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Chapter 1 : Content Pages of the Encyclopedia of Religion and Social Science

The history and theory of a number of movements in the anthropology of religion—including the theories of Marx, Freud, Weber, and Durkheim—are detailed in Brian Morris's Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text.

It is, on the one hand, a human universal—all groups of people develop complexes of symbols, rituals, and beliefs that connect their own experience to the essential nature of the universe. They do this, however, in a bewildering variety of ways. Religions may involve one god, or no gods, or thousands of gods; they may favor simple family rituals or elaborate state festivals; they may value individual transcendence, community ceremonialism, Dionysian ecstasy, or any number of other conceptions of ultimate good. The anthropology of religion explores how these different forms of religion come to be, how they change, and what they mean for the nature of human experience. Religion has stood at the center of anthropological research since the discipline began in the mid-nineteenth century, and its development has reflected trends in the discipline generally. The early studies of James Frazer, E. B. Tylor, and others turned to smaller-scale ethnography, examining the ways that individual religious systems functioned within their particular social environments. More recently, anthropologists have focused on dynamics of power and identity in religion, with particular focus on the ways that religion intersects with conceptions of gender, ethnicity, and nation. They have also looked increasingly at religious change and the influence of modern and postmodern social forms on religious life. This article outlines the scope of the anthropological literature on religion, drawing both on classic and more-recent studies. We begin with discussions of the nature, origin, and function of religion then turn to four main areas of anthropological work: Textbooks The entries in this section represent the upsurge in strong textbooks in the anthropology of religion since the early 1980s. Lessa and Vogt, once the standard reader in the field, remains a valuable archive of classic articles. Lambek includes some of the same articles, as well as examples of more-recent scholarship. Hicks and Moro offer more-accessible selections of articles and excerpts, organized around themes with useful introductions. Morris, Bowen, and Bowie take a different approach, each providing a thoughtful synthetic account by a single author. Scupin organizes its presentation around different religious traditions, rather than topical subjects. An approach to the anthropology of religion. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Bowen sets theoretical ideas in the context of ethnographic examples, emphasizing religion as a lived activity, not merely a set of beliefs or ideas. First published in Boston: The anthropology of religion: This engaging introduction to the anthropology of religion, first published in 1987, focuses particularly on the experiential and personal dimensions of religious action. Readings in the anthropology of religion. A reader in the anthropology of religion. Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 2. Reader in comparative religion: Row, Peterson, this collection of articles and excerpts can seem rather dated and stiff to current students. As a resource for classic theory in the field, however, it still has no equal. Magic, witchcraft, and religion: This is the latest edition of a very popular collection of readings on the anthropology of religion. The selection is excellent, and the chosen articles are both readable and interesting. Previous editions were compiled by Moro and James E. A readable and masterful review of non-Western religious traditions, from an anthropological perspective, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, shamanism, African and Afro-Caribbean religions, and the New Age.

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Chapter 2 : Society for the Anthropology of Religion – A section of the American Anthropological Association

Anthropology of religion is the study of religion in relation to other social institutions, and the comparison of religious beliefs and practices across cultures. [1] Contents.

Michael Lambek Anthropology was founded by freeing itself from the confines of religious authority. Hence if today anthropology reports on the boundaries between religion and secularism, it has also been complicit in formulating and reproducing them. This essay reflects on the making of distinctions between the religious and the secular. However, I will argue that the kinds of distinctions and truths produced by religion, law, and social science, respectively, are incommensurable with one another. The argument proceeds in three successively shorter phases. One could say that this is one specific version, angle on, or component of the mutual constitution of secularism and religion and I hope to show that it is a particularly salient one. Next I will offer some anthropological insights into the boundary problem. And last I will suggest how these might influence considerations of the secular university I claim, first, that anthropology is definitively a secular discipline and could be nothing else. But second, I complicate this picture by suggesting that anthropology inevitably blurs the boundaries between the religious and the secular and challenges the authority of the distinction. I take anthropology to be exemplary in this regard but also use it as something of a synecdoche for the other human disciplines, hence for the modern university more broadly. It is attention to these other faces that perhaps most clearly distinguishes anthropology from neighbouring disciplines that study religion. It could doubtless be said of the secular too that it is multi-faceted, but that is not something I can address. The distinction between religion and secularism is of course more complicated than an image of interfacing polyhedrons. It is complicated in the first instance by the fact that the divisions in the world of practice outside the university that are the ostensible subject of investigation by the academic disciplines are not entirely distinct from the divisions made by and within the disciplines, nor even unconnected from the very constitution of the modern academic disciplines and of the university of which the disciplines are a part. Insofar as the university itself has become secular in its constitution and governance and insofar as the various academic disciplines are secular in their orientation, modes of procedure, and especially, in the means by which they establish truth and hence in the kinds of truth they establish, so they are always already implicated in the question of the boundaries of religion and secularism. In other words, it is immensely difficult to find a neutral or objective place, a place that is not already self-identified as secular or religious, especially within the academy, from which to think about the distinction. And perhaps nowhere among the disciplines have these problems been more acute than within anthropology. The separation from theology was not easy, as manifest in the career of Robertson-Smith Beidelman , Masuzawa , but Tylor had a kind of assurance in stating that religion was rational but grounded in error and that it had its roots in animism. Evolutionism was eventually surpassed by functionalism, cultural particularism, and structuralism. There was a general deconstruction of the overly objective evolutionary typologies and categories of the earlier period especially magic vs. As Gordon Childe memorably put it Man makes himself. For much of the 20th century the progressive task of anthropology was to show the order, logic, ethical consistency, meaningfulness, and beauty in what seemed to the majority of Europeans and North Americans to be exotic or uninteresting, primitive, backward, disorderly, disappearing, and generally unworthy societies and systems of thought. In displaying the varieties of religious life, anthropology was also at least implicitly challenging the superiority of Christianity over other forms of thought and practice. During both these phases, modernity was identified with the growth of secularism and anthropology understood itself as a secular and largely scientific discipline, sometimes concealing from itself its strong romanticist tendencies. But by the end of the 20th Century, with the resurgence of religion in the United States and within national, transnational, and global politics a resurgence perhaps first acknowledged in the surprise occasioned by the Iranian revolution , but also with the rise of scepticism within the academy about the nature of science and secularism themselves as phrased by

