

Ludwig Siep

Der Staat als irdischer Gott

Genese und Relevanz einer Hegelschen Idee

[The State as Earthly God. The Development and Relevance of a Hegelian Idea.]

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In the present age, the reference to God within constitutions is just as much a bone of contention as the »deification of the state« because of the threat it may pose to the upholding of human rights. The idea of an »absolute« state has a long history in the political philosophy of modernity and culminates with Hegel. This notion belongs to the emancipation of the secular state from religious and ecclesiastical dictation, to the safeguarding of religious freedom and other fundamental rights. State-determined right is the only source of binding and enforceable laws. Ludwig Siep's study shows how philosophers since the time of the French Revolution viewed the state to be in a liberty-threatening rivalry with religious and economic forces. It could retain the loyalty of its subjects only through an independent imparting of meaning. In the case of emergency, it would have to be worth it to relinquish all private interests and to sacrifice just as much for the state as for belief. This idealization of the state was itself intended to support the protection of individual rights – quite the opposite to the 20th century totalitarian states disdainful of these rights. However, state sovereignty was not sufficiently limited by defensive rights of its citizens – especially in the German tradition. From this, the author draws out the implications for the present discussion in the wake of the »return of religion.« In order to secure basic rights in the face of religious powers and private interests, the state must remain the highest judicial authority – it cannot become »post-secular.« If religious communities defend human rights credibly, both inwardly and outwardly, and accept the impartial state, there is no need for a »moral« or even »sacred« state authority. In order to rein the global economy, however, some sovereignty must be given over to supranational organs – but without lack of legitimate power resulting in »failed states.«



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