

YUKTI MUKDAWIJITRA

AN 201 INTRODUCTION TO ANTHROPOLOGY

BE, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

SYMBOLIC CULTURE



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xi3AMpffGEw&t=894s>

DEFINITION OF RELIGION

- ▶ religion
 - ▶ institutional and organizational
 - ▶ prophet, priest, follower
 - ▶ teaching, rule, discipline
 - ▶ ritual, practices
- ▶ more than just the belief in supernatural beings
- ▶ religious/spiritual, magic, everyday ritual, ceremony, life cycle rituals

ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORIES OF RELIGION

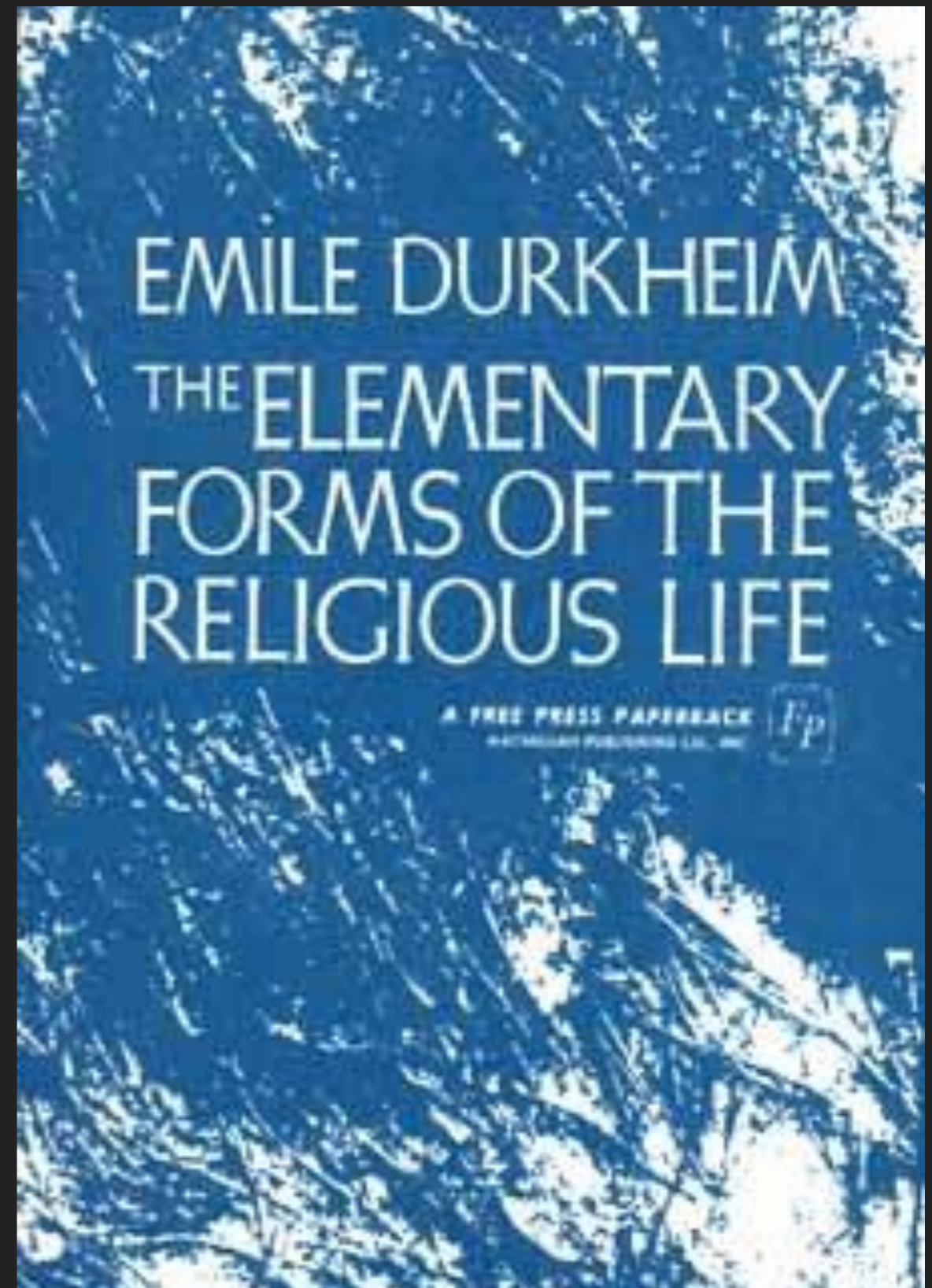
- ▶ James Frazer: various kinds of spiritual beliefs
- ▶ Malinowski: religious beliefs serve psychological needs
- ▶ Emile Durkheim, Marx, Weber and others