diverse strands of poststructuralist, postmodernist, and postcolonial thought, including, in anthropology, the seminal work of Asad and the concomitant affirmation of history or Foucauldian genealogy as the master paradigms, anthropology finds itself squirming, no longer content or able either simply to champion religion against science and modernization narratives or, with the exception of a vocal minority, to develop in full confidence an ostensibly value-free objectivist and secular science of religion. Do anthropologists simply interpret the coherence of conservative Christianity and analyze the power of its rhetoric or do we try to fight, as secularists, for the naturalist and evolutionary premises on which anthropology and the life sciences are built? The inverse question in Europe has been how anthropologists represent the worlds and rights of Muslim religious communities in face of a secularist ethos as well as sheer prejudice and fear, questions that produce conferences such as the one for which this essay was written, which ought then to be part of its subject matter. If there is a compass to the anthropological direction perhaps it lies in unmasking or decentring hegemonic assumptions, undue power, unfairness, and dogmatic or absolutist thinking, from whatever quarter. These are, of course, not the special province of religion, science, or the state per se but are characteristic of certain manifestations of each. If, during the first two phases of anthropological thought delineated above, science itself was unproblematic, and if, in the first phase anthropology saw itself unproblematically as science, these facts are not true of the present age. A number of things have changed beyond the political fortunes of religion. First, anthropology has increasingly questioned its own status as a science, and second, science itself and, of course, secularism have become objects of anthropological inquiry alongside and roughly equivalent to that of religion. Moreover, both can be seen as strong political forces, whether countering, supporting, or encapsulated by the state and market. The theoretical challenge lies in how to balance these insights with the recognition that religion may also be one of the few locations from which it is possible to stand outside politics or to regulate or ground the political in a different kind of order. Religion must be treated in a way that neither excessively politicizes nor excessively depoliticizes it. Insofar as secularism can, in one formulation, be defined as that position or standpoint from which religion can be viewed from outside Lambert. One current articulation of the recurrent epistemological fault line of anthropology is that between the sceptical genealogical observer and the complicit, but possibly critical, hermeneutic participant. When they are understood as incommensurable and hence co-present rather than binary and mutually exclusive, the co-existence of scepticism and conviction or objectivism and relativism gives rise to a state that, for at least this informant, must be described as a kind of irony. Epistemologically, anthropology is constituted by means of an intrinsic tension between objectivism and relativism. Religion in this understanding is neither a particular institution or sensibility, nor a set of comparable beliefs in something specifically spiritual or super-natural, but a kind of ontology, a model of the world in its essence and a model for existing in it and reasoning about it in a meaningful and ethical fashion; religions are the fictive not fictitious worlds in which people live and the techniques that render those worlds real and realizable. Alternatively, one can discriminate between kinds of ontologies, or world-making, referring to only some of them as religious. The issue is the relationship of ethnographic observation to participation, or to borrow after Geertz terms from psychoanalysis which, in this respect is similar to anthropology, experience-near to experience distant analysis, as well as the effects of transference and counter-transference. More generally, insofar as anthropology is characterized by the ascetic calling or stance of understanding natives without oneself going native, how is the anthropologist to conceptualize her relationship to her subject of study and articulate her research to the rest of her life? In sum, much as anthropology would like to see itself as an objective observer of the range of human institutions and transformations, it is itself situated within the broad discursive field constituted by secularism and religion and it has always also been an interested party in the debate between them, pulled between explanation and interpretation, demystification and appreciation, transcendent reason and immanent experience. As a result, despite many insightful contributions and developments, clarifying the relationship between the secular and religion remains an ongoing therapeutic task or feature of anthropology rather than a fully realized or realizable scientific goal. It is internal as well as external to the practice of anthropology. This is both

