Religion and It’s Social Meaning

Functions / Durkheim

- Questions about Ultimate Meaning
- Emotional Comfort
- Social Solidarity
- Guidelines for Everyday Life (norms)
- Social Control
- Adaptation
- Support for Government
- Social Change

Functional equivalents exist: i.e. totalitarian government

Related Dysfunctions

- War
  - Justifications for Persecution

Religions vs. Cults

Cults are new religions whose teachings and practices often put them at odds with dominant culture and religion. Because of the conflict, cults frequently
find in easier to isolate themselves from the “normal” social structure, rather than being inclusive of the existing social structure and those in it.

**Dominant Groups**

Christianity (monotheistic with a messiah)

Judaism (monotheistic without a messiah)

Islam (monotheistic with a theocratic state)

Hinduism (panoply of deities / over 3,000, including Jesus)

Buddhism: four truths

- existence is suffering
- origin of suffering is desire
- suffering ceases when desire ceases
- way to end suffering is through eightfold path)

Religion is likely to endure because it has capability of providing refuge from unexplainable (death) and commute its consequences; something with which science is unlikely to be able to deal.