla insanın merkeze alındığı bu fikirlerden biri Alman Materyalist Ludwig Feuerbach'a (1804-1872) aittir. Descartes ile birlikte sistematik hale gelen modern düşüncenin doğuştancı yaklaşımının aksine Tanrı fikrinin insan zihninde sonradan ve deneyimler yoluyla oluştuğunu savunan Feuerbach'a göre Tanrı kavramı insanın kendi doğasını dışı yansıtmamasının bir tezahürü ve sonucudur. Tanrı'ya bağlandığını ve O'nu sevdiğini sanan insan aslında, kendisinde olmasını istediği ama sahip olamadığı özellikleri atfetmek için bir öteki tasavvuru meydana getirir. Diğer bir ifadeyle insanın Tanrı tasavvuru ve inancı, insan doğasında var olan zayıflıktan, bu zayıflığı tamamlayabileceği dışsal bir varlık arayışından kaynaklanır. İnsan-insan ilişkisinde var olan, bizatihi insan doğasında bulunan duygu ya da değerlerin kutsal bir ötekiye atfedilmesiyle, insan kendine yabancılaşır. Böylece kendisinde var olan özelliklerin bir başka varlık olarak Tanrı'ya yüklenmesi, insanın kendisine yabancılaşması, kendi benliğini ya da özünü yadsıması anlamlarını içerir. Din ve teolojinin neden olduğu bu yabancılaşma insanı kendi özünden ve doğasından kopararak benliğin eksik doğasını, bu eksikliği kendisinde buldurmamayan mutlak bir öteki ile tamamlama arzusunu açığa çıkarır. İnsanın değer yitimine neden olan yabancılaşma, dini teolojinin insana, onun dışsal bir öteki olan Tanrı karşısında zayıf bir varlık olduğunu benimsetmesinin bir sonucudur. Klasik Alman idealizminden materyalizme ve pozitivistime geçişi temsil eden Feuerbach, Hegel idealizmini ve diyalektiğini bir araç olarak kullanmaya devam etmekle beraber tersine okuyarak/yorumlayarak gerçeklik arayışına yönelik düşünce akışını metafiziksel Mutlak Ruh'tan tikel insana doğru olacak şekilde benimser. Hegel, zihinsel nesnelere ile dışsal nesnelere arasındaki ilişki sorununda düşüncelerin varlığa tekabül ettiğini, bunun garantisinin

de Mutlak Zihin olduğunu vurgular. Hegelci monistik idealizm, zihinle dış dünya arasındaki bütünlüğü sağlayan Mutlak zihnin dünyadan önce var olduğunu iddia eder. Buna karşın Feuerbach, tikel akıllardan hareketle genel bilgisine ulaşılabileceğini savunur. Zira gerçeğin bilgisinin, düşünceden nesneye değil, ancak nesneden düşünceye doğru bir yol takip edilmesi halinde mümkün olabileceğini savunur. Böylece din ve teolojiye yönelik eleştirilerde de tümevarımsal yöntemi benimseyen Feuerbach ateizmin esas itibarıyla gerçek hümanizm, teolojinin de aslında antropoloji olması gerektiğini; bu nedenle Tanrı olduğuna inanılan varlığın gerçekte insan olduğunu savunur. Mükemmel bir Tanrı inancının insanın doğasında bulunduğu ve doğuştan geldiği iddiasına karşın o, bu inancın insanda sonradan oluştuğunu iddia eder. Bu nedenle Tanrı, nesnel bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirildiğinde, öznel ve bireysel bir duygudan başka bir şey değildir. İnsanın gerçek dışı spekülasyonlarla dolu temelsiz inançlarının yerine gerçek bir din anlayışına sahip olmasını sağlamak için teolojinin yerine antropoloji, dinin yerine felsefe gelmelidir. Çünkü din, ona göre gerçekliğin teoloji yüzünden gerçektışı bir hal almış yansımasında insanın kendi gerçeğini aradığı ancak bu gerçeği doğrudan ve dolaysız olarak sen ile ben arasında bulabileceği sevgi ve aşktan ibarettir. Böylece iki insan arasında sevgi yoluyla oluşan her birlik, dindir. Çalışmamızın amacı, Feuerbach düşüncesinde Tanrı'nın insanın psikolojik zayıflıklarının ve doğasındaki eksikliklerin bir sonucu olduğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlar. Bu düşüncenin oluşmasında Feuerbach'ın felsefi arka planının, insan doğasına ve yabancılaşmaya ilişkin görüşlerinin belirleyici olduğu vurgulanır. Nitekim o, Tanrı'nın insan tarafından yaratılan kurgusal bir varlık olduğunu, Tanrı'ya atfedilen bütün özelliklerin esasen insan doğasına ait olduğunu savunur. Bu nedenle insan, Tanrı'ya inanarak, onu yücelterek kendi doğasına yabancılaşır. Bu huus, Feuerbach'ın açıkça klasik anlamda bir Tanrı fikrinin yerine insan doğasını süblime eden antropomorfik bir düşünce benimsediğini gösterir. Ancak bu yaklaşım genelde bütün kutsal dinlerin inanç ilkelerine yönelik sert eleştiriler içerse de, özde ve baskın bir şekilde Hıristiyanlığın Tanrı ve inanç ilkelerini yorumlayan Hıristiyan teolojisini hedef alan hümanist bir felsefi temele dayanır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Felsefe Tarihi, Ludwig Feuerbach, Yabancılaşma, İnsan Doğası, Antropoteizm, Hümanizm.