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analogous to the way secularism and religion can be understood, respectively, as standing outside one another or outside ordinary life, and continuous with the division between religion and the secular as standpoints. In other words, anthropology is implicated in this distinction and the distinction is implicated in anthropology. One could go further and say that anthropology is intrinsically secular or that it is the emergence of the secular that enables the possibility for anthropology. I take this view but at the same time I take an alternative view, holding, ironically, to two points of view. Let me try and explain. It is clear that in theory-making the pairs can form analogies of the sort a: Abstractions themselves do not have intrinsically the distinctive features that are enabled by the sensory and material world, and so there may be a category mistake entailed in setting abstractions themselves directly in binary opposition to one another in the way we do with properties like raw and cooked. The alternative is to conceive the items in our pairs of abstract concepts as incommensurable to one another, in which case the ostensible binary opposition with its implication of mutual exclusion is itself the product of a category mistake of the order that Gilbert Ryle describes with respect to mind and body. My inclination is to follow this alternative while also being mindful of the ease with which human beings make binary oppositions and category mistakes and the consideration that, with respect to some matters, it may be impossible not to do so. That is to say, there are some domains in which we recognize simultaneously our category mistakes and the impossibility of avoiding them. Category mistakes that are incapable of correction are thereby incapable of authoritative and conclusive resolution. They remain either as mysteries, in discourses we call religious, or as paradoxes in discourses of philosophy. Where they simply go unrecognized, they lead to continuing conversation, conversation that is perpetuated insofar as we speak simultaneously to each other and past each other. Each ostensible resolution is bound to be provisional and eventually contested. The situation of inherent contestability of certain concepts once noted by Gallie as noted by Geertz b is here the effect or product of incommensurability. Instead, there are merely contingent, provisional boundaries, imperfectly conceived and ineffectively policed. I am suggesting that insofar as religion and the secular are not discrete objects they need not be mutually exclusive. In other words, insofar as their ideology of mutual exclusion is the product of a category mistake, persons, objects, and acts may be located or described simultaneously with respect to both religion and the secular possibly as both inside and outside religion or as more or less religious and secular. As did the workshop on Religious-Secular Distinctions, we can explore the emergence, constitution and effects of provisional boundaries, noticing in the first instance that they emerge in multiple discourses, practices, institutions, and forums—“from within religion, the state or law, and the academy. Although these discourses acknowledge and influence each other, their activities and effects differ in location, force and meaning. Whence come such category mistakes? One of the specific sources of confusion is that we tend to deploy these terms as nouns and by means of a semiotic ideology that supposes that words, in the first instance, refer to autonomous things in the world. This semiotic ideology itself has a history, being elucidated within anthropology by Webb Keane who shows its relationship to changes in religion itself and hence to the emergence of secularism. Indeed, we could call this semiotic ideology the ideology of modernity and hence of secularism. I have argued elsewhere Lambek forthcoming that it was followed in anthropology itself by alternative semiotic ideologies that emphasize respectively the poetic and perlocutionary and the indexical and illocutionary functions of language. Without elaborating these distinctions here, let me throw out three, related suggestions. First, while the locutionary and referential semiotic ideology certainly has its place, the academic predilection for reified abstractions overextends it. This semiotic ideology has underpinned the idea of religion and the secular as separate spaces, indeed as discrete *res extensa*, things extending in space, and thus has had an affinity with the political ideology that has sought to circumscribe and govern religion. Second, what happens if we began to take seriously other semiotic ideologies and specifically ones that recognize the significance of the illocutionary function of utterances? I suggest that the boundaries between religion and its others look different, and must be marked differently, according to the semiotic ideologies deemed respectively at play. But I would also want to distinguish the semiotic ideologies from actual semiotic practices. Thus, I have argued that the identification and realization

of spirits in Mayotte and Madagascar is partially the product of the mystification of performativeness b. Here a semiotic ideology of reference in fact conceals a semiotic practice of performativeness. Some of the conflict between science and religion comes when their semiotic ideologies are construed as identical to one another. When they are not so construed and, as inspection of their practice largely demonstrates, when they operate with different semiotic ideologies, this difference is sufficient to make them incommensurable with one another rather than in direct contradiction or competition. However, practitioners themselves may refuse to recognize the semiotic specificity of their own practices and may be wont to borrow what appears to be the most authoritative semiotic ideology in the prevailing climate. Third, what would happen if we changed our own semiotic practices and began to treat words like religion and the secularâ€”and here note the awkwardness of adding the definite articleâ€”not as nouns, with the implications of bounded entities, but as verbs, adjectives or adverbs? We have not done so in part due to the deep grammar of our Indo-European languages and in part because we have tended to view religion as comprised of or produced by a series of things, more nouns. In some versions these things are called beliefs and in other versions experiences. It is worthy of note that both belief and experience tend to start with the individual. They are thus congenial to modernity, and indeed they are the approaches that most modernists tend to take. Belief and experience, as Taylor would be the first to admit, are also close to Christianity. Here it is important to note the recent self-critique of anthropology, articulated especially by Cannell, that its own views have been implicitly shaped by Christianity. Christianity has served as the model for what religion is, as the paradigm case, hence establishing what constitutes the core of religion and the framework through which, and standard against which, other practices have been viewed. Hence too, Christianity has been the model for how this core might relate to other features of the social world, including, where it exists, the state or political realm, hence to the very definition of secularism. Perhaps the most pernicious appropriation from Christianityâ€”actually from the Abrahamic tradition more generallyâ€”is the idea that Religion is manifest as specific religions and that these religions are bounded units demanding exclusive loyalty from their adherents. Closely attached to this has been the idea that religion concerns primarily belief in God, personified and preferably singular Lambek. And of course, they find their flowering in Protestantism. One of the challenges for anthropology has been how to view and compare phenomena in ways that do not make these concepts or principles foundational, thereby neither excluding the practices of other people from the high moral ground of religion nor unduly distorting them so they fit in. Less specifically Abrahamic and, I would say, more successful anthropological approaches to religion begin with acts of making and doing rather than in the articulation of personal experience or beliefs in persons. One approach examines symbolic classification and poiesis; another begins with ritual acts. Both are rooted in Durkheimian sociological theory, which begins with the collective rather than the individual. From this perspective, belief and experience are secondary phenomena when it comes to discerning, distinguishing or, for that matter, explaining religion, despite the fact that they may be salient both within specific religious formations and for particular subjects.

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Chapter 3 : Durkheim and the Anthropology of Religion - Anthropology - Oxford Bibliographies

Theory of Social Involvement: A Case Study in the Anthropology of Religion, State, and Society - Kindle edition by Sunday A. Aigbe. Download it once and read it on your Kindle device, PC, phones or tablets.

