Part I

The Context of Understanding and Debate

Opening Frameworks

Introduction

We begin with four classic and profound statements on the nature of religion which take us from one of the ablest evolutionists (Tylor), through the two greatest sociologists on the subject (Durkheim and Weber), to the anthropologist who has been, if not the most influential, at least the most talked about theoretician in the latter decades of the 20th century (Geertz). The first three figures present what came (along with a Freudian model) to be seen as the main alternative approaches to the understanding of religion. Through the mid-20th century the choice was particularly between Durkheim and Tylor. Then, in part through the writing of Geertz, Weber became of great interest to anthropology.

Tylor and Durkheim both seek the origins or foundations of religion. For Tylor they lie in individual reasoning, hence his position is often referred to as rationalist or intellectualist, whereas for Durkheim they lie in the collective consciousness that society has of itself. Durkheim's position is therefore social. Both men seek the clearest exemplification of religion's foundations in what they consider to be the simplest known societies. Tylor's method is one of comparison, derived from ostensible facts gleaned from a voluminous number of travelers' reports of varying quality, while Durkheim begins with the analysis of what he takes to be a single case, namely Aboriginal Australia. For Tylor the presence of religion could be explained as a reasonable, albeit mistaken, attempt to solve intellectual problems, whereas Durkheim took a more symbolic approach and argued that religious ideas and rituals both express and regenerate society.

Weber's concerns were not with the origins of religion per se so much as with the role of religion in the origins of modernity. He was concerned not with small-scale societies but with states, especially when comparing Asia with Europe. His approach was also distinctly historical, in contrast to the synchronic structure-functionalism to which Durkheimian ideas gave rise. He was interested, like Tylor, in what motivated people to think and act as they did, but he understood action in

the context of collective systems of meaning. Where Tylor saw religious ideation as the product of direct and universal human concerns, Weber emphasized how such concerns are themselves shaped by diverse religious traditions. Likewise, where Tylor operated with an ostensibly universal and unequivocally positive idea of rationality, Weber was concerned with alternate kinds of means–ends relations, and especially with the emergence of various forms of what he called rationalization, which he viewed with some unease. In Weber the narrative of unequivocal progress assumed by the Victorians is replaced by distinct ambivalence.

This is not the place to rehearse the complex elements of either Durkheim's or Weber's analyses of religion, nor to chart a history of the respective traditions they founded or the way they twine through anthropological work (see O'Toole 1984 for a good sociological introduction). But it is to note that most contemporary anthropological analyses are informed by both these thinkers, whether in affirmation or resistance, tacitly or explicitly, and whether leavened by doses of Marx and Freud. Marx and Freud do belong here as well, and would have been represented by excerpts from *Capital* on commodity fetishism and from *Totem and Taboo*. Certain Freudian and Marxist arguments are presented in the selections from Obeyesekere and Taussig, respectively. All these interpretations of religion are prefigured by Feuerbach's analysis of religion as a human product (1975).

Geertz is present in this section not as a founding ancestor but as one of the strongest attempts within modern anthropology to compose a definition of religion and hence a model for subsequent research. Moreover, Geertz attempts a kind of implicit synthesis of previous approaches. We can see threads of both Tylor and Durkheim, while the overriding interest is Weberian. Geertz's roots are also Boasian, via Ruth Benedict, in that he is interested in portraying distinctive cultural worlds by means of ethnographic particulars.

Few other anthropologists have been able to develop original and powerful definitions of religion or to model its relationships to culture and society. A theoretical synthesis by sociologist Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (1967; see also Berger and Luckmann 1966), has strong parallels with Geertz. Rappaport (1999) is a magisterial anthropological attempt to understand religion's place in nature and, like Durkheim, its place at the foundations of social life.

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Religion in Primitive Culture

Edward Burnett Tylor

"The growth of religious ideas is environed with such intrinsic difficulties that it may never receive a perfectly satisfactory exposition. Religion deals so largely with the imaginative and emotional nature, and consequently with such uncertain elements of knowledge, that all primitive religions are grotesque and to some extent unintelligible." Such was the opinion of Lewis Henry Morgan (1877: 5, as cited by Guenther 1999: 58), a contemporary of Tylor's. While Tylor (1832–1917) and Morgan are considered the leading figures of 19th-century evolutionary anthropology, and certainly among the very few who are still read today, Tylor's view of religion could not have departed further from Morgan's statement. Tylor, holder of the first chair in anthropology at the University of Oxford, found primitive religions neither grotesque nor unintelligible, and he thought he had developed a model of their development. Nor did he emphasize their "imaginative and emotional" side. Tylor was a rationalist and departed from many of his contemporaries in finding this quality in so-called "primitive man" as well. However, he felt equally that despite the rationality of their thought, the conclusions reached by members of small-scale societies were in error.

