

# [In self-awareness in the world, the start of](https://assignbuster.com/in-self-awareness-in-the-world-the-start-of/)

Inour modern society, one would assume that talks about religion and what itstands for -its doctrines – would not really matter. When people think aboutreligion, they often think about a set of beliefs in relation to somethingholy, sacred, spiritual, divine, or worthy of great respect of somethingother-worldly. We think in a world run by machines and technologies brought byadvances in the different fields of sciences, why would it really matter if onecan prove or disprove the existence of God or a Divine Being? However, if talksabout religion do not really matter in these modern times, because it is simplynot “ making sense” anymore, then why do the opinions of religious leaders stillmatter or why do we still hear news on wars, which cost a lot of money and livesdue to religious differences? Theroots of religion may be traced back into the early years of man’s awareness ofthe world and his place in this world – his being. The first men on Earthcalled for the Gods and the deities when, for example, their harvests hadproblems and their survival threatened. They called for the God and the deitieswhen the materialistic world was not favoring their means for existing. But now, why would we call for God when we do not have food to continue surviving, whenwe can work to earn the money to buy the food we need.

We simply do not praywhen we are hungry, we now “ work” for our needs. So, the question arises as to whatis the role of religion now, if it does not serve anymore its “ original purposes”. Or, when we have reached this much knowledge and have evolved this advanced toactually reason out about the existence of God or Divine Beings. If religion isthe start of man’s self-awareness in the world, the start of man’s ideasthrough being, interaction with his material world and making sense of it, thenreligion itself is a powerful tool man harnessed for the creation of societies and in maintaining its stability.

Religionnow represents one of man’s ultimate capability – making sense of the world andmaking something out of it. We may understand the role of religion in acontemporary society, its creation and stability, through three differentsociological perspectives: symbolic interactionism through Weber, functionalistthrough Durkheim, and conflict through Marx. Comingthis far in the history of human race, one must understand that the role ofreligion ultimately evolved along with humans’ ideas. The first conception ofhuman ideas by being, until thismoment represents a wealth inherent in religion. The ideas now are an entity ofits own guiding human actions.

Such can be represented by the relationshipbetween ascetic Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism proposed by Weber inhis famous, The Protestant Ethic andSpirit of Capitalism. According to Weber, the religious ideas – idea of” the calling” and asceticism, that guided the life of Protestants inevitably influencedthe development of capitalism. In other words, Weber is not saying Protestantscaused capitalism, but if capitalism was a fire, Protestantism is the gas thatmade it spread. Protestantism justified their rationalistic yet individualisticand thus very hazardous way of life. The Spirit of Capitalism was ultimately -make money in order to make more money. Protestantism was an individualrelationship with god, which caused a great deal of anxiety to the Protestants.

Questions such as, ‘ does God still love me’, or ‘ will I go to heaven’ causednervousness for the Protestants as well. This was the belief of all of lifebeing predetermined, and your faith being selected. Working on their “ calling”, stirring away from all “ idolatry of the flesh”, preserving their possessionsfor it is the proof of how much they worked and how much they did not use itfor things that do not “ serve God’s glory” became the rationale for a bourgeoiseconomic life where it ultimately represents a “ modern economic man”. Moreover, it can still justify exploitations as part of “ God’s design”. Human activity, regardless of its evilness, can now be justified by the idea that God allowedit for its his will that is above all us (PA Weber: 138-173). In this modernday of capitalism, dead religious beliefs hunt us, for it is represented by evolvedideas within the concept of religion. Weber’s idea supports Durkheim’sdefinition of religion.

Religion became a social support to the kind of societywe have developed so far. This is because central to Durkheim’s definition ofreligion, is the uniformity of beliefs and practices which can unite into onesingle moral community (e. g. the community of Protestants and their way on” working for the calling”, the seemingly secularized societies today and theirway of economic life) (EF Durkheim: 33-44). Specifically, Durkheim defined religion as, “ a unified system of beliefs and practicesrelative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden -beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community calledChurch, all those who adhere to them” (EF Durkheim: 33-44). Ultimately, we donot call multi-million organizations and companies of today as Church, but theidea is that the primitive ideas and doctrines of religion, such as asceticism, has evolved into this day to be able to adapt into the modern life of aneconomic man. The belief systems ultimately became the social glue of much ofour society today.