Theory of religious economy The rational choice theory has been applied to religions, among others by the sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge. They can be divided into specific compensators for the failure to achieve specific goals, and general compensators for failure to achieve any goal. As it becomes clear that the goals of the movement will not be achieved by natural means at least within their lifetimes, members of the movement will look to the supernatural to achieve what cannot be achieved naturally. The new religious beliefs are compensators for the failure to achieve the original goals. Examples of this include the counterculture movement in America: Most religions start out their lives as cults or sects, i. Over time, they tend to either die out, or become more established, mainstream and in less tension with society. Cults are new groups with a new novel theology, while sects are attempts to return mainstream religions to what the sect views as their original purity. Mainstream established groups are called denominations. The comments below about cult formation apply equally well to sect formation. There are four models of cult formation: The founder suffers from psychological problems, which they resolve through the founding of the religion. The development of the religion is for them a form of self-therapy, or self-medication. According to this model, most founders of new religions already have experience in several religious groups before they begin their own. They take ideas from the pre-existing religions, and try to improve on them to make them more popular. Members of the religious group spend less and less time with people outside the group, and more and more time with each other within it. The level of affection and emotional bonding between members of a group increases, and their emotional bonds to members outside the group diminish. According to the social model, when a social implosion occurs, the group will naturally develop a new theology and rituals to accompany it. Some religions are better described by one model than another, though all apply to differing degrees to all religions. Once a cult or sect has been founded, the next problem for the founder is to convert new members to it. Prime candidates for religious conversion are those with an openness to religion, but who do not belong or fit well in any existing religious group. Those with no religion or no interest in religion are difficult to convert, especially since the cult and sect beliefs are so extreme by the standards of the surrounding society. But those already happy members of a religious group are difficult to convert as well, since they have strong social links to their preexisting religion and are unlikely to want to sever them in order to join a new one. The best candidates for religious conversion are those who are members of or have been associated with religious groups thereby showing an interest or openness to religion, yet exist on the fringe of these groups, without strong social ties to prevent them from joining a new group. Potential converts vary in their level of social connection. New religions best spread through pre-existing friendship networks. Converts who are marginal with few friends are easy to convert, but having few friends to convert they cannot add much to the further growth of the organization. Converts with a large social network are harder to convert, since they tend to have more invested in mainstream society; but once converted they yield many new followers through their friendship network. Cults initially can have quite high growth rates; but as the social networks that initially feed them are exhausted, their growth rate falls quickly. On the other hand, the rate of growth is exponential ignoring the limited supply of potential converts: But nonetheless it can take a very long time for religions to grow to a large size by natural growth. This often leads to cult leaders giving up after several decades, and withdrawing the cult from the world. It is difficult for cults and sects to maintain their initial enthusiasm for more than about a generation. As children are born into the cult or sect, members begin to demand a more stable life. When this happens, cults tend to lose or de-emphasise many of their more radical beliefs, and become more open to the surrounding society; they then become denominations. The theory of religious economy sees different religious organizations competing for

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followers in a religious economy, much like the way businesses compete for consumers in a commercial economy. Theorists assert that a true religious economy is the result of religious pluralism , giving the population a wider variety of choices in religion. According to the theory, the more religions there are, the more likely the population is to be religious and hereby contradicting the secularization thesis.

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Chapter 4 : Theories about religions - Wikipedia

Introduction. Religion represents an ideal subject for anthropologists. It is, on the one hand, a human universal—“all groups of people develop complexes of symbols, rituals, and beliefs that connect their own experience to the essential nature of the universe.

Heather Long and Kelly Chakov Note: In the early years of anthropology, the prevailing view of anthropologists and other scholars was that culture generally develops or evolves in a uniform and progressive manner. Just as species were thought to evolve into increasing complexity, so too were cultures thought to progress from a simple to complex states. It was thought that most societies pass through the same series of stages to arrive, ultimately, at a common end. Change was thought to originate from within the culture, so development was thought to be internally determined. The evolutionary progression of societies had been accepted by some since The Enlightenment. Both French and Scottish social and moral philosophers were using evolutionary schemes during the 18th century. Among these was Montesquieu, who proposed an evolutionary scheme consisting of three stages: This division became very popular among the 19th century social theorists, with figures such as Tylor and Morgan in adopting this scheme Seymour-Smith By the middle of the nineteenth century, Europe had successfully explored, conquered and colonized many heretofore unknown and alien parts of the globe. This global movement led to products and peoples that lived quite different lifestyles than the Europeans and proved politically and scientifically problematic. The discipline of anthropology, beginning with these early social theories arose largely in response to this encounter between cultures Winthrop The notion of dividing the ethnological record into evolutionary stages ranging from primitive to civilized was fundamental to the new ideas of the nineteenth century social evolutionists. These theorists developed rival schemes of overall social and cultural progress, as well as the origins of different institutions such as religion, marriage, and the family. Tylor disagreed with the contention of some early-nineteenth-century French and English writers, led by Comte Joseph de Maistre, that groups such as the American Indians and other indigenous peoples were examples of cultural degeneration. He believed that peoples in different locations were equally capable of developing and progressing through the stages. Tylor maintained that culture evolved from the simple to the complex, and that all societies passed through the three basic stages of development suggested by Montesquieu: To account for cultural variation, Tylor and other early evolutionists postulated that different contemporary societies were at different stages of evolution. According to this view, the "simpler" peoples of the day had not yet reached "higher" stages. Thus, simpler contemporary societies were thought to resemble ancient societies. In more advanced societies one could see proof of cultural evolution through the presence of what Tylor called survivals - traces of earlier customs that survive in present-day cultures. The making of pottery is an example of a survival in the sense used by Tylor. Earlier peoples made their cooking pots out of clay; today we generally make them out of metal because it is more durable, but we still prefer dishes made out of clay. Tylor believed that there was a kind of psychic unity among all peoples that explained parallel evolutionary sequences in different cultural traditions. In other words, because of the basic similarities in the mental framework of all peoples, different societies often find the same solutions to the same problems independently. But, Tylor also noted that cultural traits may spread from one society to another by simple diffusion - the borrowing by one culture of a trait belonging to another as the result of contact between the two. Another nineteenth-century proponent of uniform and progressive cultural evolution was Lewis Henry Morgan. A lawyer in upstate New York, Morgan became interested in the local Iroquois Indians and defended their reservation in a land-grant case. In gratitude, the Iroquois adopted Morgan, who regarded them as "noble savages. But he also subdivided savagery and barbarism into upper, middle, and lower segments Morgan Each stage was distinguished by a technological development and had a correlate in patterns of subsistence, marriage, family, and political organization. In *Ancient Society*, Morgan commented, "As it is undeniable that portions of the human family have existed in a state of savagery, other

