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Deify

from the Anarchist Encyclopedia — S. Faure

Sébastien Faure

1934

Deify: verb. Put at the rank of a god. Attribute to an animal or an object a supernatural power. Deification is a sign of ignorance and it is understandable only in the backward ages of humanity, when man had not yet pierced the mysteries of nature and was inclined to deify that which he didn't understand. It is thus that through ignorance or terror the first men adored the thunder and in order to demonstrate their joy or their recognition they glorified the sun and the stars that brought them light.

Afterwards, when humanity had left the darkness into which it had been plunged and when man, through seeking, arrived at determining the causes of certain phenomena, it elevated itself from the deification of objects, of things to the deifications of his like. It considered as gods the great men of his generation, the kings, the inventors and those who singled themselves out by their discoveries. In a word man, during these centuries, infallibly believed in the power of external forces and made divine those it considered benefactors or capable of exercising a favorable influence on the collective life of humanity.

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Even though progress in science and philosophy have in a large measure abolished the practices to which the populations of ancient societies delivered themselves, deification still subsists and we frequently witness the adoration of a noted personality of an era by a people. Just as the ancients placed above all and adored after their deaths — and sometimes when they were alive — certain of their great men, modern populations exalt as gods beings whose value cannot be disdained, but who were men, and only men. In France did we not make of Jaurès a veritable god, and isn't the same being done in Russia with Lenin? To be sure, we are not so ridiculous as to address prayers to these deified men, but nevertheless the belief of the people is such that during periods of difficulty they imagine that only the presence of these individuals is capable of resolving a material or moral crisis. Pious pilgrimages are organized to the tombs of these new gods, and the cult dedicated to them is such that no one is permitted to doubt their past, present and future power.

Montaigne said: “Those things the least known are those most likely to be deified,” and it is because humans have no confidence in their own force that they always take refuge in some kind of belief or another and they hope that others will do that which seems impossible to them. There is no providence and nothing can be modified by supernatural means or forces. We must have confidence only in ourselves. Unite our efforts: nothing is superior to the living being! Suppress the gods, all the gods. Preserve the memory of those men who, by their will, their foresightedness, or their courage brought their tribute to humanity. But we must not deify them unless we want to fall back into those errors that were so harmful to the evolution of humanity.