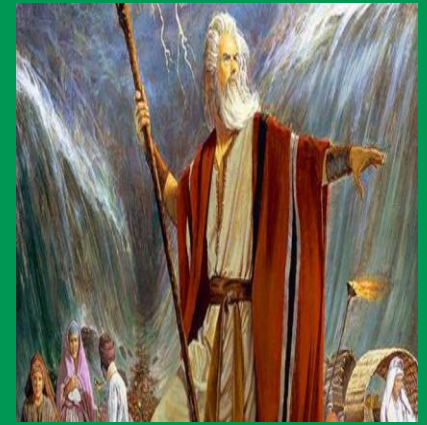
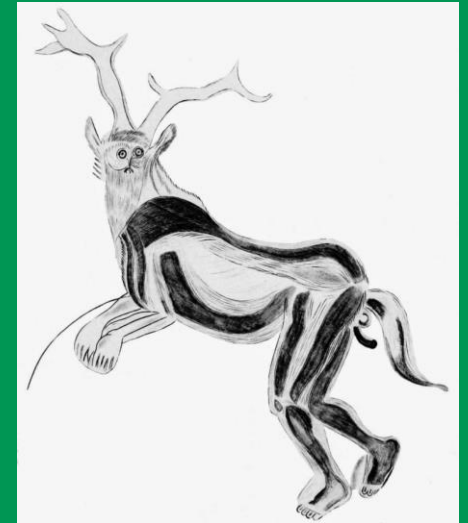
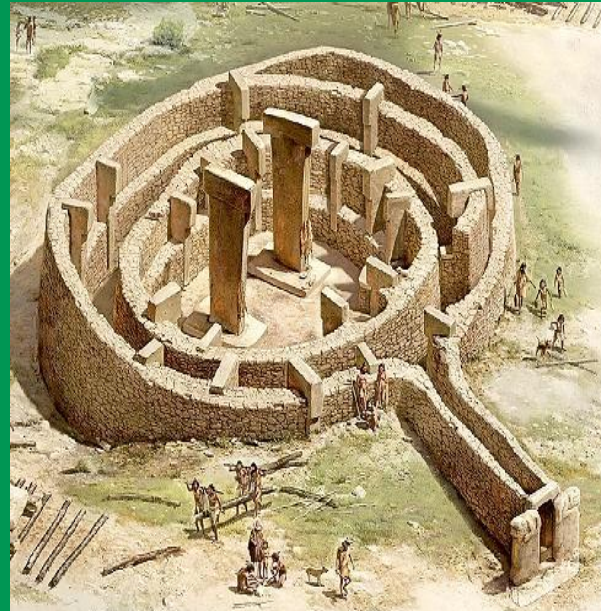
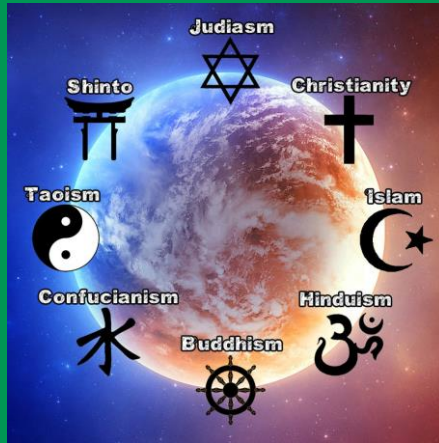


The History of Religion



Introduction to part 1: The Part played by Religion in the Transition from Ape to Humanity



What is Religion?

- × Oxford dictionary: Action or conduct indicating belief in, obedience to, and reverence for a god, gods, or similar superhuman power
- × “a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate men to the ultimate conditions of his existence”



- 4 ‘Areas’ of Life:
- Ritual
- Morality
- Myth
- Altered States of Consciousness

Ritual: Human and Animal

- Monkeys, elephants and apes have been known to mourn.....the same as a human funeral?
- bird rituals..... The same as human 'mating' rituals/marriage?

Mimesis and Mirror neurons:
"Monkey see monkey do"

The degree of collectiveness is a key qualitative difference between humans and the ritual behaviour of other apes.



The amount of energy and time dedicated to such rituals and the extent to which they are practiced for no 'extrinsic' reason also differentiates human from animal ritual.

"Our traditions are always alive among us, even when we are not dancing; but we work only that we may dance."
Member of the Uito Tribe of South America quoted by Mircea Eliade



Ritual and Play

— ‘Play’ as an evolutionary puzzle:

— Hypotheses:

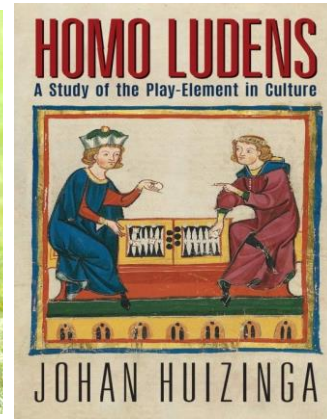
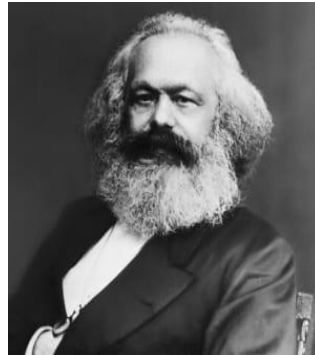
— Motor-skills

— Adult skills

— Bonding/social intelligence

— Stress

— Homo Ludens: How does the unique degree of ‘playfulness’ relate to religion?