EMILE DURKHEIM

- ▶ Religion is where the society is created.
- ▶ The sacred and the profane.
- ▶ Mary Douglas: purity and danger

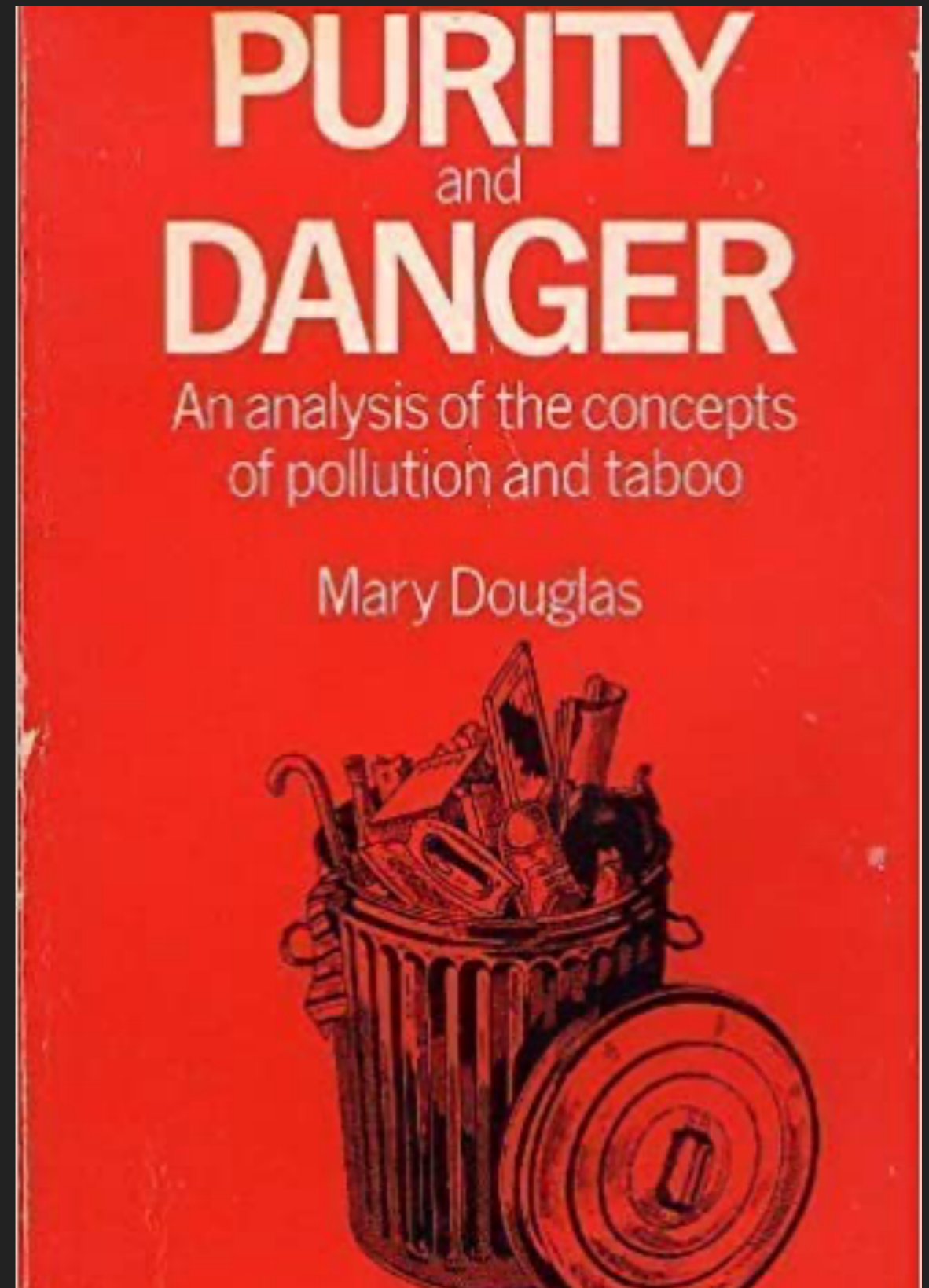
EMILE DURKHEIM (1913)

- ▶ Totem is the elementary form of religion
- ▶ Totem is the representation of the society
- ▶ When the rite to worship the totem is held is when the collective power of the society emerged
- ▶ Totem preserves the society's power in the collective power in the object.
- ▶ Ritual is to remind the community of the emergence of the society/totem/religion.
- ▶ The society is the sacred/religious, whereas the individual is the profane.