If Tylor is the only 19th-century writer to be included here, it is not only because he was among the more sensible, but because the core of his definition of religion as "the belief in Spiritual Beings" remains congenial to many contemporary thinkers and is indeed almost a part of western "common sense" on the subject. His characterization of animism remains fruitful and does serve as one means to generalize about religious phenomena of all kinds. Animism speaks today to reflections on the mind/body problem and conceptualizations of the person, to the relations between humans

From Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958 [1871]), pp. 8–19, 80–6, 444–7. Abridged, footnotes removed, paragraph breaks added.

and other species, especially in hunting societies, and to conceptualizations of death and the centrality of both mortuary ritual and sacrifice in human societies. (See the essay by Viveiros de Castro, chapter 23 below.)

Tylor's main successor was Sir James Frazer, who developed a stronger contrast between magic, religion, and science as forms of reasoning (1890). It was Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1985 [1910], 1966 [1923]) who provided the most direct alternative to rationalism. He is associated with the view that "natives" lived in some mystical connection with the world that transcends or evades the rational. It is easy to criticize Lévy-Bruhl (and he eventually criticized himself – 1949), but his argument looks rather more sophisticated if we see it as the complete inverse of Tylor, namely that if primitives are not rational, neither can they be said to be in error with respect to their conclusions. For Lévy-Bruhl, at least, the relation to the world was a rich and powerful one.

The criticisms of Tylor have been well rehearsed. The evolutionism entails value judgments and assumes a static quality to the thought of small-scale societies, as if they had been frozen in time; the comparative method decontextualizes ethnographic facts whose meaning is thereby reduced and distorted; the rationalism ignores the emotional side of religion; and the intellectualism ignores the collective, symbolic, representational dimension. The fact that Tylor sees religion grounded in error has appeared to many subsequent thinkers to debase and reduce the subject. Moreover, despite his concern for accurate empirical evidence, Tylor's approach is characterized by his own excessive speculation. Tylor's errors were compounded in Frazer.

Both Tylor and Lévy-Bruhl present one-sided and therefore impoverished pictures. Members of small-scale societies are far more sophisticated thinkers than either gave them credit for. They have far greater knowledge of the human condition and far richer, more variegated, and complex religious lives than Tylor recognized. They are also capable of much greater critical distance and abstract reasoning than Lévy-Bruhl imagined. Moreover, it is a mistake to generalize about small-scale societies; there are great differences among them and over time. A comprehensive critique of Tylor, Lévy-Bruhl, and other evolutionists is to be found in Evans-Pritchard (1965).

Nevertheless, there are kernels of thought here that subsequent anthropologists have found of interest. There has been a stream of self-conscious "Neo-Tyloreanism" (notably Horton 1993) in response to an overly structure-functionalist approach to religion. This school draws particular inspiration from the fact that whatever his ethnocentrism, Tylor begins with the rational and questioning nature of all people to try to understand the human situation and our place in the world, and that religious ideas are adequate to the worlds they describe and shift as the horizons of those worlds shift, as Horton put it, from microcosm to macrocosm. In reading Tylor today it is striking to see behind the evolutionary language a basic concern with universals in human thought and experience and the continuity of religious thought between small-scale societies and his own; in this respect Tylor forms a precursor to contemporary cognitivist approaches. Moreover, although some of the language used appears highly problematic, Tylor's basic argument was against those who saw in smaller-scale societies either a degeneration or a borrowing from large-scale ones. What Tylor staunchly defends is the rationalism and creativity

of all humans. Conversely, authors such as Devisch (1993) and Jackson (1989) (see also Leenhardt 1979 [1947]) suggestively reimagine aspects of mystical participation through ideas of embodied knowledge and experience. However, neither mental nor bodily relationships are unmediated; on both counts Durkheimian or culturalist understandings of the way society and language shape collective representations and individual experiences are critical.