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portions in a state of barbarism, and still others in a state of civilization, it seems equally so that these three distinct conditions are connected with each other in a natural as well as necessary sequence of progress" Morgan Morgan distinguished these stages of development in terms of technological achievement, and thus each had its identifying benchmarks. Middle savagery was marked by the acquisition of a fish diet and the discovery of fire; upper savagery by the bow and arrow; lower barbarism by pottery; middle barbarism by animal domestication and irrigated agriculture; upper barbarism by the manufacture of iron; and civilization by the phonetic alphabet Morgan For Morgan, the cultural features distinguishing these various stages arose from a "few primary germs of thought"- germs that had emerged while humans were still savages and that later developed into the "principle institutions of mankind. For example, he speculated that the family evolved through six stages. Human society began as a "horde living in promiscuity," with no sexual prohibitions and no real family structure. In the next stage a group of brothers was married to a group of sisters and brother-sister mating was permitted. In the third stage, group marriage was practiced, but brothers and sisters were not allowed to mate. The fourth stage, which supposedly evolved during barbarism, was characterized by a loosely paired male and female who lived with other people. In the next stage husband-dominant families arose in which the husband could have more than one wife simultaneously. Finally, the stage of civilization was distinguished by the monogamous family, with just one wife and one husband who were relatively equal in status. Morgan believed that family units became progressively smaller and more self-contained as human society developed. His postulated sequence for the evolution of the family, however, is not supported by the enormous amount of ethnographic data that has been collected since his time. For example, no recent society that Morgan would call savage indulges in group marriage or allows brother-sister mating. Although their works reached toward the same end, the evolutionary theorists each had very different ideas and foci for their studies. Differing from Morgan and Tylor, Sir James Frazer focused on the evolution of religion and viewed the progress of society or culture from the viewpoint of the evolution of psychological or mental systems. Among the other evolutionary theorists who put forth schemes of development of society, including different religious, kinship, and legal institution were Maine, McLellan, and Bachofen. It is important to note that all of the early evolutionary schemes were unilineal. Unilineal evolution refers to the idea that there is a set sequence of stages that all groups will pass through at some point, although progress through these stages will vary. Groups, both past and present, that are at the same level or stage of development were considered nearly identical. Thus a contemporary "primitive" group could be taken as a representative of an earlier stage of development of more advanced types. On the one hand, the uniformity which so largely pervades civilization may be ascribed, in great measure, to the uniform action of uniform causes; while on the other hand its various grades may be regarded as stages of development or evolution, each the outcome of previous history, and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future Tylor One debate arising from the evolutionist perspective was whether civilization had evolved from a state of savagery or had always coexisted with primitive groups. Also the degeneration theory of savagery that primitives regressed from the civilized state and that primitivism indicated the fall from grace had to be fought vigorously before social anthropology could progress. This new view proposed that evolution was a line of progression in which the lower stages were prerequisite to the upper. This idea seemed to completely contradict traditional ideas about the relationships between God and mankind and the nature of life and progress. Evolutionists criticized the Christian approach as requiring divine revelation to explain civilization. Reactions within evolutionist thought: Within the school of social evolution there were debates particularly concerning the most primitive stages of society. It was highly debated as to the order of primitive promiscuity, patriarchy, and matriarchy. Marx and his co-worker, Friedrich Engels, devised a theory in which the institutions of monogamy, private property, and the state were assumed to be chiefly responsible for the exploitation of the working classes in modern industrialized societies. Its leading opponent was Franz Boas, whose main disagreement with the evolutionists involved their assumption that universal laws governed all human culture. Boas argued that these nineteenth-century individuals lacked sufficient data as did Boas himself to formulate many useful