Also, the fact that we still see the relevance of the Churchand its teaching despite the boom in scientific knowledge, ultimatelyrepresents the power religion has over man’s thoughts and actions. According toElementary Forms of the Religious Life, people are not interested in true and false, but interested in how we createmeaning around the world. It is to be noted that not all religions are false, but also not saying that they are all true.

Religions are all real because itcan ultimately compel people to do things. In regard to Durkheim, he was a veryprogressive thinker in terms of the way he thought of other people. Religionhas beliefs, and rites. The beliefs are representations, and options such assacred and profane, the distinction between good and evil. Something can liftup from profane to sacred – the belief in sacred will make you have rites.

Rites are essentially the modes of action. Durkheim is saying we have todistinguish religion from magic. One thing that religion has that magic doesn’tis that a community really matters, there is not church in magic. Religion hasthe moral community, a community of believers in a church, mosque, or temple. Durkheim’s main focus is on how religion maintains social organization, not onthe specific beliefs each religion has. Furthermore, religions have power forhow it can be a representative of a group on which a member of it identifieshimself. Each individual identifying himself with the religion and what itstands for, ultimately gives life to it as social institution and further makethe “ mystified” a reality for the human being (EF Durkheim: 207-225).

Weberfocused on how specific ideas promoted by the mystification of religion and internalizedby the person, which made it his way of life, was able to make a “ spirit” ofthe society. Durkheim on the other hand, took a larger step in making thisseemingly generalizable to all other religions by arguing that the individualcannot exist in isolation, hence collectively creating a reality apart of himwhich would continue to bind all other individuals into this collective uniteven after the individual’s death. One can only expect that the complexity ofhumanity’s development would always be in relation to the evolution ofreligion, the wealth of ideas, and culture inherent in it.            Religion’s extent to be a motor ofsocial change or stability then lies in the power of the ideas representativeof the reality of human beings regardless of the time. As long as religion canrepresent a part of human history’s being, it would always be relevant tosociety. These realities can only be conceived as we are part of our nature oraccording to Marx, our inorganic body– “ man lives from nature, i. e. nature is his body, and he must maintain acontinuing dialogue with it if he is not to die.

” The relationship of natureand man have always been so complicated; hence we have different kinds ofdialogue today. Similar to what we have now, but such complicated relationshiprepresents the power man has over nature, and nature has over man. Moreover, according to Marx, our essence is in our capacity for consciousness andactivity.

Now, we reflect on our essence through work, and the product of ourwork, for this our way of exercising consciousness, activity, and validatingour existence (EL Marx: 70-81).            Despite the different perspectives, the three views were consistent in emphasizing the role of religion as a bodyof beliefs created by man, and of which man is being created, and thus society. On the other hand, its role in the contemporary society is not distinct fromit, but a part of it. Religion helps build the society we know now followingthe ideas of the three sociological theories presented. Additionally, theanswer to the question of the possibility of living in a society withoutreligion lies in the continuous development of man’s essence.

Ultimately, thegoal of the theorists discussed is not to pinpoint the specific time whenreligion would cease to exist, but provide us an insight to its role andfunction in the society. As long as we find meanings and our sense of being init, its existence would not be a matter of question. However, in relation tothis, we can ponder on this statement from Marx, “ The abolition of religion asthe illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. Tocall them to give up their illusions about their conditions is to call on themto give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion istherefore in embryo the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion isthe halo.” (EL Marx: 70-81)            Sociology as a field of study inrelation to religion is then placed side by side with man and society. Sociologyhas the ultimate goal of being a scientific field capable of aiding man in hisdevelopment as a being by adding to the wealth of ideas a man can work with. Like religion, sociology as a science can be a system of beliefs on which mancan reflect on his essence.