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The first requisite in a systematic study of the religions of the lower races, is to lay down a rudimentary definition of religion. By requiring in this definition the belief in a supreme deity or of judgment after death, the adoration of idols or the practice of sacrifice, or other partially-diffused doctrines or rites, no doubt many tribes may be excluded from the category of religious. But such narrow definition has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motive which underlies them. It seems best to fall back at once on this essential source, and simply to claim, as a minimum definition of Religion, the belief in Spiritual Beings. If this standard be applied to the descriptions of low races as to religion, the following results will appear. It cannot be positively asserted that every existing tribe recognizes the belief in spiritual beings, for the native condition of a considerable number is obscure in this respect, and from the rapid change or extinction they are undergoing, may ever remain so. It would be yet more unwarranted to set down every tribe mentioned in history, or known to us by the discovery of antiquarian relics, as necessarily having passed the defined minimum of religion. Greater still would be the unwisdom of declaring such a rudimentary belief natural or instinctive in all human tribes of all times; for no evidence justifies the opinion that man, known to be capable of so vast an intellectual development, cannot have emerged from a nonreligious condition, previous to that religious condition in which he happens at present to come with sufficient clearness within our range of knowledge. It is desirable, however, to take our basis of enquiry in observation rather than from speculation. Here, so far as I can judge from the immense mass of accessible evidence, we have to admit that the belief in spiritual beings appears among all low races with whom we have attained to thoroughly intimate acquaintance; whereas the assertion of absence of such belief must apply either to ancient tribes, or to more or less imperfectly described modern ones. The exact bearing of this state of things on the problem of the origin of religion may be thus briefly stated. Were it distinctly proved that non-religious savages exist or have existed, these might be at least plausibly claimed as representatives of the condition of Man before he arrived at the religious state of culture. It is not desirable, however, that this argument should be put forward, for the asserted existence of the non-religious tribes in question rests . . . on evidence often mistaken and never conclusive. The argument for the natural evolution of religious ideas among mankind is not invalidated by the rejection of an ally too weak at present to give effectual help. Non-religious tribes may not exist in our day, but the fact bears no more decisively on the development of religion, than the impossibility of finding a modern English village without scissors or books or lucifer-matches bears on the fact that there was a time when no such things existed in the land.

I propose here, under the name of Animism, to investigate the deep-lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings, which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy. Animism is not a new technical term, though now seldom used. From its special relation to the doctrine of the soul, it will be seen to have a peculiar appropriateness to the view here taken of the mode in which theological ideas have been developed among mankind. The word Spiritualism, though it may be, and sometimes is, used in a general sense, has this obvious defect to us, that it has

become the designation of a particular modern sect, who indeed hold extreme spiritualistic views, but cannot be taken as typical representatives of these views in the world at large. The sense of Spiritualism in its wider acceptation, the general belief in spiritual beings, is here given to Animism.

Animism characterizes tribes very low in the scale of humanity, and thence ascends, deeply modified in its transmission, but from first to last preserving an unbroken continuity, into the midst of high modern culture. Doctrines adverse to it, so largely held by individuals or schools, are usually due not to early lowness of civilization, but to later changes in the intellectual course, to divergence from, or rejection of, ancestral faiths; and such newer developments do not affect the present enquiry as to the fundamental religious condition of mankind. Animism is, in fact, the groundwork of the Philosophy of Religion, from that of savages up to that of civilized men. And although it may at first sight seem to afford but a bare and meagre definition of a minimum of religion, it will be found practically sufficient; for where the root is, the branches will generally be produced. It is habitually found that the theory of Animism divides into two great dogmas, forming parts of one consistent doctrine; first, concerning souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities. Spiritual beings are held to affect or control the events of the material world, and man's life here and hereafter; and it being considered that they hold intercourse with men, and receive pleasure or displeasure from human actions, the belief in their existence leads naturally, and it might almost be said inevitably, sooner or later to active reverence and propitiation. Thus Animism in its full development, includes the belief in souls and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinate spirits, these doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship.

One great element of religion, that moral element which among the higher nations forms its most vital part, is indeed little represented in the religion of the lower races. It is not that these races have no moral sense or no moral standard, for both are strongly marked among them, if not in formal precept, at least in that traditional consensus of society which we call public opinion, according to which certain actions are held to be good or bad, right or wrong. It is that the conjunction of ethics and Animistic philosophy, so intimate and powerful in the higher culture, seems scarcely yet to have begun in the lower. I propose here hardly to touch upon the purely moral aspects of religion, but rather to study the animism of the world so far as it constitutes, as unquestionably it does constitute, an ancient and world-wide philosophy, of which belief is the theory and worship is the practice.

Endeavouring to shape the materials for an enquiry hitherto strangely undervalued and neglected, it will now be my task to bring as clearly as may be into view the fundamental animism of the lower races, and in some slight and broken outline to trace its course into higher regions of civilization. Here let me state once for all two principal conditions under which the present research is carried on. First, as to the religious doctrines and practices examined, these are treated as belonging to theological systems devised by human reason, without supernatural aid or revelation; in other words, as being developments of Natural Religion. Second, as to the connexion between similar ideas and rites in the religions of the savage and the civilized world. While dwelling at some length on doctrines and ceremonies of the lower races, and sometimes particularizing for special reasons the related doctrines and ceremonies of the higher nations, it has not seemed my proper task to work out in detail the problems thus suggested among the philosophies and creeds of Christendom. Such applications, extending farthest from the direct scope of a work on primitive culture, are briefly stated in general terms, or touched in slight allusion, or taken for granted without remark. Educated readers possess the information required to work out their general bearing on theology, while more technical discussion is left to philosophers and theologians specially occupied with such arguments.

