

# Durkheim vs marx essay



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Marx vs. Durkheim: Religion An essay by Erin Olson plus commentary by Antonino Palumbo Religion and religious institutions play a powerful role in influencing a society and the lives of its members. The sociological traditions of Marx and Durkheim view religion totally differently, yet they both agree that religion is a very important aspect of a society. During his career, Marx spoke little on the subject of religion. However, "what is lacking in volume is made up for in vigor and comprehensiveness.

Some of Marx's best-known obiter are about religion. It is 'the sigh of the oppressed creature', 'the illusory happiness of men'. It is 'the reflex of the real world' and best of all it is 'the opium of the people'. Durkheim, on the other hand, spoke a great deal on religion. In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he specifically defines "a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which united in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 47). As we have seen, Durkheim and Marx each had their own definitions of religion.

However, we will learn that they both see an important role that religion plays in a society, as well as the ways in which society creates and shapes their religions." Karl Marx is without a doubt the most influential political atheist of all time. Because Marx espoused atheism in his attempt to destroy capitalism, half the world today is officially committed to atheism as a political philosophy" (Koster, 161). For Marxists, religion is used to justify and preserve the class system, as well as ensure the status quo of the dominant ideology of the society.

Religion plays a significant role in the beliefs and values that encompass any society and therefore acts to preserve the existing social order. The rich can afford to make generous donations to the church, while the poor cannot....