## INTRODUCTION

In the process that started with the modern period and continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is seen that challenging philosophical ideas in terms of human belief in God, gained momentum. Auguste Comte declares his positivist thought, which includes the view that theology is the most primitive and positivism is the most advanced age in human history, and that as a necessary result of historical evolution, man will leave religion aside as he reaches scientific competence.<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx argues that religion and belief in God are used

<sup>1</sup> Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, ed. Harriet Martineau (London: Chapman Publications, 2010), 1/1.

by socio-political forces as an instrument of pressure on societies, and in such a social order, man's freedom will disappear. He puts forward the idea that a social order in which the resources created by religions will be drained and eliminated is necessary in order to ensure the freedom of people in social and political terms.<sup>2</sup> Freud clearly stated his psychologically based thought that man's belief in God stems from man's fears, need for sanctuary and so on. He argues that the need for God will disappear in parallel with the development and strengthening of humanity, so that belief in God is unnecessary for a strong person.<sup>3</sup> In Nietzsche's philosophy, there is a stance in which man is centralized and that God has no place in human life. J.P. Sartre adopts an existentialist approach, which includes the idea that the idea of God is a result of man's desire to deify himself and to see himself as God, and that man must give up belief in God in order to attain eternal freedom.<sup>4</sup> The most influential of these contra-religion ideas, and one of the threatening views of Church Christianity, especially for the understanding of God, belongs to German Materialist Philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872).

Feuerbach played a leading role in the formation and development of Post-Hegelian philosophy, in the evolution of German philosophy from idealism to Naturalism, Materialism and Positivism through the midst of the nineteenth century. The point that gave Feuerbach this position, expressing the transition period from classical German idealism to materialism, was that he put human being at the center of his philosophy by reversing Hegel's thought. In this respect, he is known as the creator of the modern tradition of refuting religious myths and reinterpreting the religion from the humanist point of view, and an important source of inspiration for contemporary theological schools known that argues the death of God.<sup>5</sup>

His philosophy, which did not receive enough attention in his own time, regained momentum in the middle of the twentieth century due to the profound effects it had on Marx and Engels. Galloway expresses the foundations of the revival of interest in Feuerbach as a result of both positive and negative criticism as follows:

Self-critical Marxists, who are disturbed by the apparently inhuman character of some of the institutions of developed socialism, have been casting

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<sup>2</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "Introduction", *Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, On Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), vii.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, çev. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton Company Inc., 1961), 38-39.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, çev. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 139.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Taylor, "Feuerbach and Roots of Materialism", *Political Studies* 26/3 (Eylül 1978), 417.

about for a richer concept of humanity which would complement the ethical values inherent in their concept of class; many theologians, having been startled by the remarkable degree of confirmation which Feuerbach's account of religion appears to have received in the progressive secularization of Europe, have developed a new and intense interest in what John Robinson has called 'the human face of God'.<sup>6</sup>

Feuerbach, who argues that individualism or egoism is one of the most fundamental problems faced by the subject of the modern period, states that Modernism defines man as a single and unique holiness and eternity in his own individuality. The modern era, which is the cause of these determinations, dictates the tendency to see the history as a product of particular individuals rather than of humanity as a whole, the effort to explain nature with some mechanical features rather than a relational and organic framework, and the belief that God is an individual willpower subject who creates the world and directs it. He states that nature contains a developmental purposefulness within itself, as opposed to the belief that the theistic understanding of God excludes an organic natural dynamism and that the first action is formed by the purposeful action of an external agent. For him, nature disintegrates itself as an unlimited creative force. However, all these fragmentations or multiplicity take place within the organic unity of nature, which has the principle of development. This indicates that the nature is the basis and principle of itself. So he expresses this view in his first thesis titled *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* as: Nature is ground and principle of itself, or—what is the same thing, it exists out of necessity, out of the soul, the essence of God, in which he is one with nature.<sup>7</sup>

Adopting a different metaphysical doctrine than the classical religious teachings, Feuerbach, being influenced by Hegel's philosophy, proposes a new philosophy model on his criticisms of dialectical philosophy. Although he states that Hegel's thought has achieved a success that would be the culmination of modern rationalism, he states that Hegel, like all rationalist philosophers, is oriented towards transcendence that denies the visible, towards essentially a spiritual being full of religious motives. Because of this orientation, Hegel's thought caused the deterioration of the material world, which is the main characteristic of metaphysics; of the human, which is the main characteristic of ethics, and of the senses, which are the main characteristics of epistemology. However, Hegel's philosophy also provides useful

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<sup>6</sup> A.D. Galloway, "The Meaning of Feuerbach", *The British Journal of Sociology* 25/2 (1974), 137.

<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality from the Papers of a Thinker*, çev. James A. Massey (Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980), 94.

instruments for getting rid of the religious unreality contained in modern thought. According to Feuerbach, Hegel's emphasis on the primacy of reason and the necessity of reason to realize itself in the material has resulted in the negation of the Hegelian system itself in favor of establishing the foundations of a materialist metaphysics, a humanistic ethics and a sensuous epistemology in the new philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

The system of thought, which Feuerbach calls the new philosophy or the philosophy of the future, is based on the axiom that only a sensible being is real and genuine. Accordingly, in the thought-being relationship, being is the subject and thought is the attribution. Being is not a product of thought, but thought is a product of being. The essence of being as being is the essence of nature.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, Hegel's consciousness, Descartes and Kant's reason, Spinoza's matter...all those are nothing but only our ego, our mind and our essence. These concepts deified by generative philosophers are not God-in-itself, but only the appearance of us to ourselves. Therefore, these philosophers create an esoteric ground that instrumentalizes human psychology while explaining classical metaphysical existence.<sup>10</sup> Against these esoteric approaches, Feuerbach exhibits a sensory realist approach, saying that he does not generate object from thought, but the thought from the object, and keeps it aside until it becomes an object that has an existence outside of one's brain.<sup>11</sup> This realist approach states that according to the philosophy making way he has established, unlike the systems known up to now, the understanding of truth is not just a pencil; he also states that he needs eyes and ears, hands and feet as instruments. This point clearly shows that he gives importance to sensibility in his philosophical understanding.<sup>12</sup> Thus, he exhibits "an understanding close to materialism by seeing sensations as reflections of an objective reality"<sup>13</sup>