The first branch of the subject to be considered is the doctrine of human and other Souls, an examination of which will occupy the rest

of the present chapter. What the doctrine of the soul is among the lower races, may be explained in stating the animistic theory of its development. It seems as though thinking men, as yet at a low level of culture, were deeply impressed by two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between a living body and a dead one; what causes waking, sleep, trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions? Looking at these two groups of phenomena, the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom. These two are evidently in close connexion with the body, the life as enabling it to feel and think and act, the phantom as being its image or second self; both, also, are perceived to be things separable from the body, the life as able to go away and leave it insensible or dead, the phantom as appearing to people at a distance from it.

The second step would seem also easy for savages to make, seeing how extremely difficult civilized men have found it to unmake. It is merely to combine the life and the phantom. As both belong to the body, why should they not also belong to one another, and be manifestations of one and the same soul? Let them then be considered as united, and the result is that well-known conception which may be described as an apparitional-soul, a ghost-soul. This, at any rate, corresponds with the actual conception of the personal soul or spirit among the lower races, which may be defined as follows: It is a thin unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow; the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates; independently possessing the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner, past or present; capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place; mostly impalpable and invisible, yet also manifesting physical power, and especially appearing to men waking or asleep as phantasm separate from the body of which it bears the likeness; continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body; able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things. Though this definition is by no means of universal application, it has sufficient generality to be taken as a standard, modified by more or less divergence among any particular people.

Far from these world-wide opinions being arbitrary or conventional products, it is seldom even justifiable to consider their uniformity among distant races as proving communication of any sort. They are doctrines answering in the most forcible way to the plain evidence of men's senses, as interpreted by a fairly consistent and rational primitive philosophy. So well, indeed, does primitive animism account for the facts of nature, that it has held its place into the higher levels of education. Though classic and mediæval philosophy modified it much, and modern philosophy has handled it yet more unsparingly, it has so far retained the traces of its original character, that heirlooms of primitive ages may be claimed in the existing psychology of the civilized world. Out of the vast mass of evidence, collected among the most various and distant races of mankind, typical details may now be selected to display the earlier theory of the soul, the relation of the parts of this theory, and the manner in which these parts have been abandoned, modified, or kept up, along the course of culture.

To understand the popular conceptions of the human soul or spirit, it is instructive to notice the words which have been found suitable to express it. The ghost or phantasm seen by the dreamer or the visionary is an unsubstantial form, like a shadow or reflexion, and thus the familiar term of the *shade* comes in to express the soul. Thus the Tasmanian word for the shadow is also that for the spirit; the Algonquins describe a man's soul as *otahchuk*, "his shadow;" the Quiché language uses *natub* for "shadow, soul;" the Arawak *ueja* means "shadow, soul, image;" the Abipones made the one word *loákal* serve for "shadow, soul, echo, image." The Zulus not only use the word *tunzi* for "shadow, spirit, ghost," but they consider that at death the shadow of a man will in some way depart from the corpse, to become an ancestral spirit. The Basutos not only call the spirit remaining after death the

seriti or "shadow," but they think that if a man walks on the river bank, a crocodile may seize his shadow in the water and draw him in; while in Old Calabar there is found the same identification of the spirit with the *ukpon* or "shadow," for a man to lose which is fatal. There are thus found among the lower races not only the types of those familiar classic terms, the *skia* and *umbra,* but also what seems the fundamental thought of the stories of shadowless men still current in the folklore of Europe, and familiar to modern readers in Chamisso's tale of Peter Schlemihl. Thus the dead in Purgatory knew that Dante was alive when they saw that, unlike theirs, his figure cast a shadow on the ground.

Other attributes are taken into the notion of soul or spirit, with especial regard to its being the cause of life. Thus the Caribs, connecting the pulses with spiritual beings, and especially considering that in the heart dwells man's chief soul, destined to a future heavenly life, could reasonably use the one word *iouanni* for "soul, life, heart." The Tongans supposed the soul to exist throughout the whole extension of the body, but particularly in the heart. On one occasion, the natives were declaring to a European that a man buried months ago was nevertheless still alive. "And one, endeavouring to make me understand what he meant, took hold of my hand, and squeezing it, said, 'This will die, but the life that is within you will never die;' with his other hand pointing to my heart." So the Basutos say of a dead man that his heart is gone out, and of one recovering from sickness that his heart is coming back. This corresponds to the familiar Old World view of the heart as the prime mover in life, thought, and passion. The connexion of soul and blood, familiar to the Karens and Papuas, appears prominently in Jewish and Arabic philosophy. To educated moderns the idea of the Macusi Indians of Guiana may seem quaint, that although the body will decay, "the man in our eyes" will not die, but wander about. Yet the association of personal animation with the pupil of the eye is familiar to European folklore, which not unreasonably discerned a sign of bewitchment or approaching death in the disappearance of the image, pupil, or baby, from the dim eyeballs of the sick man.

