

# Ludwig Feuerbach's View of God in *The Essence of Christian*

Nguyễn Thị Cẩm Tú<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Post-Graduate in University of Social Science and Humanities – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City; Teaching at Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry, Vietnam

DOI: [10.36348/jaep.2022.v06i02.005](https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2022.v06i02.005)

| Received: 08.01.2022 | Accepted: 16.02.2022 | Published: 22.02.2022

\*Corresponding author: Nguyễn Thị Cẩm Tú

Post-Graduate in University of Social Science and Humanities – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City; Teaching at Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry, Vietnam

## Abstract

Hegel was once a philosopher who greatly influence the views and perceptions of Ludwig Feuerbach. However, in the process of studying the philosophy of the seventeenth century, the French materialism of the eighteenth century and observing the reality of German society at that time, Ludwig Feuerbach realized that Hegel's philosophy was still limited. Based on that perception, Ludwig Feuerbach criticizes Hegel's position, at the same time, he criticizes the position of Christian philosophy. Thereby, he established his own philosophical views – humanist philosophy or humanist thought. Although Ludwig Feuerbach's view of society has not yet clearly shown human independence, it is the foundation and "source of fire" for Karl Mark and F. Engels to establish the concept of human emancipation.

**Keywords:** Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christian, source of fire.

**Copyright © 2022 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804 - 1872) was an outstanding delegate, following the tradition of Renaissance philosophers, the French Enlightenment of movement and the eighteenth – century French materialism with humane pages about people. In the process of the exploring new experience, along with the impact of contemporary German society. Ludwig Feuerbach has made significant "ahead" contributions to the history of philosophy in general and the history of classical German philosophy in particularly. In his studies, Ludwig Feuerbach has left a great legacy to be a meaningful end to researcher not only of German classical philosophy. Accordingly, the works of *The Essence of Christianity* (German: *Das Wesen des Christenhum*s) he emphasized that it is necessary to reform philosophy in the relationship between matter and consciousness, thinking and being, spirit and nature.

In *The Essence of Christianity*, Ludwig Feuerbach conceived of God as a life, an object of perception and knowledge. To distinguish God and man, Ludwig Feuerbach pointed out many details such as the contradiction in the perception of man and God, the different life, the powers of God and the limitations of man. All the above analysis to come to a different

view of God and man, because God is perfect and humans are weak, God is immortal and man is limited, God is everywhere and man is not.

### Ludwig Feuerbach's view of religion Christianity

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Germany's economy and politics were both backward and far behind neighboring countries such as England, France and Netherlands. In the meantime, German philosophy flourished. It is the cognitive and ideological maturity of the contemporary German intelligentsia, including Ludwig Feuerbach.

After a long time accepting the views of Hegel – his teacher – Ludwig Feuerbach realized that Christianity cannot free people and lead them to the happiness of real life, religion only blinds them. Man must be enslaved to Christianity and the Prussian monarchy [3]. According to Ludwig Feuerbach, must express human nature, not blinds them. The concept of God is not eternal but change according to historical circumstances, because concepts is perceived by people. At the times, Ludwig Feuerbach no longer considered the Hegelian system of philosophy as the final step of philosophical thought, but wished to introduce new contents into it, demonstrating the movement forward in history. On the argument, Ludwig Feuerbach started a "system" of his own aspiration of a religion without

God – the religion of human love. In *The Essence of Christianity*, Ludwig Feuerbach sees religion as “separating humanity from man himself” [1]. Religion makes people reflect on their latent nature, which is internal forces and wills within people that have not yet been fully developed. By the ways, wisdom helps them to change the world. Thus, Ludwig Feuerbach concludes, the starting point of religion is quite different from that of man. Because people exist in real life, with real relationships, ties, limitation, suffering. Religion is not.

### **Ludwig Feuerbach's view of God**

Before writing *The Essence of Christianity*, Ludwig Feuerbach believed that religion or absolute concepts dominated contemporary real world. Ludwig Feuerbach considers thought as the universal space of all things and subjects. Ludwig Feuerbach also believed that, in the context that Germany is under pressure of changes from neighboring countries, Hegel's philosophy really opens up the sense of freedom, suggests many new things in human consciousness, the possibility of liberating man from the bonds of creed is a new opportunity. However, in the process of studying ideologies such as French Enlightenment philosophy, French materialism of the 17th – 18th centuries, Ludwig Feuerbach realized that God does not play a role in a human life, God – an unidentified object – make man unable to overcome themselves, not to struggle with the injustices of life. In fact, God and man contradict each other: “God is not man – man is not God. God is perfect, man is not; God is omnipotent, man is sick...God and man are two states” [1]. Contrary to Hegel's view, according to Ludwig Feuerbach, God is different from human life. Human life is defined, imperfect, sickly, and forbidden. God is powerful and vetoes all human activities, but God cannot solve their pain. Why do people worship God but God cannot solve their suffering? According to Ludwig Feuerbach, God is an objective object, but he has “superpowers of thinking, power of action” [1]. Ludwig Feuerbach demonstrated that, God is not only unable to solve human their pain but is also “an absurd and evil being” [1]. Agreeing Ludwig Feuerbach, researcher William B. Chamberlain also said that people worship religion because they live in a period of being bound by Christianity and the Prussian monarchy. In fact, human is their object, but they do not realize it that: “The fact that the divine being is only the objectivation, abstraction, or purification of the human being means that the attributes of the divine nature are therefore attributes of human nature” [4].