According to Feuerbach, who, unlike traditional materialism, gives an ontological and epistemological status to consciousness and mind in addition to the senses, prioritizes matter unlike idealism, nonetheless allows neither matter nor consciousness to be deified, instead of saying that man is separated from animals only through consciousness, he is aware of consciousness. However, this change or differentiation does not necessitate the

<sup>8</sup> Hayden V. White, "Feuerbach, Ludwig Andreas", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borcherth (USA: Macmillan Reference, 2006), 3/610.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach ve Klasik Alman Felsefesinin Sonu*, çev. Sevim Belli (Ankara: Sol Yayınları, 1979), 29.

<sup>10</sup> White, "Feuerbach, Ludwig Andreas", 3/610.

<sup>11</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *Hıristiyanlığın Özü*, çev. Devrim Bulut (Ankara: Öteki Yayınları, 2004), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Feuerbach, *Hıristiyanlığın Özü*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmet Cevizci, *Felsefe Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Paradigma Yayınları, 1999), 272.

idealist view that consciousness is the only thing that creates human beings. Because, contrary to the claim of general materialism, just as nature belongs to the essence of man, contrary to the claim of subjective idealism, similarly, man belongs to the essence of nature as well.<sup>14</sup> This nature is the sum of mortal and living finite beings, individuals existing in different times and places. In this framework, the uniqueness and integrity of nature can be explained by accepting existence and non-existence, life and death, creation and destruction as equally constitutive elements of limited beings. In short, non-existence should be understood as a condition for existence.

The issue that being is a unity and a whole that includes particulars is put forward by Feuerbach by remaining faithful to Hegel's dialectical method. If we accept that there are organic ties that bind man as an organic being to other homogeneous individuals, and that these bonds form a single being, namely forms the nature, by connecting the parts between the particulars of nature, we can say that the common consciousness of the species is hidden in the mobility of each of these particular beings between existence and non-existence. Similarly, Spirit is nothing but the sum of the existence of self-conscious individuals in which it acquires a concrete consciousness and thus exists as Spirit. From this point of view, the death of the individual is considered necessary for the existence of the Infinite Spirit/Spirit. He expresses it as: "Death is just the withdrawal and departure of your objectivity from your subjectivity, which is eternally living activity and therefore everlasting and immortal."<sup>15</sup>

The statement above shows that Feuerbach uses Hegel's dialectic as an instrument in his system of thought, which he calls new philosophy. However, he does not accept that the absolute mind exists before particular minds and is seen as a necessary precondition and guarantee of the particular mind's correspondence with reality or external object. Hegel's thought, solves the problem of the relationship between mental objects and external objects by claiming that thoughts correspond to existence and that the absolute mind is its guarantee. In other words, he argues that the correspondence of our thoughts to reality – to real beings – is provided by the absolute mind, and that what we know about the real world is its mental content. However, the idea that the Absolute mind existed before the world contradicts Feuerbach's anthropological approach. This constitutes one of the reasons for Feuerbach's later break with Hegelian idealism. Instead of the idea that the absolute and abstract mind is the predecessor of the whole

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<sup>14</sup> White, "Feuerbach, Ludwig Andreas", 3/611.

<sup>15</sup> Feuerbach, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality from the Papers of a Thinker*, 95.

particular reality, Feuerbach argues that general knowledge can be reached from particulars with an empirical attitude. Thus, Feuerbach's paradigm on the relationship between thought and being displays an example of a Hegelian thinker's way towards materialism. He draws an inductive realist picture in his philosophy, arguing that he concentrates his thoughts on substances that can only be understood through the senses.<sup>16</sup>

The unreality of belief in God in Feuerbach's thought is determined by his approach to two fundamental issues. He first reveals the human nature, the species characteristics of human being in a positivist framework then states that human has alienated his own nature by projecting his own species-specific features to an external entity. For this reason, Feuerbach's philosophical analysis of the human-God relationship requires an explanation of his thoughts on human nature and on the process of man's alienation from himself.

## 1. ON HUMAN NATURE

Referring to the phenomenon of religion in understanding human nature, Feuerbach emphasizes that one of the most obvious distinctions between humans and subhuman living forms is religion, and therefore, human nature must be discovered first in order to understand religion. Fundamentally, thinking that the particular consciousness is part of the universal (respectively the species and the universal) must involve the self, the other, in the form of an internal dialogue, so that the human individual must realize the distinction between the species to which he belongs and the non-human species. The fact that man is a thinking being implies that he is not only a thinking being, but also a being that has desires, aspirations, and emotions. He expresses this as follows:

It follows that if thou thinkest the infinite, thou perceivest and affirmest the infinitude of the power of thought; if thou feelest the infinite, thou feelest and affirmest the infinitude of the power of feeling. The object of the intellect is intellect objective to itself; the object of feeling is feeling objective to itself.<sup>17</sup>

In his new human-centered philosophy, Feuerbach emphasizes that neither the derivation of man's essence or material aspect from his spiritual aspect nor any vice versa will give us correct results for the understanding of man. According to him, man should realize that he is equipped with a

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<sup>16</sup> Feuerbach, *Hıristiyanlıđın Özü*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, çev. Marian Evans (Edinburgh, London: Trübner&Co, 1881), 9.

