



Religion and Socialization

Agents of Socialization

Elements of a Religion

- Four Common Themes of what makes up a religion
 - Love – How can we make the world better?
 - Purpose – Why are we here?
 - Mysteries – How to explain the unexplainable
 - Death – What happens when we die?
- Faith important in following of religion
 - Belief anchored in conviction not evidence



A Sociological Perspective of Religion

- Characteristics of Religion

- Common Elements:

- Beliefs
 - The Sacred and Profane
 - Rituals and Ceremonies
 - Personal Experience

- Functions of Religion

- Social Cohesion
 - Social Control
 - Provides Meaning and Purpose



Relationship Between Religion and Sociology

- Sociology seeks to examine Religion's role in society
 - Not Critique
- Seeks to examine how religion dictates the responsibilities of someone within the society and what sort of participation is required



Perspectives of Religion: Structuralism

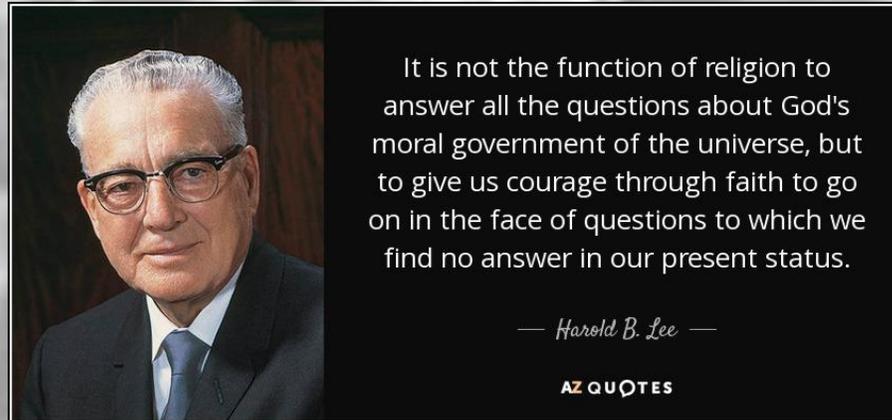
- Developed by Emile Durkheim
- Defined Religion As:
 - The Social institution involving beliefs and practices based upon a conception of the sacred.
- Religion focuses on things that surpass our own knowledge by dividing events in the Sacred and the Profane
 - The Profane
 - Ordinary Elements of everyday life
 - The Sacred
 - The Extraordinary that inspires awe, reverence, or fear
- Rituals and Ceremonies
 - Prayer as a ritualistic and/or ceremonial link to personal experience.

Purpose of Religion: Build Moral Communities

- Moral Communities
 - Religious groups that share common beliefs and values.
- A religious community serves several functions:
 - Provides continuity from one generation to another
 - Argument as to whether it is education or indoctrination?
 - Allows the laity to look after the profane matters while an elite tend to the sacred
 - Provides social support
 - In times of threat, religious communities can offer some protections

Perspectives of Religion: Functionalism

- Religion is just one the social institutions that contribute to the stability of a society through the social processes of:
 - Builds Societal cohesion
 - Used as a method of Social control
 - Religion applies authority and direction to important points of a person's life cycle including marriage, birth, and death
 - Gives members a Provision of purpose
 - Religion helps reduce social anxiety by providing answers to broad questions about the meaning of life, existence, and non-existence



Perspectives of Religion: Conflict

- Conflict theorists are highly critical of religion.
 - Marx called religion the “opiate of the masses”
 - Religion has been used to keep the masses in check for fear of divine punishment
- By diverting thoughts to future happiness in a coming world, religion relieves the suffering of this world
 - Religion legitimizes the social inequalities of society.
 - Divides society into “Chosen” classes and those out of “god’s graces”