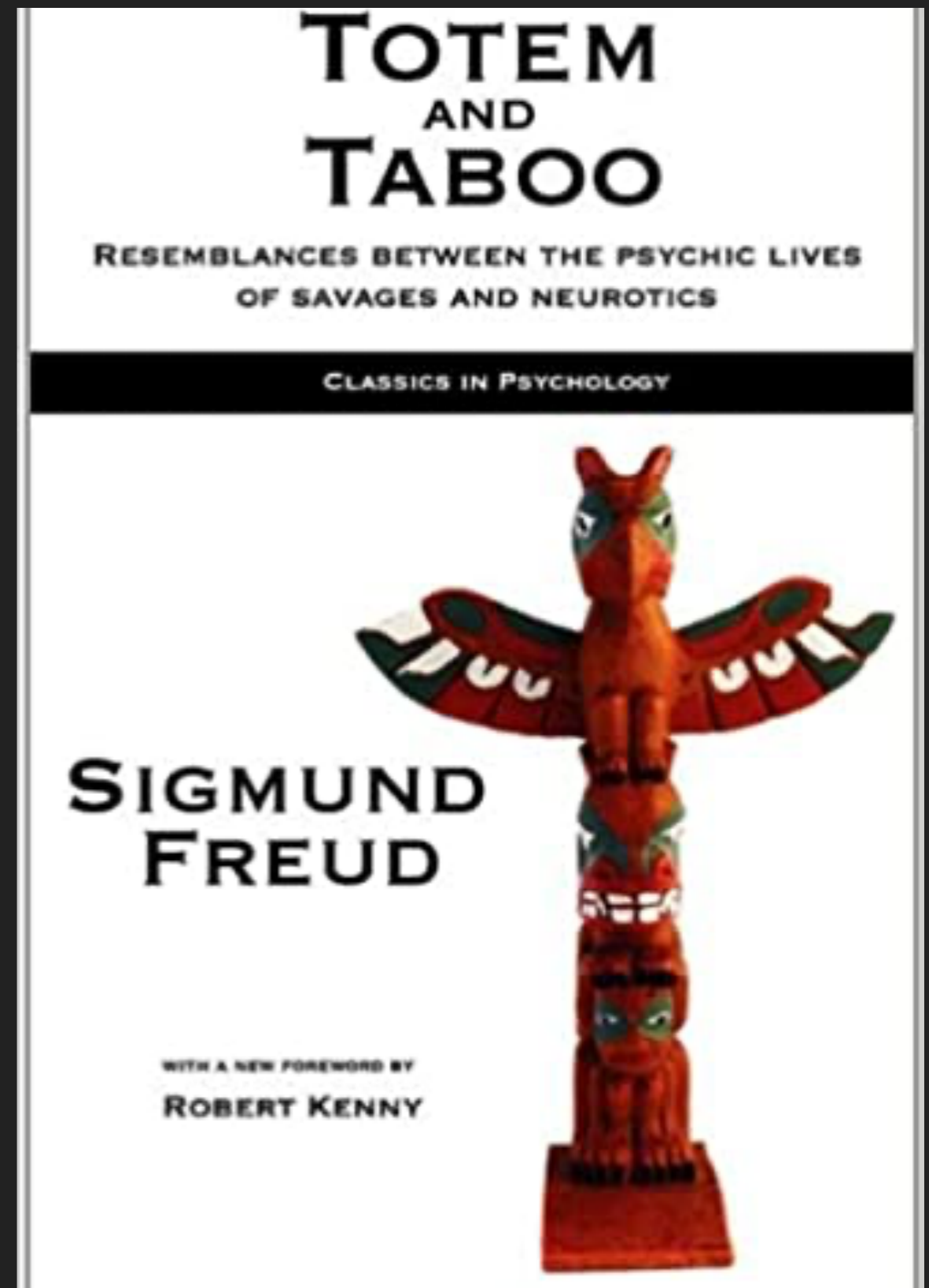
MARY DOUGLAS (1978)

- ▶ The sacred is the purity.
- ▶ What is hygiene is actually the sacred, something religious, psychological, not scientific.
- ▶ Dirtiness, pollution is what is out of order, anomaly, ambiguous, disorder.
- ▶ What is dangerous is the same (like snakes).
- ▶ Tabooed foods are those "out of order", like pork for the Muslim and many taboo food of other religions.