consciousness that tries to realize his essence within the network of relations he has established with other individual beings of his own species. This essence is revealed only in the drive for unity or wholeness with other particular minds. To put it more clearly, the reality of man manifests itself in the unity that he embodies in the community, without ignoring the differences between the self and the other. In this framework, human activity is possible by understanding the capacity of subhuman living forms to overcome their limited reactions to their environment.<sup>18</sup>

Feuerbach's emphasis on the individual-species relationship in the understanding of human nature and its agency reveals the evolution of theology into anthropology, in short, a consistent transformation of the understanding of man instead of God as an external absolute being as a result. He regards man as the telos of natural circularity or dynamism. Because man is defined as the universal essence. Under the reflexes of man, as the universal essence, against nature, of which he is a part, lies the urge to create unity by uniting with the other. This connectivity is also the implicit mover of all human thoughts and actions. According to Feuerbach, the thing that man is in search of in his orientation to the Absolute, which he constructs in the world of imagination and believes to be real, is nothing but the unity or integrity of the self and the other.<sup>19</sup>

According to Feuerbach, who argues that human consciousness has a very close relationship with its species, the forces of thinking, will and heart are not powers under the authority or will of the individual. These are the essential, non-egoistic forces of the species. These powers become concrete in the individual's softening his own desires in order not to violate the freedom of the other, in the voice of conscience that tells him that the other's area of existence should be recognized, in compassion, and in the awareness that we need to get rid of the elements that limit our intellectual existence. It assumes that the individual's intellectual passion also includes the awareness that we have individual limits rather than varietal (limits about being species) limits, so the individual's efforts to transcend himself involve understandable norms.<sup>20</sup>

Man, as an individual being, is not only a physically but also a morally limited being. But neither our physical nor moral limitations restrict the species to which we belong. Because while the individual experiences his own physical and moral limits, he also experiences that his species has cha-

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<sup>18</sup> White, "Feuerbach, Ludwig Andreas", 3/611.

<sup>19</sup> White, "Feuerbach, Ludwig Andreas", 3/611-612.

<sup>20</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 283-285.

racteristics beyond these limits. In other words, the individual realizes the particular limitation and the universal unlimitedness on the same line. For example, an individual who scolds himself with self-talk for being a coward becomes aware of the fact that the main reason for this scolding is not only the cowardice he has, but also the lack of courage in his fellows. The individual who is offended to himself for being stingy actually suffers from not having enough generosity that someone else has. In a nutshell, a person exists not only because of his own deficiencies, but also in relation to a consciousness that transcends himself with an awareness that he can potentially overcome these deficiencies and potentially have features that he didn't possess before. According to Feuerbach, the consciousness that makes the relation of the individual with the external real and makes him a part of the whole is the species consciousness.<sup>21</sup>

The *Essence of Christianity*, which includes Feuerbach's efforts to create a positive philosophy of religion against the classical dominant understanding of religion and God, and a part of his efforts to create a new philosophy, also shows his departure from idealistic pantheism. An obvious explanation of this approach is expressed as follows:

The general predicates are the metaphysical, but these serve only as external points of support to religion; they are not the characteristic definitions of religion. It is the personal predicates alone which constitute the essence of religion—in which the Divine Being is the object of religion. Such are, for example, that God is a Person, that he is the moral Lawgiver, the Father of mankind, the Holy One, the Just, the Good, the Merciful. It is, however, at once clear, or it will at least be clear in the sequel, with regard to these and other definitions, that, especially as applied to a personality, they are purely human definitions, and that consequently man in religion—in his relation to God—is in relation to his own nature; for to the religious sentiment these predicates are not mere conceptions, mere images, which man forms of God, to be distinguished from that which God is in himself, but truths, facts, realities.<sup>22</sup>

In Feuerbach's relationship between man and God, he makes a distinction between metaphysical explanations and personal explanations. On one side of this distinction, there exists God in himself or God as God who is independent of the finitude of man and the existential problems that this finitude brings; on the other side there exists the human being whose consciousness is claimed to be entirely dependent on the consciousness of God's

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<sup>21</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 170.

<sup>22</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 25.

existence. However, human consciousness is by no means a religious consciousness, but has a skeptic, materialistic and naturalistic character.<sup>23</sup> From this point of view, according to Feuerbach, God is seen not as an object of religious thought for his believer, but as an object of feeling, imagination, and object of asylum.

## 2. ON ALIENATION

Alienation, in its most general sense, is estrangement with one's environment, with other people and ultimately with one's own being.<sup>24</sup> The concept of alienation in contemporary philosophers also includes the meaning of "self-alienation". Alienation from oneself (his own nature, self, essence, etc.) occurs when a person's inclusion of internal characteristics belonging to himself in the reference field of an external entity causes him to distance himself from his own self and cause a disconnection in the definition-reality relationship of the self.<sup>25</sup>

The philosophical foundations of the concept of alienation can be traced back to Plato's thought. For him, the natural world can be regarded as a kind of alienation of the world of ideals, as it is an imperfect picture of it. On the other hand, it is seen that the concept was first used in detail by Hegel. Hegel regards nature as an alienated form of Absolute Mind, Absolute Reason, or God as it is known. Accordingly, the Absolute is not composed of static or fixed things, but a Self in the process that expresses the dynamism between alienation and non-alienation.<sup>26</sup> Human emancipation is possible only by increasing his knowledge of the absolute and self-awareness.<sup>27</sup>

The Hegelian dialectic includes the idea that alienation moves away from the essence of the limited subject and approaches its essence. This alienation is the subject's seeing himself in some external concreteness or in some abstractions such as culture, language and institutions. But in both cases, the subject somehow objectifies himself or becomes alienated from himself. It is possible to get rid of alienation when the subject who objectifies himself knows himself or is sufficiently known by himself.<sup>28</sup>

Feuerbach, who accepts Hegel's idea that man can become alienated

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<sup>23</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 44.