The act of breathing, so characteristic of the higher animals during life, and coinciding so closely with life in its departure, has been repeatedly and naturally identified with the life or soul itself. Laura Bridgman showed in her instructive way the analogy between the effects of restricted sense and restricted civilization, when one day she made the gesture of taking something away from her mouth: "I dreamed," she explained in words, "that God took away my breath to heaven." It is thus that West Australians used one word *waug* for "breath, spirit, soul;" that in the Netela language of California, *piuts* means "life, breath, soul;" that certain Greenlanders reckoned two souls to man, namely his shadow and his breath; that the Malays say the soul of the dying man escapes through his nostrils, and in Java use the same word *ñawa* for "breath, life, soul." How the notions of life, heart, breath, and phantom unite in the one conception of a soul or spirit, and at the same time how loose and vague such ideas are among barbaric races, is well brought into view in the answers to a religious inquest held in 1528 among the natives of Nicaragua. "When they die, there comes out of their mouth something that resembles a person, and is called *julio* [Aztec *yuli* = to live]. This being goes to the place where the man and woman are. It is like a person, but does not die, and the body remains here." *Question.* "Do those who go up on high keep the same body, the same face, and the same limbs, as here below?" *Answer.* "No; there is only the heart." *Question.* "But since they tear out their hearts [i.e. when a captive was sacrificed], what happens then?" *Answer.* "It is not precisely the heart, but that in them which makes them live, and that quits the body when they die." Or, as stated in another interrogatory, "It is not their heart that goes up above, but what makes them live, that is to say, the breath that issues from their mouth and is called *julio*."

The conception of the soul as breath may be followed up through Semitic and Aryan etymology, and thus into the main streams of the philosophy of the world. Hebrew shows *nephesh*, "breath," passing into all the meanings of "life, soul, mind, animal," while *ruach* and *neshamah* make the like transition from

"breath" to "spirit"; and to these the Arabic *nefs* and *ruh* correspond. The same is the history of Sanskrit *âtman* and *prâna,* of Greek *psychē* and *pneuma*, of Latin *animus*, *anima*, *spiritus*. So Slavonic *duch* has developed the meaning of "breath" into that of soul or spirit; and the dialects of the Gypsies have this word *dūk* with the meanings of "breath, spirit, ghost," whether these pariahs brought the word from India as part of their inheritance of Aryan speech, or whether they adopted it in their migration across Slavonic lands. German *geist* and English *ghost,* too, may possibly have the same original sense of breath. And if any should think such expressions due to mere metaphor, they may judge the strength of the implied connexion between breath and spirit by cases of most unequivocal significance. Among the Seminoles of Florida, when a woman died in childbirth, the infant was held over her face to receive her parting spirit, and thus acquire strength and knowledge for its future use. These Indians could have well understood why at the death-bed of an ancient Roman, the nearest kinsman leant over to inhale the last breath of the departing (et excipies hanc animam ore pio). Their state of mind is kept up to this day among Tyrolese peasants, who can still fancy a good man's soul to issue from his mouth at death like a little white cloud.

It will be shown that men, in their composite and confused notions of the soul, have brought into connexion a list of manifestations of life and thought even more multifarious than this. But also, seeking to avoid such perplexity of combination, they have sometimes endeavored to define and classify more closely, especially by the theory that man has a combination of several kinds of spirit, soul, or image, to which different functions belong. Already in the barbaric world such classification has been invented or adopted. Thus the Fijians distinguished between man's "dark spirit" or shadow, which goes to Hades, and his "light spirit" or reflexion in water or a mirror, which stays near where he dies. The Malagasy say that the *saina* or mind vanishes at death, the *aina* or life becomes mere air, but the *matoatoa* or ghost hovers round the tomb. In North America, the duality of the soul is a strongly marked Algonquin belief; one soul goes out and sees dreams while the other remains behind; at death one of the two abides with the body, and for this the survivors leave offerings of food, while the other departs to the land of the dead. A division into three souls is also known, and the Dakotas say that man has four souls, one remaining with the corpse, one staying in the village, one going in the air, and one to the land of spirits. The Karens distinguish between the "là" or "kelah," the personal life-phantom, and the "thah," the responsible moral soul. More or less under Hindu influence, the Khonds have a fourfold division, as follows: the first soul is that capable of beatification or restoration to Boora the Good Deity; the second is attached to a Khond tribe on earth and is reborn generation after generation, so that at the birth of each child the priest asks who has returned; the third goes out to hold spiritual intercourse, leaving the body in a languid state, and it is this soul which can pass for a time into a tiger, and transmigrates for punishment after death; the fourth dies on the dissolution of the body. Such classifications resemble those of higher nations, . . .