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generalizations. Thus historicism and, later, functionalism were reactions to nineteenth century social evolutionism. Johann Jacob Bachofen Swiss lawyer and classicist who developed a theory of the evolution of kinship systems. He postulated that primitive promiscuity was first characterized by matriarchy and later by patrilineality. Sir James George Frazer - Educated at Cambridge, he was considered to be the last of the British classical evolutionists. Frazer was an encyclopedic collector of data although he never did any fieldwork , publishing dozens of volumes including the popular work *The Golden Bough*. Frazer went on to study the value of superstition in the evolution of culture saying that it strengthened the respect for private property, strengthened the respect for marriage, and contributed to the stricter observance of the rules of sexual morality. Botanist and antiquarian who was a staunch pupil of Darwin. He observed that there was a range of variation of stone implements from more to less crude and that deposits that lay beneath upper deposits seemed older. As Illustrated by *Ancient Remains and the Customs of Modern Savages* illustrates the evolutionists analogies to "stone age contemporaries. Sir Henry James Sumner Maine English jurist and social theorist who focused on the development of legal systems as the key to social evolution. His scheme traces society from systems based on kinship to those based on territoriality, and from status to contract and from civil to criminal law. Maine argued that the most primitive societies were patriarchal. This view contrasted with the believers in the primacy of primitive promiscuity and matriarchy. Maine also contrasted with other evolutionists in that he was not a proponent of unilinear evolution Seymour-Smith Scottish lawyer who was inspired by ethnographic accounts of bride capture. From this he built a theory of the evolution of marriage. Like others, including Bachofen, McLellan postulated an original period of primitive promiscuity followed by matriarchy. His argument began with primitive peoples practicing female infanticide because women did not hunt to support the group. The shortage of women that followed was resolved by the practice of bride capture and fraternal polyandry. These then gave rise to patrilineal descent. One of the most influential evolutionary theorists of the 19th century and has been called the father of American anthropology. An American lawyer whose interest in Iroquois Indian affairs led him to study their customs and social system, giving rise to the first modern ethnographic study of a Native American group, the League of the Iroquois in In this, he considered ceremonial, religious, and political aspects and also initiated his study of kinship and marriage which he was later to develop into a comparative theory in his work, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity*. This latter work is also a milestone in the development of anthropology, establishing kinship and marriage as central areas of anthropological inquiry and beginning an enduring preoccupation with kinship terminologies as the key to the interpretation of kinship systems. His *Ancient Society* is the most influential statement of the nineteenth-century cultural evolutionary position, to be developed by many later evolutionists and employed by Marx and Engels in their theory of social evolution. Each stage was characterized by a technological advance and was correlated with advances in subsistence patterns, family and marriage and political organization Seymour-Smith Sir Edward Burnett Tylor - Put the science of anthropology on a firm basis and discounted the degeneration theory. Tylor formulated a definition of culture: His major contributions were in the field of religion and mythology, and he cited magic, astrology, and witchcraft as clues to primitive religion. It was an impressive and well-reasoned analysis of primitive psychology and far more general in application than anything which had been earlier suggested. Tylor correlates the three levels of social evolution to types of religion:

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Chapter 5 : Anthropology and Sociology of Religion | The University of Chicago Divinity School

Durkheim's approach gave rise to functionalist school in sociology and anthropology Functionalism is a sociological paradigm that originally attempted to explain social institutions as collective means to fill individual biological needs, focusing on the ways in which social institutions fill social needs, especially social stability. Thus.

Robertson Smith, Edward B. Tylor, and Sir James G. These scholars, of course, were not the first to take an interest in the comparative study of religion, nor were they the first to speculate on the religions of preliterate and tribal peoples. What set these men apart is that they were the first to suggest that tribal religions might be amenable to study following the rules of the scientific method, and the first to posit specific methodological procedures for the comparative analysis of religious beliefs and practices. Additionally, all four scholars conducted their research from the center of the far-flung British empire and thereby had access to a wider range of comparative data than had been previously available. They were primarily interested in human thought. All sought to understand religious belief and practice at its most fundamental, basic level. Frazer argued, for example, that human thought is best understood as a progression from magic, to religion, to science. In more advanced societies, Frazer contended, magic eventually is replaced by religion, and both are finally replaced by science. Another source of bias is that "armchair anthropologists" such as Tylor and Frazer tested their theories on the basis of the highly suspect reports provided by missionaries and European travelers. It was the rare Western observer who was able to report on non-Western religions objectively and with firsthand data. Indeed, evolutionary models current at the time would have precluded such objective reportage. Given such substantial constraints, it is amazing that the nineteenth-century interpretations of tribal religions are as sympathetic and insightful as they sometimes are. It is not surprising that many of the leading minds of the nineteenth century would turn their attention to religion. It has never been difficult to make a case for the significance of religion in human life. Religion has been found in all societies studied by anthropologists. It is highly visible and, in the words of Raymond T. And he knows it, poor soul; that is the thing. Researchers in the area cannot agree as to exactly how "religion" should be defined or what the term religion should encompass. Although his definition may be useful in elaborating what religion is like conceptually and what it does psychologically and socially, Geertz has been criticized for failing to explain specifically how a researcher might identify religion when encountered in the field. A major stumbling block to all definitions of religion, of course, is that religion is not a "thing" but an abstraction. Other twentieth-century definitions of religion e. In the later twentieth century, debate has arisen concerning the scope of the anthropology of religion. Do anthropologists of religion only study religions in tribal settings? Is it exclusively the study of non-Western religions? Is it to be limited to the study of religion among oppressed and marginalized people? The focus of anthropological study has shifted from the study of tribal to modern religions. A number of well-received studies have analyzed religion in developing societies, Europe, and the United States. Contemporary ethnographers concentrate on examining religious diversity in complex societies rather than providing further documentation for uniformity in tribal religions. An unresolved issue facing the anthropology of religion is the nature and problem of religious belief itself. There has been protracted debate among scholars as to whether it is possible for a nonbeliever to make definitive pronouncements concerning the religious beliefs of others. Can a religion be understood fully only from the perspective of the believer? While a number of leading psychologists and sociologists of religion are themselves adherents to the faiths they study, the overwhelming majority of anthropologists are skeptics. Most anthropologists are materialists and reductionists. They would find themselves in strong agreement with Firth But it is a human not a divine truth. Nevertheless, a number of anthropologists have insisted that religions can be grasped only from "within. This has altered the character and scope of research on religion and forced anthropologists to become more modest in their goals and less sweeping in their generalizations. Contemporary anthropological assertions are more likely to concern the manifestation of a particular belief in a particular place and time rather than