<sup>24</sup> Selman Yılmaz, "Teaching Profession in Sociological Perspective", *Educational Sociology*, ed. Mehmet Cem Şahin - Mustafa Güçlü (Ankara: Sonçağ, 2021), 252.

<sup>25</sup> Gajo Petrovic, "Alienation", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borchert (USA: Macmillan Reference, 2006), 1/121.

<sup>26</sup> G. W. Friedrich Hegel, "The Phenomenology of Spirit", *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1977), 297-298.

<sup>27</sup> Hegel, "The Phenomenology of Spirit", 561.

<sup>28</sup> Petrovic, "Alienation", 1/121.

from himself, argues that the concept of alienation should be understood within the human-God relationship, but by reading the Hegelian dialectic in reverse, instead of the idea that man or nature is the alienation of the Absolute mind from himself. To put it more clearly, according to him, man is not a God alienated from himself, on the contrary, God is a concept that is the result of man's alienation from himself. It is the result of man's outward projection and absolutization of his own limited nature. Thus, Feuerbach, while formally remaining faithful to Hegel's concept of alienation, adopts the idea that when man believes that there is an imaginary external, absolute being which higher than him, he necessarily adopts that he alienates from himself as a weak, helpless, deficient, flawed slave that obedient in front of that being. The way to eliminate this alienation, in other words, to realize and return to one's own essence, is the elimination of the existence that is the cause of alienation, namely God.<sup>29</sup>

Feuerbach tries to clarify the issue of human alienation by restating the metaphysical fiction in a naturalist perspective. According to him, belief in God is an illusion for people stemming from religions. This illusion separates man from his nature. In this distinction, man alienates himself, his own nature, by attributing his nature to an external being. Hegelian speculative doctrine identifies human consciousness with God's self-consciousness. When God is thought of by man, he thinks of himself or becomes self-conscious. However, Feuerbach argues that the person who has self-consciousness and the object of self-consciousness is human, starting from the view that the reflective thought of the conscious being creates self-consciousness. In other words, he argues that man's knowledge of God and God's knowledge of himself are in direct contradiction. The way to get rid of this contradiction is to understand the subject and the object correctly, contrary to the religion's teaching of God. Accordingly, man's knowledge of God is actually nothing but man's knowledge of himself and his own nature. The real is only the knowledge of being and reality. He argues that man's consciousness of God will clearly reveal the reality of man who has consciousness of God, not God's reality.<sup>30</sup>

Feuerbach, who tries to realize the return back of the human individual to his essence by reversing Hegel's dialectical system, criticizes Hegel's philosophy for positioning the essence of man in the absolute spiritual and non-worldly realm outside the human being and therefore alienating him from his own essence and giving continuity to his alienation from himself.

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<sup>29</sup> Petrovic, "Alienation", 1/121-122.

<sup>30</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 230.

The problem of alienation of the human individual by the religion's concept of God can only be solved by man's self-realization. For this, man should give up fictional and consoling beings and contribute to the creation of abstract political and cultural institutions suitable for his return to his own essence. Feuerbach thus gave an atheistic humanism identity to his new philosophy, in which he established the ontological reality and inevitability of man instead of God.<sup>31</sup>

Although Marx accepts Feuerbach's ideas that man is alienated from himself under the influence of theology, that this alienation reflects his own essence to an external being, he said that such religious alienation is only one type or dimension of alienation that needs to be considered in a general and broader perspective. In the process of alienation, man alienates himself not only in the form of God as an other being, but also in the form of concrete/material goods of his own production and in the form of abstract goods of his own production.<sup>32</sup>

From this perspective, the main factor that alienation creates in individual consciousness is that the "self" needs the "other" to exist, and that it arises from the belief that it cannot fulfill the requirements of the role it has to fulfill in the society in which he lives. Alienation, which Marx defines on a concrete level as "the inability of man to experience himself as an agent acting in his understanding of the world, his being alienated from his own reality", shows a more abstract character in Feuerbach's thought, in which the questioning is carried out through God.<sup>33</sup>

Feuerbach, who is considered to be a very challenging figure of the modern period in terms of religion and belief in God, tries to explain belief in God with an anthropological approach. This approach is based on the assumption that God, who is adopted and exalted by man as an object of belief, is both a cause and a consequence of man's alienation from himself. This assumption justifies his understanding of theology as anthropology in its essence, of atheism as a genuine humanism. According to him, God is a concept emerged as a result of the human mind's reflection of its own nature outwards. Feuerbach, starting from the point that there is no difference between divine expressions or subjects and expressions or subjects belonging to human nature, therefore states that the real meaning of theology is anthropology. Because denying what theology says about the metaphysical field and explaining the essence of man with a new understanding of "faith", "belief"

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<sup>31</sup> Gooch Todd, "Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Petrovic, "Alienation", 1/121.

<sup>33</sup> Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, çev. T. B. Bottomore (London and New York: Continuum Publishing, 2004), 37.

based on anthropology, and reducing theology to anthropology are considered identical issues in his perspective. According to him, man's belief in the existence of God is, in a sense, the result of denying his own self, alienating himself from his essence, and voluntarily attaching himself to an ontological inadequacy. The central idea in *The Essence of Christianity*, which reflects his views on the manifestations of this alienation process in the God-human relationship; that the transcendent God of religion is in fact the projection of the essential qualities of human nature. He expresses this as follows:

Man—this is the mystery of religion— projects his being into objectivity, and then again makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject; he thinks of himself, is an object to himself, but as the object of an object, of another being than himself. Thus here. Man is an object to God. That man is good or evil is not indifferent to God; no! He has a lively, profound interests in man's being good... Thus in and through God, man has in view himself alone. It is true that man places the aim of his action in God, but God has no other aim of action than the moral and eternal salvation of man: thus man has in fact no other aim than himself. The divine activity is not distinct from the human.<sup>34</sup>

