

Marx on Religion

Religion is ideology that justifies and supports the status quos. It is an illusion with evil consequences.

The details of religion (doctrine, rituals and so on) aren't worth considering.

Marx was influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872)

Feuerbach believed religion is a projection by people, who attribute good qualities to God and bad qualities to themselves, resulting in alienation.

For Marx, religious alienation (superstructure) parallels economic alienation (base).

Marx called religion the "opium of the people" since it provides illusory (often future) happiness, thus inhibiting people from understanding and taking action against the evils of capitalism.

Religion is helpful to the dominant class, who can use it justify the status quo.

Critique

1. Marx's focus is mainly on Christianity and doesn't easily apply to religions without belief in positive afterlife.
2. Historical evidence suggests a more complicated relationship between religion and economics than Marx suggests. (Sometimes religion inspires and/or is used as a tool by those resisting oppression.)
3. The Marxist theory of religion is dependent upon Marx's larger theory, which has its own flaws.
4. Like Durkheim's theory of religion, Marx's is reductionist.