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Having thus surveyed at large the theory of spirits or souls of objects, it remains to point out what, to general students, may seem the most important consideration belonging to it, namely, its close relation to one of the most influential doctrines of civilized philosophy. The savage thinker, though occupying himself so much with the phenomena of life, sleep, disease, and death, seems to have taken for granted, as a matter of course, the ordinary operations of his own mind. It hardly occurred to him to think about the machinery of thinking. Metaphysics is a study which first assumes clear shape at a comparatively high level of intellectual culture. The metaphysical philosophy of thought taught in our modern European lecture-rooms is historically traced back to the speculative psychology of classic Greece. Now one doctrine which there comes into view is especially associated with the name of Democritus, the philosopher of Abdera, in the fifth century BC. When Democritus propounded the great problem of metaphysics,

"How do we perceive external things?" – thus making, as Lewes says, an era in the history of philosophy – he put forth, in answer to the question, a theory of thought. He explained the fact of perception by declaring that things are always throwing off images (εἴδωλα) of themselves, which images, assimilating to themselves the surrounding air, enter a recipient soul, and are thus perceived.

Now, supposing Democritus to have been really the originator of this famed theory of ideas, how far is he to be considered its inventor? Writers on the history of philosophy are accustomed to treat the doctrine as actually made by the philosophical school which taught it. Yet the evidence here brought forward shows it to be really the savage doctrine of object-souls, turned to a new purpose as a method of explaining the phenomena of thought. Nor is the correspondence a mere coincidence, for at this point of junction between classic religion and classic philosophy the traces of historical continuity may be still discerned. To say that Democritus was an ancient Greek is to say that from his childhood he had looked on at the funeral ceremonies of his country, beholding the funeral sacrifices of garments and jewels and money and food and drink, rites which his mother and his nurse could tell him were performed in order that the phantasmal images of these objects might pass into the possession of forms shadowy like themselves, the souls of dead men. Thus Democritus, seeking a solution of his great problem of the nature of thought, found it by simply decanting into his metaphysics a surviving doctrine of primitive savage animism. This thought of the phantoms or souls of things, if simply modified to form a philosophical theory of perception, would then and there become his doctrine of Ideas. Nor does even this fully represent the closeness of union which connects the savage doctrine of flitting object-souls with the Epicurean philosophy. Lucretius actually makes the theory of film-like images of things (simulacra, membranæ) account both for the apparitions which come to men in dreams, and the images which impress their minds in thinking. So unbroken is the continuity of philosophic speculation from savage to cultured thought. Such are the debts which civilized philosophy owes to primitive animism.

The doctrine of ideas, thus developed in the classic world, has, indeed, by no means held its course thenceforth unchanged through metaphysics, but has undergone transition somewhat like that of the doctrine of the soul itself. Ideas, fined down to the abstract forms or species of material objects, and applied to other than visible qualities, have at last come merely to denote subjects of thought. Yet to this day the old theory has not utterly died out, and the retention of the significant term "idea" (ἰδέα, visible form) is accompanied by a similar retention of original meaning. It is still one of the tasks of the metaphysician to display and refute the old notion of ideas as being real images, and to replace it by more abstract conceptions. It is a striking instance that Dugald Stewart can cite from the works of Sir Isaac Newton the following distinct recognition of "sensible species:" "Is not the sensorium of animals, the place where the sentient substance is present; and to which the sensible species of things are brought, through the nerves and brain, that there they may be perceived by the mind present in that place?" Again, Dr. Reid states the original theory of ideas, while declaring that he conceives it

> to have no solid foundation, though it has been adopted very generally by philosophers. . . . This notion of our perceiving external objects, not immediately, but in certain images or species of them conveyed by the senses, seems to be the most ancient philosophical hypothesis we have on the subject of perception, and to have, with small variations, retained its authority to this day.

Granted that Dr. Reid exaggerated the extent to which metaphysicians have kept up the notion of ideas as real images of things, few will deny that it does linger much in modern minds, and that people who talk of ideas do often, in some hazy metaphorical way, think of sensible images. One of the shrewdest things ever said about either ideas or ghosts was Bishop Berkeley's retort upon Halley, who bantered him about his idealism. The bishop claimed the mathematician as an idealist also,

his ultimate ratios being ghosts of departed quantities, appearing when the terms that produced them vanished.