Based on the above statement, it can be said that according to Feuerbach, theology strengthens alienation by putting obstacles in front of people's seeing and understanding the real object of religion. Therefore, theology contains dogmas that are truly self-contradictory and meaningless. Feuerbach, who criticizes the dominant religions' understanding of God from an anthropological perspective, and the correct meaning of theological claims, argues that these claims point to anthropological facts rather than theological ones. Therefore, religion should be handled in harmony with the essence of man. To put it more clearly, the predicates that man attributes to God in accordance with the principles of religious belief are those that can be applied in accordance with the human species and essence, of which God is an unreal representation. Here, man creates God as a fictional being, as a being that he can reflect and attribute the features that exist in him, and that he wants to see the absolute, eternal and strongest form of these features. According to Feuerbach, attributing the inherent characteristics of man to God as an "other" being is seen as both the basis and manifestation of his alienation from himself. Thus, he argues that religion assumes a conception of God that contradicts human nature.<sup>35</sup> He states that true religion or anthropology is based on reference to man, so his stance should be understood

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<sup>34</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 29-30.

<sup>35</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 198.

as anthropotheism rather than atheism.<sup>36</sup>

Feuerbach, against the criticisms directed at him that he ignores the subjective side of religion, said that a God with a subjective character is only an individual reality, that it cannot be a universal reality, because the God to whom subjective emotion is directed can also be an acceptability in subjective character; therefore God is nothing but objectively a subjective feeling. (B 230 To judge the Scripture The Essence of Christianity). However, this approach is far from explaining why Feuerbach sees God as a manifestation or result of man's alienation from himself.<sup>37</sup>

According to Feuerbach, the concept of God was formed as a result of man's reflection of his own nature. According to him, believing in the existence of God means, in a sense, denial of his own self and alienation from his essence. Because a belief in God that is perfect in all aspects is the result of a person attributing the power and values that exist in himself to an entity other than himself, to God, or of such a need. Therefore, according to him, the essential thing is the existence of man himself.

### 3. THE CRITIQUE OF RELIGION AND THEOLOGY IN FEUERBACH'S ANTHROPOLOGY

Throughout history, humanity has always seen itself as a restricted, limited, weak and inadequate entity in the face of nature and supernatural power or forces, and has often cited this weakness as the reason for his inability to overcome the difficulties he encountered in nature. The fact that man is a weak and limited being has strengthened his sense of attachment to a more competent being that does not have these limitations, and this power has led him to seek an "other" beyond the limited "I", an external being that he thinks can complement his weaknesses. As a matter of fact, the exemption from the natural obligations that the early Christians ascribed to God was interpreted by Feuerbach as a manifestation of the desire of these Christians to free themselves from the constraints of material existence. In his strict critique of religions' belief in God, he separates the Absolute Spirit from man's essence and finally from the domination on man's understanding of reality. Thus, on the condition of getting rid of the dominant theological point of view and establishing a human point of view instead, he, in the new philosophy model, offers the individual man the opportunity to liberate himself from a fictional absolute being to which he attaches himself to by means of his own characteristics, and to explain himself on an individual and generic

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<sup>36</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 46.

<sup>37</sup> Todd, "Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach".

basis with a more profane, secular and humanist motivation.

Feuerbach likens religion to man's inherent state of consciousness. This nature belongs to its species. In the concept of species, man has an awareness of his own essence. But this awareness does not occur in a limited, finite, imperfect and special way, but in a perfect, complete and infinite way. Thus, man becomes the object (object) of himself. But at first he does not realize this identity. He considers his fundamental nature to be something outside himself. For this reason, it emphasizes sensory pleasures and the importance of being concrete and real at every opportunity. For Feuerbach, living according to one's own wishes is right, perfect and divine. But what he emphasizes here should be understood as the divine value of will, not the importance of hedonism. His desire to realize his true and whole humanity becomes a form of worship, devotion, and devotion to the other self, which is separate and of a different species. If the concept of species, not as abstract ideas, but as concrete clear and unambiguous entities is used in a way that corresponds to society, it can be said that in a more modern and technical linguistic perspective, Feuerbach actually emphasizes that man makes sense of his own world only in a cultural context. He gets involved in the cultural context by seeing that society can correspond to his humanity through individual relationships. In this cultural context, becoming divine/sacred is nothing but becoming human. All the attributes of divine nature are therefore attributes of human nature."<sup>38</sup>

Man differs from the animal in having the consciousness of his own species. Animals are only aware of the present simple environment and the concrete and specific features within it. If this state of consciousness is considered as the sense of feeling oneself, as the ability to distinguish any sensory object from another, as the ability to perceive and even interpret the properties of objects in the external world, then it will be an undeniable fact that animals also can have consciousness. Consciousness, which distinguishes humans from animals in a serious sense, has been given to beings who think about their own species and way of existence, according to him. In this way, human beings, unlike animals, have the ability to distinguish their own species from other species. In this case, where there is consciousness, there is also the capacity to produce systematic knowledge and science.<sup>39</sup> It is the consciousness of his species that gives him the ability to engage in the two specific activities of humanity: "science" and "religion".

According to Feuerbach, the religion taught by theology is man's se-

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<sup>38</sup> Galloway, "The Meaning of Feuerbach", 137-140.

