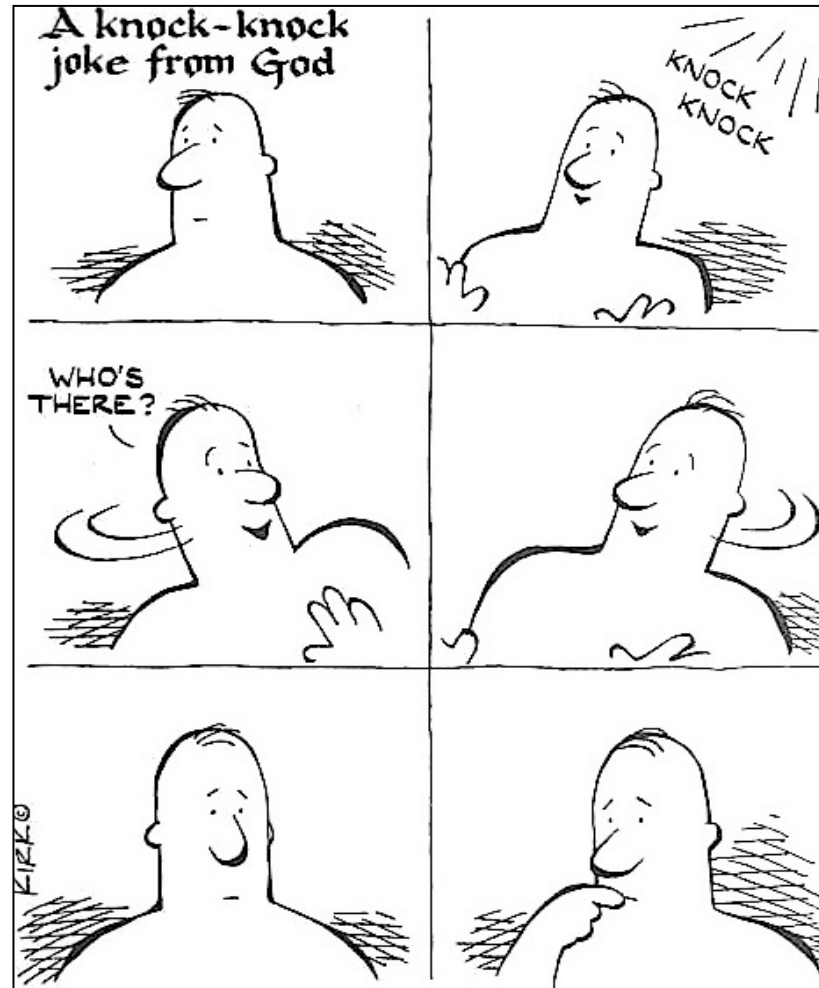
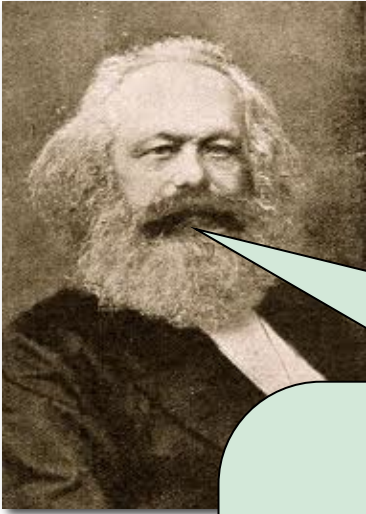


# Realism and Nonrealism

# The Hiddenness of God



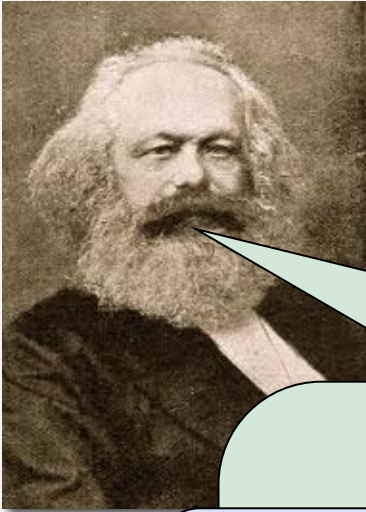
# Nonrealist Accounts



Karl Marx  
1818-1883

“Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature,  
the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the  
spirit of spiritless conditions.  
It is the *opium* of the people.”

# Nonrealist Accounts



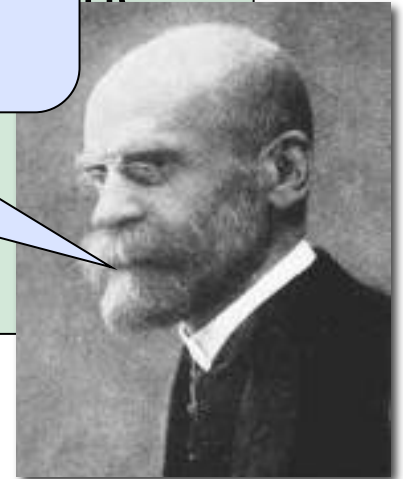
Karl Marx  
1818-1883

Religion is a mechanism that helps stabilize the social order.

It is the *opium* of the people.