It remains to sum up in few words the doctrine of souls, in the various phases it has assumed from first to last among mankind. In the attempt to trace its main course through the successive grades of man's intellectual history, the evidence seems to accord best with a theory of its development, somewhat to the following effect. At the lowest levels of culture of which we have clear knowledge, the notion of a ghost-soul animating man while in the body, and appearing in dream and vision out of the body, is found deeply ingrained. There is no reason to think that this belief was learnt by savage tribes from contact with higher races, nor that it is a relic of higher culture from which the savage tribes have degenerated; for what is here treated as the primitive animistic doctrine is thoroughly at home among savages, who appear to hold it on the very evidence of their senses, interpreted on the biological principle which seems to them most reasonable. We may now and then hear the savage doctrines and practices concerning souls claimed as relics of a high religious culture pervading the primeval race of man. They are said to be traces of remote ancestral religion, kept up in scanty and perverted memory by tribes degraded from a nobler state. It is easy to see that such an explanation of some few facts, sundered from their connexion with the general array, may seem plausible to certain minds. But a large view of the subject can hardly leave such argument in possession. The animism of savages stands for and by itself; it explains its own origin. The animism of civilized men, while more appropriate to advanced knowledge, is in great measure only explicable as a developed product of the older and ruder system. It is the doctrines and rites of the lower races which are, according to their philosophy, results of point-blank natural evidence and acts of straightforward practical purpose. It is the doctrines and rites of the higher races which show survival of the old in the midst of the new, modification of the old to bring it into conformity with the new, abandonment of the old because it is no longer compatible with the new.

Let us see at a glance in what general relation the doctrine of souls among savage tribes stands to the doctrine of souls among barbaric and cultured nations. Among races within the limits of savagery, the general doctrine of souls is found worked out with remarkable breadth and consistency. The souls of animals are recognized by a natural extension from the theory of human souls; the souls of trees and plants follow in some vague partial way; and the souls of inanimate objects expand the general category to its extremest boundary. Thenceforth, as we explore human thought onward from savage into barbarian and civilized life, we find a state of theory more conformed to positive science, but in itself less complete and consistent. Far on into civilization, men still act as though in some half-meant way they believed in souls or ghosts of objects, while nevertheless their knowledge of physical science is beyond so crude a philosophy. As to the doctrine of souls of plants, fragmentary evidence of the history of its breaking down in Asia has reached us.

In our own day and country, the notion of souls of beasts is to be seen dying out. Animism, indeed, seems to be drawing in its outposts, and concentrating itself on its first and main position, the doctrine of the human soul. This doctrine has undergone extreme modification in the course of culture. It has outlived the almost total loss of one great argument attached to it – the objective reality of apparitional souls or ghosts seen in dreams and visions. The soul has given up its ethereal substance, and become an immaterial entity, "the shadow of a shade." Its theory is becoming separated from the investigations of biology and mental science, which now discuss the phenomena of life and thought, the senses and the intellect, the emotions and the will, on a groundwork of pure experience. There has arisen an intellectual product whose very existence is of the deepest significance, a "psychology" which has no longer anything to do with "soul." The soul's place in modern thought is in the metaphysics of religion, and its especial office there is that of furnishing an intellectual side to the religious doctrine of the future life.

Such are the alterations which have differenced the fundamental animistic belief in its

course through successive periods of the world's culture. Yet it is evident that, notwithstanding all this profound change, the conception of the human soul is, as to its most essential nature, continuous from the philosophy of the savage thinker to that of the modern professor of theology. Its definition has remained from the first that of an animating, separable, surviving entity, the vehicle of individual personal existence. The theory of the soul is one principal part of a system of religious philosophy which unites, in an unbroken line of mental connexion, the savage fetish-worshipper and the civilized Christian. The divisions which have separated the great religions of the world into intolerant and hostile sects are for the most part superficial in comparison with the deepest of all religious schisms, that which divides Animism from Materialism.

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Lastly, a few words of explanation may be offered as to the topics which this survey has included and excluded. To those who have been accustomed to find theological subjects dealt with on a dogmatic, emotional, and ethical, rather than an ethnographic scheme, the present investigation may seem misleading, because one-sided. This one-sided treatment, however, has been adopted with full consideration. Thus, though the doctrines here examined bear not only on the development but the actual truth of religious systems, I have felt neither able nor willing to enter into this great argument fully and satisfactorily, while experience has shown that to dispose of such questions by an occasional dictatorial phrase is one of the most serious of errors. The scientific value of descriptions of savage and barbarous religions, drawn up by travellers and especially by missionaries, is often lowered by their controversial tone, and by the affectation of infallibility with which their relation to the absolutely true is settled. There is something pathetic in the simplicity with which a narrow student will judge the doctrines of a foreign religion by their antagonism or conformity to his own orthodoxy, on points where utter difference of opinion exists among the most learned and enlightened scholars.