<sup>39</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 21-22.

arch for his own truth in the shadow of an unreal God, or among many Gods. Now one must realize that reality has to be found in the love between “you” and “me” directly through the relationship of people with each other. According to him, emotions between people like love, friendship, etc. have been sanctified and valued by people, not because they are valuable in themselves, but on the contrary, by using the name of a religion. At this point, the essential thing is not that these feelings exist only as human beings. On the contrary, it is the exaltation of these values to the value of religion. These feelings can only reach their true value when they gain a religious character. Accordingly, every union between two people is a religion. For this reason, the person who thinks that he is attached to God and loves God actually feels love for an ordinary being who has the features that he would like to have, but that he does not have. The source of this love is admiration for God as a being that longed for, desired and worthy of love as a result of attributing the features that people want to have in themselves, but that they do not have, to an imaginary entity created by the person himself. But this states that unlike the image of man as a being who is optimistic and emotional towards people because of his love for God and his feelings for him, the first interlocutor (God) is fictional, that is, the God that man says he loves and believes does not exist in reality and therefore these feelings are against the second being, human, not the first being. For this reason, although religion is the expression of man’s relationship with himself, or rather with his own essential being, man establishes a relationship with his essential being as if he were another being. However, the divine being is nothing but man himself.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, what is called religion actually consists of love. Feuerbach tries to explain this love in the divine personality-pantheism relationship: God is a personal being, which is an expression that turns the ideal into reality, the subjective into the objective. All the words about the divine being and all the attributes of the divine being are basically human qualities; however, since these are attributes of a human being and, accordingly, separate and independent from human beings, they do indeed appear to be other than human beings. Therefore, in this context; It is necessary to talk about anthropomorphisms, which we can call “the similarities between God and man”. The attributes of the divine being and man are not the same, but they are similar. Therefore, the idea of the “personality of God” here is the antidote of pantheism, that is, the similarity of the divine and human being is derived from the religious reflection idea of the disappearance of the identity between the idea of personality and the

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<sup>40</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 37.

human and its qualities. The characteristic idea of pantheism is; that man can only be a part of God. On the other hand, religious discourse says that man is the image of God and a being close to him. So man has a sacred origin.<sup>41</sup> Feuerbach here questions the quality/degree of the expression of divine origin. According to him, the most appropriate explanation for this situation is the relationship of a child with his father. In this parable, God becomes man's father, and man becomes God's son. Here, God's sufficiency and man's dependence on him are described. In pantheism, the part is at least as self-sufficient as the whole. However, the distinction of pantheism regarding the "part and the whole" is only in appearance. There can be no father without son; They form a being together. In love, man rejects his independence and, as a degrading act, reduces himself to the fragment. As such, the starting point of this idea is the view that the loved one (God) willingly and knowingly agrees to be a part of the whole with son, so that the two of them will attain greater power together. According to pantheism, there is the same relationship between God and man.<sup>42</sup>

However, a religious person is glad of attributing the qualities inherent in his nature to another being. The reason for this is that man does not need to look for anything in himself that he needs for himself. Because everything necessary for man is hidden in God. Man sees alienation from his own nature not as alienation, but as a journey towards the external being where he positions reality. Therefore, none of these qualities are lost to man.<sup>43</sup> The qualities that he gives to God as a sacred object do not harm him, so he feels protected in God. In other words, man wants to realize and complete his own existence in God. What man takes away by renunciation only clings to God more enthusiastically and to a higher degree. However, this connection that takes place in the context of religion is only a product of imagination.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, Feuerbach states plainly that man alone is the absolute. There is nothing that man can think, dream of, imagine, feel, believe in, wish for, love and adore as the absolute than the essence of human nature itself.<sup>45</sup>

According to Feuerbach, who argues that belief in God as an object of worship is the negative effect of theology on man, man has moved away from God in the modern era. This distancing is about understanding that the divine is actually human. To the extent that the divine object is unders-

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<sup>41</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 243.

<sup>42</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 243.

<sup>43</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 51.

<sup>44</sup> Galloway, "The Meaning of Feuerbach", 139.

<sup>45</sup> J. E. Barnhart, "Anthropological Nature on Feuerbach and Marx", *Philosophy Today* 11/4 (1967), 265.

tood to be within the real man, the obvious difference between the divine man and God becomes even more evident. God, who can be nothing, but who is fully human...<sup>46</sup> That is, the more the identity of man and divine being is denied by theology and religion, the lower the value of man. The reason for this is this: Since the positive and basic principles of the idea of God can only be human principles, the thought that man is an object of consciousness can only be a negative, that is, hostile understanding. For God to become rich, man must become impoverished.<sup>47</sup> If God is everything, man must be nothing. Feuerbach, recalls Anselm's phrases: "Whoever despises himself is honored by God. Whoever does not love himself, God loves him, so be small in your own eyes so that you can be great in God's eyes, because the more you despise yourself, the more God will value you." God is selfish, egotistical, seeking in everything for himself, for his own dignity, for something for his own benefit. His only concern is to satisfy his own selfishness and ego. Man has a great contribution to God in acting as such. In order to find this God, man denies his own dignity, ego and finally his own existence.<sup>48</sup>

For Feuerbach, his understanding of philosophy was also the first step towards liberation from Christian theology. He believed that with the help of the dialectical method, the exact level of truth of science could be reached from the dogma of Christianity. This method allowed him to reveal that the Christian theology, which claims to be the absolute interpreter of the Bible, is in an unscientific and inadequate form in its explanations of the external relations between God, man and nature. This opportunity opened the way for him to reduce the theological point of view to the secular field in an all-encompassing perspective and thus to resolve the obvious contradictions between the theological point of view and the scientific and philosophical point of view. With the substitution of anthropology for theology, a return from the fictional and celestial to the real and secular, to recognizing the divine perfection of the human species, and to recognizing the identities of man and God takes place in the final stage. In parallel with the development of religion and the correct understanding of religion, man gradually takes back the potentials he has given to God. "Thus, the being, which is ostensibly thought to have been reduced to the lowest degree, is in reality exalted to the highest. In religious contraction (systole) man alienates from his own nature, while in religious expansion (diastole) he accepts it

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<sup>46</sup> Galloway, "The Meaning of Feuerbach", 138.