“It is true that animals also produce. They build nests and dwellings, like the bee, the beaver, the ant, etc. But they produce only their own immediate needs or those of their young; they produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so, while man produces even when he is free from physical need and **truly produces only in freedom from such need**; they produce only themselves, while man reproduces the whole of nature;” **Marx, Economic and Philosophical manuscripts**

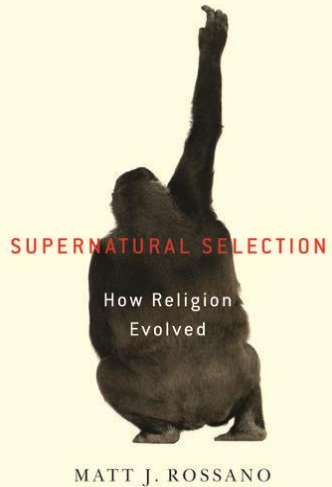
Morality: Uniquely human?

monkey fairness

Experiment repeated with chimpanzees, macaques, marmosets, dogs, wolves, rats, crows and ravens

'Super-Human' beings play an important part in the expansion of morality/community

The sense of being watched/responsible even when alone is a key element in the 'excessive' moral sense among humans



Totem and Taboo, the Primal Crime and the Alpha Male "System"

Christopher Boehm: Reverse Dominance

Chris Knight: the 'human revolution'

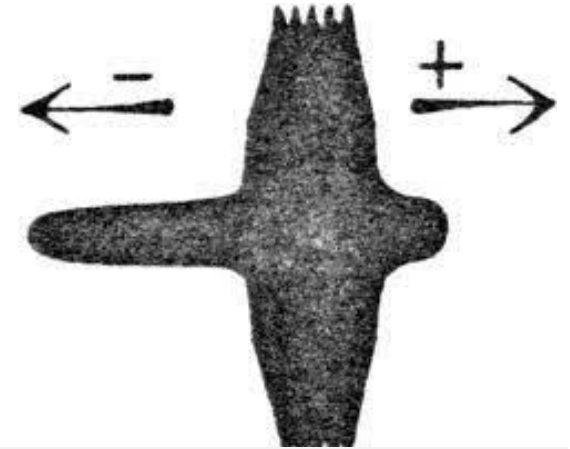
'Own kill rule' and the incest taboo

Myth



Myth can be seen as an organisation of archetypes/emotional responses which are needed for humans to function in the qualitatively more complex human world.

Turtles, chicks and Joseph Campbell



Theories on the evolution of language:

(nativist)

Chomsky

(social)

Dan Everett

Knight/Engels

Music/singing

Altered States of Consciousness

Dolphins:

Singing, dancing and drums

The development, valuing and striving for altered states of consciousness is universal among human cultures (particularly hunter gatherers).

Social cohesion is definitely important but music, worship etc aim not only at union with the 'community' but with **the cosmos itself**.

'Stoned Ape'? (Terrence Mckenna)

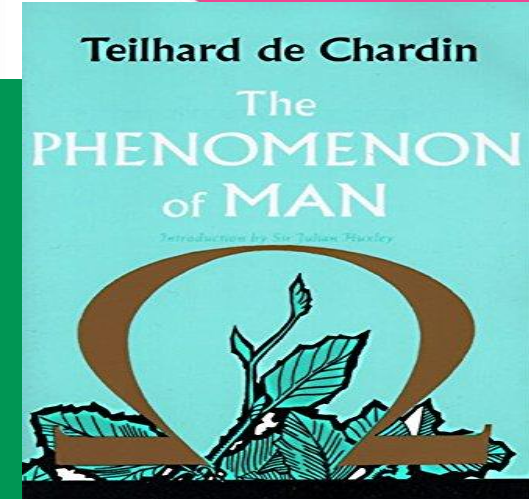
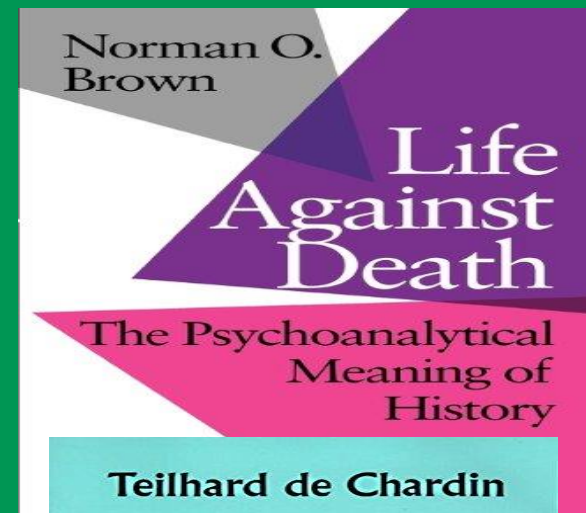
Michael Winkelman modified this theory in a more 'reasonable' form.



Understanding Evolution the history of Religion

What is a *dialectical* approach? And what are its advantages?

“Darwin is an ingenious interpreter of Hegel’s theory of knowledge. The latter is a doctrine of evolution which embraces not only the origin of species of the entire animal world, but also the origin and development of all things. It is altogether a **cosmical theory of evolution. We have as little right to blame Hegel for his obscurity as Darwin for not having exhausted all knowledge with regard to the origin of species.” Joseph Dietzgen,**



2 books which attempt to put the history of humanity in its ‘cosmic context’ . The aim of this course?

Thank you