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speculate on "religion" in the abstract. Researchers focus on a single aspect of a religion a specific myth, a specific ritual, or an aspect of a ritual such as divination, sacrifice, spirit possession, and so on but refuse to examine an entire religious complex. This has had both positive and negative consequences for the anthropological study of religion. Twentieth-century anthropologists of religion have been left with the choice of "saying more with less authority" or "saying less with more authority. As a result, religions have been analyzed from a variety of perspectives: Of these new perspectives, variants of functionalism have been the most enduring, but cognitive and symbolic studies are likely to dominate in the next century. A number of promising studies have focused on ritual and ritual forms. From this perspective, rituals are seen as the fundamental unit of religious expression and the building blocks for all religions. Earlier studies Durkheim , Radcliffe-Brown underscored the role of ritual in mirroring the defining central features of society and culture, worldviews, identities, political forms, and social arrangements. More recently, scholars have argued that ritual not only mirrors these defining features but challenges them as well. Greater attention has been given to so-called ritual inversions and to what Max Gluckman has termed "rituals of rebellion. All mythology, they argued, has its roots in ritual activity. The myth-ritual debate raged for more than 60 years until , when Clyde Kluckhohn offered a satisfactory compromise by recounting multiple instances in which a myth clearly began as a ritual and other instances in which a ritual clearly began as a myth. Anthropological studies of ritual distinguish between calendrical and crisis rituals and between individual and collective rites Durkheim , Radcliffe-Brown For Durkheim, rituals both reflect and support the moral framework underlying social arrangements. Ultimately, Radcliffe-Brown suggested, rituals directly related to the collective and material well-being of a society are elevated to having spiritual, "ritual value" as well. Perhaps the most influential study of the ritual process was provided by Arnold van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage* , where he argued for the significance of rites of transition, which he categorized as an immutable tripartite sequence: Within the anthropological tradition, myth has been understood primarily as an encapsulation of sacred truth. Functional theorists such as Bronislaw Malinowski argued that myth promotes social cohesion and serves as a "charter" for human behavior. Myth, in short, legitimates human activities. Other theorists have treated mythology separately from religion. Anthropologists have long noted that religions are highly dynamic, and the role of religion in fostering social change has been extensively explored. An interest in religious change is discernable in the evolutionary theories of Tylor and Frazer as well as the twentieth-century diffusionist studies of Leslie Spier and A. Wallace identified a five-stage progression to account for attitudinal and organizational changes that occur within religious movements: Wallace is best known for his conception of "revitalization movements" and his application of this concept to the Plains Indian Ghost Dance and cargo cults in Melanesia. Cognitive, Biological, and Symbolic Approaches Much recent work in the anthropology of religion focuses on symbols and cognition, as exemplified in the writings of Geertz, Turner, Fernandez, Boon, Ortner, and Douglas. Still other approaches focus on biological and experiential models of religion Laughlin et al. Cognitive and neurological sciences have produced great insights into the biology of behavior, and many of these insights have been extended to the study of religion. Organizations such as the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness are devoted to the rigorous, scientific exploration of religious experience, including the religious use of hallucinogens, altered states of consciousness, shamanism, trance states, and the cross-cultural study of spirit possession. Naturalistic theories of religion have experienced a revival in the writings of Stewart E. Guthrie and Pascal Boyer Other scholars Morris , Horton , Klass , Saler , Pals have devoted attention to the reassessment of previous research. They have argued that contemporary anthropologists of religion are constrained by inadequate and outmoded categories and conceptions. Their frustration is eloquently expressed by Morton Klass Such critical assessments often fail to do justice to the tremendous amount that can be learned from the excellent textbooks of Lowie , Norbeck , Wallace , Radin , and de Waal Malefijt as well as more recent texts by Pandian and Child and Child In conclusion, functional, cognitive, and symbolic approaches have dominated the anthropological study of religion in the late twentieth century as researchers have become increasingly concerned with the concept of meaning. Biological,

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neurological, and cognitive approaches undoubtedly will assume greater importance in the next century. Anthropology of religion is no longer confined to the study of religion in tribal societies. Since the late s, a majority of anthropological studies have dealt with religion in the developed or developing world. University of California Press, A. Free Press, [] E. Firth, Religion New York: Macmillan, [] C. Basic Books, S. Guthrie, Faces in the Cloud New York: Oxford University Press, R. Cambridge University Press, W. Klass, Ordered Universes Boulder, Colo.: Columbia University Press, R. Lowie, Primitive Religion New York: Cambridge University Press, E. Oxford University Press, J. Prentice Hall, A. Free Press, P. Radin, Primitive Religion New York: Yale University Press, V. Oxford University Press, B. Saler, Conceptualizing Religion Leiden, Neth.: Spiro, Culture and Human Nature , new ed. Cambridge University Press, V. Tylor, Primitive Culture London:

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Chapter 6 : Religion - Anthropology - Oxford Bibliographies

The idea of the soul has been pivotal to the growth of modern social thought and continues to animate the contemporary anthropology of religion. For instance, a growing number of scholars today are interested in exploring the cognitive foundation of various renderings about the soul's existence after death.