<sup>47</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 51.

<sup>48</sup> Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 53.

again within himself. As a result, one moves away from religion, or at least from “religion as the worship of a transcendent being.” Thus, what used to be religion before, is no longer allowed as religion. Based on the idea that what is religion today will be idolatry tomorrow, Feuerbach says that what is allowed as atheism today will be allowed as real religion in future.<sup>49</sup>

The main argument in Feuerbach’s new model of positive philosophy is that all determinations attributed to God are determinations of the essence of nature or the essence of man in real terms.<sup>50</sup> While he does not accept the reality of God, he emphasizes that God, who is believed to exist, is the essence of many mythological sacred beings acquired by people throughout history, as a result of change, differentiation and finally elimination in the historical process. The statement “the very essence of the countless Gods” means in Feuerbach’s thought that there are no countless divine attributes possessed by different understandings of God; on the contrary that it can be accepted that one purely mental and abstract God that has no features is essential God. Religion, which was seen as objective at first, is then perceived as subjective, for example, what was seen and worshiped as God is now seen as human. According to afterwardly emergent religion, an earlier religion has turned into paganism. Although man worships his own existence, he has objectified and externalized himself, but today he has not yet realized that this object is himself, not God. He will realize this reality when his conception of God, which he believed in at the moment, turns into idolatry at some point in the future. Therefore, man, who is nothing but an image of God himself, is also not a real person, but an abstract and mental image, the essence of countless real people.<sup>51</sup>

Feuerbach argues directly that Christianity - more precisely, Christian theology - is a bundle of contradictions, and that as a logical consequence of the dissolution of this bundle, the lost man will find himself and be exalted. He emphasizes that theology alienates man from himself through the concept of God. Accordingly, man perceives his individual and species characteristics as if these belong to another independent, transcendent entity separate from him. Thus, theology leads man to believe that individual minds are alienated from Absolute consciousness. This emphasis shows that Feuerbach’s attitude goes beyond criticizing the Christian understanding of God with reference to Hegel’s philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Galloway, “The Meaning of Feuerbach”, 138.

<sup>50</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, çev. Ralph Manheim (Oregon: Wipf&Stock, 1967), 21.

<sup>51</sup> Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Karl Ameriks, *The Legacy of Idealism in the Philosophy of Feuerbach, Marx, and Kierkegaard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 259.

Feuerbach, who argues that religions' understanding of God stems from the deficiencies in human nature, and that man needs an external being to fill this deficiency, believes that theology recognizes these weaknesses of man and manipulates the human mind by directing him to believe the reality and worship of a fictional God. The sublimation of an external being causes man to distance himself from his own nature. The human mind's attributing the powers inherent in its own nature to an external entity and absolutizing this entity causes it to become alienated from its own reality and its own nature. This alienation leads to a dead end as long as man continues to accept commitment to God. The way to get out of this deadlock is to return to one's own essence, to rediscover the nature that he has distanced himself from and alienated from. This discovery is possible with anthropology and positive science in Feuerbach's thought. The human individual, who has this opportunity, discovers that the divine being that he actually sublimates and worships is not an external other, but an internal existence that nothing but himself.

## CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

Like Marx and Comte, Feuerbach, inspired by the idea of evolution, sees humanity as a part of a civilization developing in a prescribed order. In this development process, while religion or belief in God represents the more primitive stages of humanity, positive science forms the apex. However, it can be said that this claim has a reductionist attitude by ignoring the distinction between human nature and human experience and knowledge. When the history of humanity is considered as a whole, it can be said that what changes or develops over time is not the nature of man, his tendencies and beliefs of this nature, but his experience and knowledge about the world. It is obvious that this process of gaining experience and knowledge will continue as long as humanity exists. Feuerbach's assuming a change in human history while forming his perspective of anthropology, associating it with the changes that religion has undergone is reminiscent of a generalist attitude. Of course, there have been periods in which there were some inconsistent, complex, ambiguous and incomprehensible approaches in terms of religions or belief principles that people adopted. However, in the process of relationship between the believer and the believed, based on the assumption that there is a necessary identity between the existence of the Absolute-in-himself and the entity or principles that are emerged through its interpretation by human mind, the thought that human emotional states and experiences also manipulate the experienced being, first of all, does not comply with the richness and plural aspect of human life experience which Feuerbach emphasized in

his philosophy. In a nutshell, the effort to explain the principles about the metaphysical field as depending upon the reality of the physical field ignores the fact that there are some constancy as well as change. Ethical, aesthetic and religious values are universally accepted as the basic necessities of human life, to which human nature is in orientation, even if considered to be at least formal. Contrary to the idea that God, which man believes as a result of his reflection of his own nature, is nothing but a being who has all the human competencies at an absolute level, an understanding of God isolated from all his active qualities is seen by Feuerbach in accordance with both his own philosophical discipline and his thoughts on religion. He argues that what man believes in is not God, and that the real God is man himself.

The idea that on the one hand there is a God standing over there as a passive entity, abstracted from all his features and deprived of his powers, on the other hand, there is "human God" who supposedly gets to the place it deserves after the powers that are imagined to belong to God are taken from God and handed over to their real owners resembles the genre of humanistic anthropomorphism. Nevertheless, the discourse that Feuerbach did not oppose an idea of God who has no characteristics, aimed to ground the existence of people as profane Gods in accordance with a non-classical metaphysical discourse, and in a sense, paved the way for a polytheistic understanding in his own materialism.

After all, as a final sentence, it can be said that Feuerbach's thought that anthropology is the real theology, the man is the real God, has a positive function in stating that the ties to be established between human and transcendent fields and values should be more consistent.

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