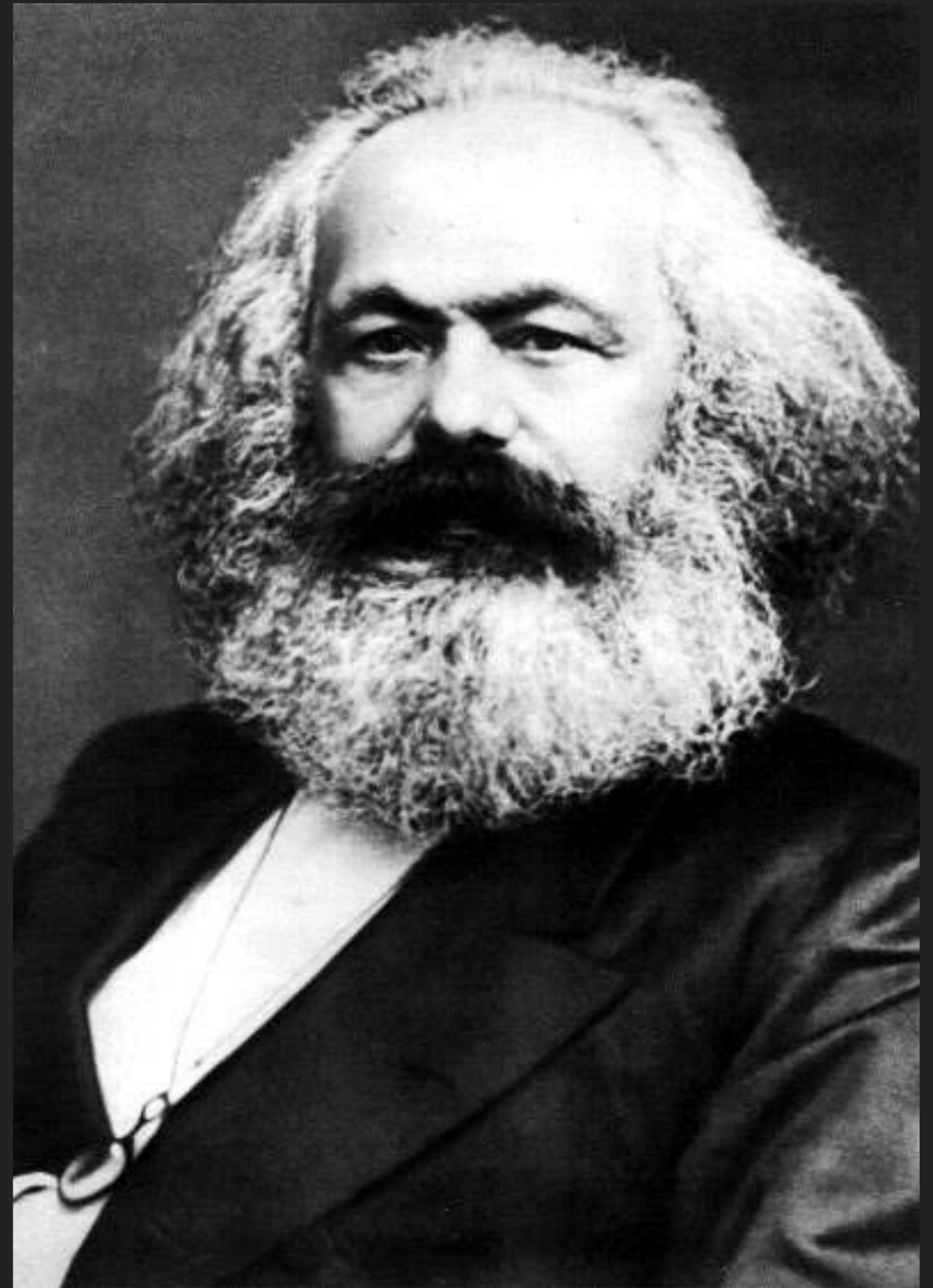
SIGMUND FREUD (1913)

- ▶ Religion is the Superego controlling the ID (instinct, desire).
- ▶ Religion is in conflict with human instinct, however it is the source of civilization.
- ▶ Art, creative activities are diversion of instincts and desires so that the psyche conflicts got manage.
- ▶ If the conflicts continue or one cannot divert the instincts he will become a madman.



KARL MARX

- ▶ "Religion is the opium of the people."
- ▶ Religion is the ideology maintaining inequality.
- ▶ In capitalist society, commodity, exchange value, abstract labor and the (mainstream) economics are the religion of capitalism.



ELEMENT OF RELIGION

- ▶ cosmology
- ▶ the supernatural
- ▶ rules governing behavior
- ▶ ritual

THE SUPERNATURAL

- ▶ spirits: exist by themselves, connect or communicable to human, associate or being part of the human.
- ▶ gods: monotheism, polytheism, a-theism (intellectual Buddhism)

RULES OF BEHAVIOR

- ▶ discipline
- ▶ religious time (taboo period)
- ▶ religious everyday practices (Islam)

RITUAL

- ▶ rites of passage
 - ▶ Arnold Van Gennep: Rites of Passage.
 - ▶ rite of departure—>rite of interval—>rite of return
 - ▶ everyday ritual
 - ▶ rite of passage: rite of coming of age, wedding, funeral, etc.
 - ▶ Victor Turner: the interval period