Nature of Theories What is "theory? The theories we are going to review are "anthropological constructions of reality. A theory is based upon the particular history within that discipline. As an abstract model or paradigm, a "theory" is necessarily not the reality of that which it seeks to represent. To assume such would be to commit the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness. The "post-modern" perspectives of the "Interpretivists" and "Constructivists" will alter the premise that dichotomizes the relationship between "theory" and "reality. With regard to the various theories discussed, ask yourself were you fit, what sorts of questions make sense to you and why do they make sense? What are the problems and shortcomings of each theory? And what is your own theory? As each of these theories addresses a broad spectrum of anthropological topics, issues and concerns, this particular outline will only focus on how each frames questions revolving around "religion," "mythology," and "world view," topics that we will deal with initially in this course. Edward Tylor Evolutionist - exemplified by Edward Tylor - Tylor was a Quaker, with no formal university training, who traveled Mexico from , began publishing his theories in In became the first professor of new field of anthropology at Oxford University. He asked two basic questions: What was the earliest forms of religion, i. In contrast with "religion," which seeks to ask and petition God, given human submissive to God, and "science," which knows correct nature of associations based on rational and empirical knowledge. Animism and Magic are the basis of the first stages of intellectual and societal evolution. Set stages all societies "unilineal" evolve through: The "primitives" are simply "survivals" of past ages. Thus their "primitive" differences are explained and why some feel they have the right to conquer, exploit and missionize them is justified. Lack of actual field experience - data - and reliance on second-hand accounts, a sort of "Arm chair" anthropology, Data does not support theories, e. The ethnocentric view that European-rational "civilization" is the basis and criteria for judging the worth and value of other cultures. While needing to be further developed, the concept of "psychic unity" challenged the prevailing ethnocentric and racist ideas of "degeneration" and innate disposition to account for cultural diversity, and paved way for the "comparative method. Though he did not conduct field work himself, Schmidt was responsible for the field work training of a large number of Catholic missionaries. The culmination of his research was the 12 volume each volume some pages Origins of the Idea of God, s. Like Tylor, Schmidt asked two basic questions: What was the earliest form of religion - origins? But he came up with opposite conclusions, based on an entirely different mechanism for culture change. Origin with "primitive monotheism," not animism or polytheism. And mechanism for change was not unilineal evolution, but diffusion. Specifically, process of diffusion out from centers - Kulturkreise, "culture circles," centers of "primitive monotheism. While diffusion is an acknowledged mechanism for change credit Schmidt , but not only mechanism. While well-trained students were sent out into the field, they were looking for "primitive monotheism" - "self-fulfilling prophecy" Contribution: Freud refocused the discussion and level of analysis away from society to the individual and innate psychological struggles that in turn become manifested in society. He asked, how do we mediate and control our basic psychological instincts, which can be selfish and destructive? Freud saw man as driven by his instincts and anxieties derived from two unconscious processes: When confronted with an impasse between the two, they are overcome either by rational, logical processes, or by withdrawal into fantasy, dreams and illusions. Exemplified in the "origins of religion. In uncontrolled passion, the sons kill their fathers and eat them - the id at work. The images and content of religious illusion is the structure of child-family imagery, projecting morality and the triumph of the superego onto society. Such can be observed in the functioning of "male initiation rituals" and their degree of severity. In instances of close son-mother associations and need of strong adult male solidarity, find enhanced Oedipus rivalry and stronger

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male initiation rituals, resulting in subincision and circumcision rituals. Such rituals focus on the penis, symbolically and literally cutting ties with mothers and identifying with adult males. Not the best source of informants, and thus difficult to extend beyond his sample to all the human condition. Unlike previous theorists, Boas reacted against the "grandiose armchair theories and theorist," many of whom were overtly racist in nature. He challenged the "comparative method," "psychic unity," "universal laws," "environmental, geographic or economic determinism," "prime movers" as causes of culture change, i. And Boas stressed the need for solid, intensive and long-term field work, i. Focus research on specific society, its whole, and its own history, i. Radcliffe-Brown - No single individual has had greater impact on the social sciences and anthropology than Durkheim. Born into long line of French rabbis and educated in Old Testament and Hebrew studies, he never-the-less became an agnostic. Durkheim tried University life but dropped out, only finally to return and graduate second from the bottom. But by the s, he had established himself, by publishing such monumental works as Division of Labor in Society and Suicide and Elementary Forms of Religious Life He also experienced tremendous tragedy - World War I. All his students, except one killed, but including his own brilliant son, were killed. The "war to end all wars" wiped out one of the most promising classes of intellectual minds. Durkheim never recovered, dying at age What maintains social solidarity? How does the individual support society? He refocused the discussion from the psychology and "superego"- the interior - to the exterior - social solidarity. Focus on the "social condition" and "social facts," defined as a collection of symbols that are fundamental to society. Thus Durkheim is not concerned about Freudian psychological struggles, nor Marxist "modes of production," nor is he concerned with origins or stages of development, as they are only conjecture. Religion as one example of social facts. Beliefs and practices involving the "Sacred" - things that contribute positively to society and are thus revered and set apart, such as a "priest," "cross," "medicine bundle," "totemism. United into single community called a "church," which reiterates the "collective" quality, i. Since religion is a social fact, derived from the social conditions, whose function is to help insure solidarity, it becomes society that man is worshiping in ideal form. Thus "religion" represents the positive aspects of social solidarity. So when people are praying to God, they are actually praying to society. Or rephrased, man worships himself for the purpose of social cohesion. Tautology - circular argument - the cause of something is the consequence, which in turn is the cause. One can not claim that "religion," as a "social fact" and an expression of the need for social solidarity, is the cause of religious beliefs and practices, the consequences of those social facts. Identified three types of needs society satisfies for individuals: Thus religion and magic responses to psychological needs to control destiny and chance, where pragmatic knowledge, i. The example of Trobriand Islands fishing lagoon vs.

Chapter 7 : Concentration in Anthropology and Religion Â» Anthropology Â» Boston University

In fact, the origin of 'race theory'1 in anthropology can be traced back to this evolutionism school. Race theorists Race theorists were influenced by evolutionism (Ember, Ember and Peregrine, ; 18).

Chapter 8 : Anthropological Theory

The anthropological study of religion attends to religious life via the study of everyday practices. Rather than understanding religion as a set of beliefs, anthropologists examine the ways that practices and belief are constitutive of each other via a broad spectrum of representations, embodiments and ethical and social practices.

Chapter 9 : Faculty and Staff

The discipline of anthropology, beginning with these early social theories arose largely in response to this encounter between cultures (Winthrop). Cultural evolution - anthropology's first systematic ethnological theory - was intended to

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help explain this diversity among the peoples of the world.