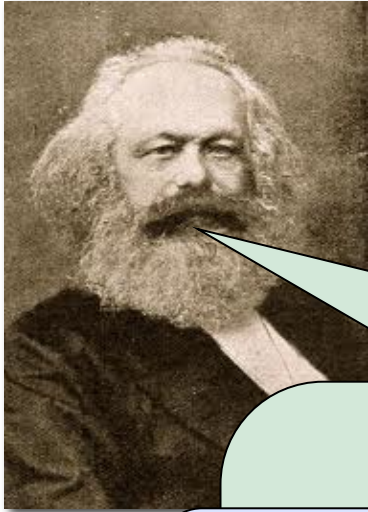
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Emile Durkheim  
1858-1917

# Nonrealist Accounts

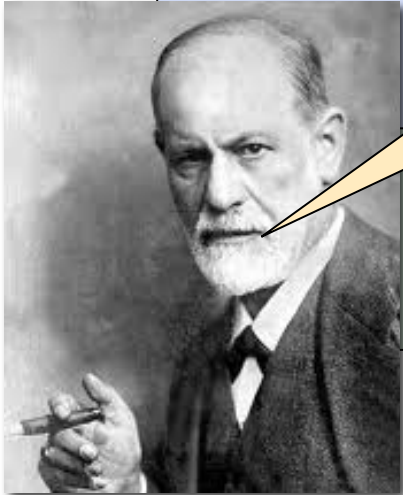


Karl Marx  
1818-1883

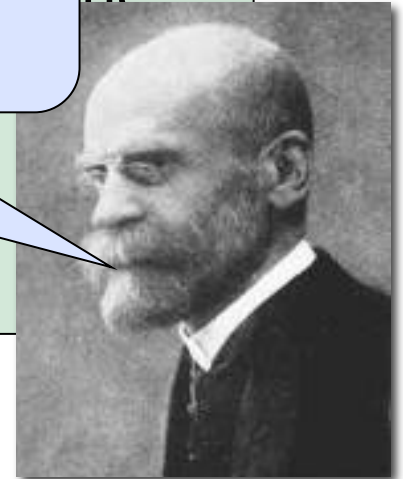
“Religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires.”

Religion is a mechanism that  
s stabilize the social order.

It is the *opium* of the people.”



Sigmund Freud  
1856-1939



Emile Durkheim  
1858-1917

# Taxonomy

**Religious Realism:** religious claims are about an objective reality (beyond mere psychological or sociological phenomena), and so have a truth-value (i.e., are either true or false) determined by that supernatural reality.

**Religious Nonrealism:** religious claims are about human inventions (social relations and institutions); reducible to psychological or sociological phenomena, these claims otherwise have no truth-value.

**Methodological nonrealism:** A religion is best understood by examining the function of its beliefs in the life of the individuals and society, setting aside questions of the belief's content or truth.

**Ontological nonrealism:** The meaning of religious beliefs is exhausted by their functional meaning; the belief's content is rejected as empty.

# Definitions

**Reductionism:** Defines one sphere of experience in terms of another that is thought to be “simpler” or “more basic” — e.g., describing biological phenomena in terms of chemical events, or psychological phenomena in terms of neurological events.

**Scientism:** The claim that the only legitimate knowledge is that produced by the scientific method.

**Noncognitivism:** (specific to some area of belief) Religious noncognitivism holds that religious beliefs lack truth-values.

**Truth-value:** The property that (most) statements have of being true or being false.

**Causes to believe** (rational and non-rational): justifications vs explanations.

# Wittgenstein

*Tractatus* (1921)

*Philosophical Investigations* (1953)

## How do words mean?

- **Representational:** Picture Theory (the meaning of a word is its denotation; the meaning of a sentence is the fact that it pictures)
- **Behavioral/Pragmatic:** Use Theory (the meaning of a linguistic expression is its use and the behavioral difference it makes for those who use it)

‘God’ has no denotation (a grammatical claim, *not a* factual claim). Both realism and nonrealism are incoherent positions.



Ludwig Wittgenstein  
(1889-1951)  
(Vienna, Cambridge)



# Non-Denoting Terms

- (1) God
- (2) The highest number
- (3) Unicorns
- (4) Sherlock Holmes
- (5) The present king of France
- (6) The zebra in this room



Ludwig Wittgenstein  
(1889-1951)  
(Vienna, Cambridge)

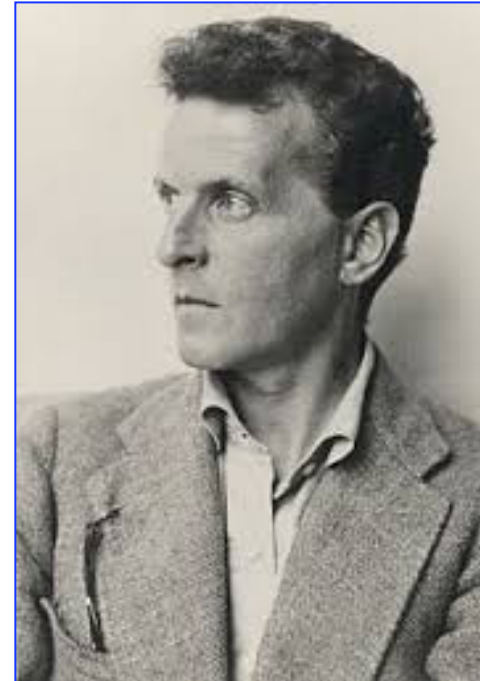
# Wittgenstein on Religion

“I believe God exists” plays a different linguistic role than “I believe the moon will be full tonight”.

Religious language indicates a certain way or form of life, a *Lebensform*.

Its claims, ultimately, have no truth-value (= religious noncognitivism). They are instead meaningful reflections of various practices and ways of orienting ourselves in the world.

Denying a religious belief is not to contradict anything, since the essence of such beliefs has nothing to do with how the world is, but rather concerns the way we are to live our lives.



Ludwig Wittgenstein  
(1889-1951)  
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