

SOC 105-001

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Reflection Essay

Harari makes several points in his famous book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* about religion.

While many of his points are incredibly important to understand and consider, Fligstein, MacAdams, Durkheim and I disagree with his disregard for the importance of religion in society.

In Harari's book, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, he discusses morality and religion. More specifically, Harari discourages and criticises religion and its practices. In chapter 12 of his book, titled 'Humility,' Harari uses Judaism as an example of how religions view themselves as being the center of humanity's story. He says that "Israelis often use the term "the three great religions," thinking that these religions are Christianity (2.3 billion adherents), Islam (1.8 billion), and Judaism (15 million)," but goes on to say that this misconception "implies in the mind of Israelis that all major religious and ethical traditions emerged out of the womb of Judaism..."(Harari, 192). Religions lack a global perspective outside of their religion, making them selfish and ignorant. Religion implements a certain moral and ethical code for humans to adhere to, supposedly making a more peaceful society as humans have something greater than themselves that they worship and want to please. Religion creates community as people share a common belief system, but has come to be obsolete in that need to Harari. Despite this, Harari says, in chapter 13, that religion is not required for a society or person to have morals, saying

that religion is required for a moral, productive, and safe society, because no one wants to live in a society that has no morals, thus supporting secular humanism.

In *The Cultural Logic of Collective Representation*, Durkheim views religion as more of a necessity and benefit for society, in contrast to Harari. Durkheim argues that religion created society and different cultures through collective effervescence, thus “the idea of society is the soul of religion” (Durkheim, 72). The importance of religion for society is highlighted in this essay, as it argues that religion sets a moral consciousness and compass that impacts how societies, their beliefs, laws, and ideas are formed. Harari does not believe that religion is at all needed for society or for humanity to have a moral consciousness. Meaning making projects, activities and moments together as a group created religion, which, in turn, created society. Because of this, I agree with Durkheim that religion is crucial for society and for their morality. I understand that Harari believes that religion may be futile for society now, but without religion, society would eventually fall back into immorality. The religion of society is crucial for humanity because it created community, and a ‘matter of belief.’ David Morgan wrote an excellent book explaining religion as ‘the matter of belief’: the material practices humans perform create religion, and Durkheim also points to this idea with collective effervescence. Without a matter of belief, what religion is, society would fall apart.

Fligstein and MacAdams also agree with Durkheim in *Microfoundations*. The development of language allowed belief and cultural systems, as well as collective meaning making projects possible. Fligstein and MacAdams argue that belief systems, religion, made reality concrete, and still provide humans with meaning and a sense of grounding. They also argue that beliefs define reality and create community and bonds with members of society.

are incredibly important for the functionality and success of humanity. Harari makes several excellent points legitimizing religion as a necessity in society, but I do not believe that society could survive without religion, in what it is as a material practiced belief system.