Ludwig Feuerbach's view of God, of course, the opposite of that of the contemporary Christianity. His judgments about God led to him lose his teaching job at the University Erlangen – Germany and his books were banned circulation by the Prussian monarchy but, *The Essence of Christianity* is the signal of the awareness of a combative materialist philosopher as

well as a sign of Ludwig Feuerbach break with the idealism he once admired.

### **The different between God and man according to Ludwig Feuerbach**

According to Ludwig Feuerbach, intellectually, God is difficult to understand and impossible to explain. But the intellectual nature of man is explainable. They are smart. Humans who have “mysterious activities of thoughts, latent nature of the unconscious” can complete be “awakened” because of practical activities [1]. Human is different from God, according to Ludwig Feuerbach. Humans are owner of all kinds of sciences “philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, physics, science in the universal is concrete evidence” [1]. Human created sciences to serve their life, but people are also weak, and sympathize with the pain of the community in which they live and create. Meanwhile, God cannot do that. To distinguish the thinking and perceptions of human and God, Ludwig Feuerbach said that: people have thinking and reason because they imagine – a potential power of reason, an abstraction from his objective object as well as the study of his object by scientists. But who is God? Ludwig Feuerbach asked. God has the attributes of metaphysics, an intelligence, contented with the very thoughts of the people who imagine it and exist in it. Which does not help people to explain and get rid of the injustices of life. According to Ludwig Feuerbach, “Understanding is the condition and governs all things” [1]. It is understanding that helps people realize who they are, where they come from and explain other different origins. In that sense, understanding is going against God's point of view. To explain this problem, Ludwig Feuerbach emphasized: “Reason does not depend on God, but God depends on reason” [1]. This mean that reason has an objective nature, which exist in man himself without God's grace. Human can completely overcome difficulties and challenges in life by themselves. Meanwhile, God is not different from man. God want to think, want to perceive, God must also rely on reason. According to Ludwig Feuerbach, reason is even higher than God, because reason governs human cognitive and action activities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Theology in general and God in particular are supernatural forces created by unspecific understanding of human beings. Human, who is governed in their perception and in action by religion. They have not yet been to explain inequality in real sociality, therefore, their perception was dominated by theological views and the Prussian monarchy. Ludwig Feuerbach understands the injustices that people have to endure and wants to build a humane sociality exclusively for people, so he denied the power and immortality of God. Agreeing view's Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Mark also emphasized that “religion is the opium of the people” [2] where they can dream, rely on to overcome difficulties in reality. We can consider the work to be

one of the most rigorous dialectical materialist formulations, which broadly defines the human conscience as a mirror of socio-economic facts from in *The Essence of Christianity*. According to Ludwig Feuerbach, God is humane image, God's history is a heavenly repetition of human progress. According to Karl Mark, people's feelings and ideals are a reflection of their conditions of existence, human's history is reflection about history of production conditions. Based on that analysis, it can be said that humanistic thinking about man or communism later on is based on the view of point that has been summarized: "Ludwig Feuerbach is a surveyor; Karl Mark and Friedrich Engels were the builders" [3].

To borrow the words Ludwig Feuerbach once said is the opens pages of *The Essence of Christianity* to concludes the article: "My book, as I have said, contain

the beginning of the concrete development of new philosophy, not a didactic philosophy, but a philosophy of man" [1].

## REFERENCE

1. Ludwig, F. (2012). *The Essence of Christianity*. General Book LLC. Memphis. Printed in the USA.
2. Karl, M., & Friedrich, E. (1998). *The German Ideology – Includes:Theses on L.Feuerbach and Critique of Political Economy*. Prometheus Books, US.
3. William, B. C. (2016). *Heaven wasn't his destination - The philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*. Cambridge University. US.
4. Đinh Ngọc Thạch, Doãn Chính (Co-editor) (2018 - 1). *History of Western philosophy*. Volume 1. Hanoi: National political Publishing.