The systematization of the lower religions, the reduction of their multifarious details to the few and simple ideas of primitive philosophy which form the common groundwork of them all, appeared to me an urgently needed contribution to the science of religion. This work I have carried out to the utmost of my power, and I can now only leave the result in the hands of other students, whose province it is to deal with such evidence in wider schemes of argument.

Again, the intellectual rather than the emotional side of religion has here been kept in view. Even in the life of the rudest savage, religious belief is associated with intense emotion, with awful reverence, with agonizing terror, with rapt ecstasy when sense and thought utterly transcend the common level of daily life. How much the more in faiths where not only does the believer experience such enthusiasm, but where his utmost feelings of love and hope, of justice and mercy, of fortitude and tenderness and self-sacrificing devotion, of unutterable misery and dazzling happiness, twine and clasp round the fabric of religion. Language, dropping at times from such words as soul and spirit their mere philosophic meaning, can use them in full conformity with this tendency of the religious mind, as phrases to convey a mystic sense of transcendent emotion. Yet of all this religion, the religion of vision and of passion, little indeed has been said in these pages, and even that little rather in incidental touches than with purpose. Those to whom religion means above all things religious feeling, may say of my argument that I have written soullessly of the soul, and unspiritually of spiritual things.

Be it so: I accept the phrase not as needing an apology, but as expressing a plan. Scientific progress is at times most furthered by working along a distinct intellectual line, without being tempted to diverge from the main object to what lies beyond, in however intimate connexion. The anatomist does well to discuss bodily structure independently of the world of happiness and misery which depends upon it. It would be thought a mere impertinence for a strategist to preface a dissertation on the science of war, by an enquiry how far it is lawful for a Christian man to bear weapons and serve in the wars. My task has been here not to discuss Religion in all its bearings, but

to portray in outline the great doctrine of Animism, as found in what I conceive to be its earliest stages among the lower races of mankind, and to show its transmission along the lines of religious thought.

The almost entire exclusion of ethical questions from this investigation has more than a mere reason of arrangement. It is due to the very nature of the subject. To some the statement may seem startling, yet the evidence seems to justify it, that the relation of morality to religion is one that only belongs in its rudiments, or not at all, to rudimentary civilization. The comparison of savage and civilized religions brings into view, by the side of a deep-lying resemblance in their philosophy, a deep-lying contrast in their practical action on human life. So far as savage religion can stand as representing natural religion, the popular idea that the moral government of the universe is an essential tenet of natural religion simply falls to the ground. Savage animism is almost devoid of that ethical element which to the educated modern mind is the very mainspring of practical religion. Not, as I have said, that morality is absent from the life of the lower races. Without a code of morals, the very existence of the rudest tribe would be impossible; and indeed the moral standards of even savage races are to no small extent well-defined and praiseworthy. But these ethical laws stand on their own ground of tradition and public opinion, comparatively independent of the animistic belief and rites which exist beside them. The lower animism is not immoral, it is unmoral. For this plain reason, it has seemed desirable to keep the discussion of animism, as far as might be, separate from that of ethics. The general problem of the relation of morality to religion is difficult, intricate, and requiring an immense array of evidence, and may be perhaps more profitably discussed in connexion with the ethnography of morals . . .

The essential connexion of theology and morality is a fixed idea in many minds. But it is one of the lessons of history that subjects may maintain themselves independently for ages, till the event of coalescence takes place. In the course of history, religion has in various ways attached to itself matters small and great outside its central scheme, such as prohibition of special meats, observance of special days, regulation of marriage as to kinship, division of society into castes, ordinance of social law and civil government. Looking at religion from a political point of view, as a practical influence on human society, it is clear that among its greatest powers have been its divine sanction of ethical laws, its theological enforcement of morality, its teaching of moral government of the universe, its supplanting the "continuance-doctrine" of a future life by the "retribution-doctrine" supplying moral motive in the present. But such alliance belongs almost or wholly to religions above the savage level, not to the earlier and lower creeds. It will aid us to see how much more the fruit of religion belongs to ethical influence than to philosophical dogma, if we consider how the introduction of the moral element separates the religions of the world, united as they are throughout by one animistic principle, into two great classes, those lower systems whose best result is to supply a crude childlike natural philosophy, and those higher faiths which implant on this the law of righteousness and of holiness, the inspiration of duty and of love.