

Body, sacrifice and love: towards a Theory of Community in Ludwig Feuerbach

*Kolloquium Bildungsphilosophie - Bildungsgeschichte – Prof. Dr. Rita Casale
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In his 1862 essay *The Mystery of Sacrifice, or Man Is What He Eats*, Ludwig Feuerbach explores the fundamental relationship between diet and identity, arguing that food transcends its purely biological function to become a spiritual and social mediator. This text, deeply rooted in the materialist philosophy that he would increasingly embrace throughout his life, invites reflection on how “becoming one with the body” can be expressed through sacrificial ritual and the sharing of food.

Thus, this lecture proposes to analyze how Feuerbach articulates the link between the physical and spiritual body within the framework of sacrificial practices, which embody a fusion between the individual and the community. Sacrifice is interpreted here not only as an act of renunciation, but also as a process of social cohesion and collective communion. By employing a critical reading of this text that takes into account its genesis – 12 years earlier, in his 1850 recension of Jakob Moleschott’s *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel. Für das Volk* – our study aims to examine the political implications that may arise from a materialist conception of sacrifice.

Secondly, and no less important, we will explore the extent to which such a concept of sacrifice could align with Feuerbach’s conception of community, notably as being founded on love as a transcendental instance that supersedes the purely individual human being. To this end, we will also refer to his early work *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, from 1830.

What are we to make of this “becoming one body” when it comes to conceiving of the human community as founded on love? Moreover, what are we to make of it if this love, to which Feuerbach attaches such importance, must be understood as sacrifice? And, furthermore, what place would then remain for nourishment? This work will attempt, if not to answer these questions, at least to articulate these fundamental problems with the clearest possible precision, in order to lay a solid foundation for future research.

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