

**Worldviews  
in  
Small Scale Oral  
Societies**

# **Worldviews in Peasant Societies**

# **Worldviews in Modern Societies**

# TRIBAL SOCIETIES

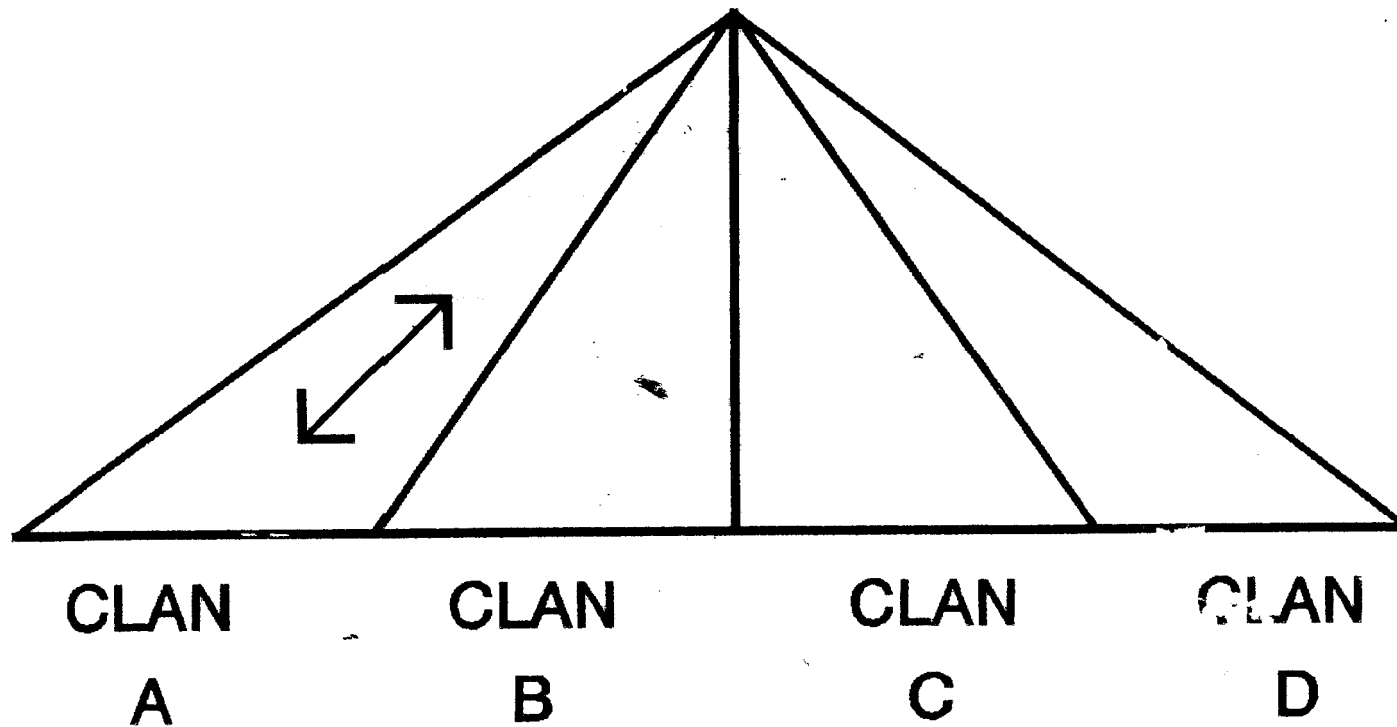
## **1. SIMPLE SUBSISTENCE TECHNOLOGY:**

- *small population*
- *less densely populated*
- *live in harmony with nature*
- *simple subsistence technology*

## **2. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION BASED ON KINSHIP TIES:**

- family and kin play a major role in life.*
- kinship is the basis of social organization: extended families, lineages, clans, tribe.*
- ancestors or 'living dead', and unborn are present in everyday life.*
- kinship ties may be extended to animals and plants in totemic rites.*
- kinship ties are used to handle social crises like death and disasters.*

## TRIBAL SOCIETIES



- strong kin based groups
- minimum social hierarchy
- vertical care and communication within kin groups

### **3. STRONG GROUP ORIENTATION:**

- *strong sense of group solidarity and responsibility.*
- *failure leads to a sense of shame, not guilt.*
- *important decisions are made by group leaders.*
- *ostracism is the ultimate punishment.*

#### **4. MINIMAL SOCIAL HIERARCHY:**

- *leadership is by tribal elders and chiefs.*
- *strong obligation to share everything.*
- *communication between top and bottom of the society.*

#### **5. ASSOCIATIONS:**

- *age grades*
- *gender associations*
- *secret societies*



## **6. ORAL SOCIETIES:**

- *store information in memories, songs, stories, rituals.*
- *value spoken sound sounds.*
- *tie forms and meanings in symbols.*

## **7. WHOLISTIC APPROACH TO LIFE:**

- *little specialization.*
- *religion at the center of everything.*

## **8. RELIGION:**

- *distant high god, this world full of capricious spirits, ancestors, unborn, and lesser gods.*
- *supernatural powers such as magic, witchcraft, evil eye, curses, sorcery.*
- *focus on existential questions: explain life, death, disease in life now.*
- *seek guidance through divination, omens, dreams, visions, shamen.*
- *seek fertility, wellbeing and harmony with nature here and now.*
- *use many and contradictory explanations.*
- *primary concern is POWER.*

# DEBATE ON "THE PRIMITIVE MIND"

## 1. COMTE:

- father of positive science
- theory of mental evolution

## 2. MORGAN AND TYLOR:

- mental evolution -> cultural evolution

## 3. LEVY-BRUHL:

- mentality based on association and linkages

## 4. RIVERS, BOAS AND RADIN

- common mentality of all humanity

## 5. MALINOWSKI

- sacred (religion, magic) versus profane (science) logic

## L. LEVY-BRUHL

1926 How Natives Think.

### 1. LOGIC OF LINKAGE OR CONNECTEDNESS

Person - Shadow - Soul

Person - Group

Person - Animal (totemism)

Person - Image

Person ~~←~~ Name

Person - Land

Person - Objects (hair, clothing)

Spoken Word - Rite - Reality

Dream - Reality

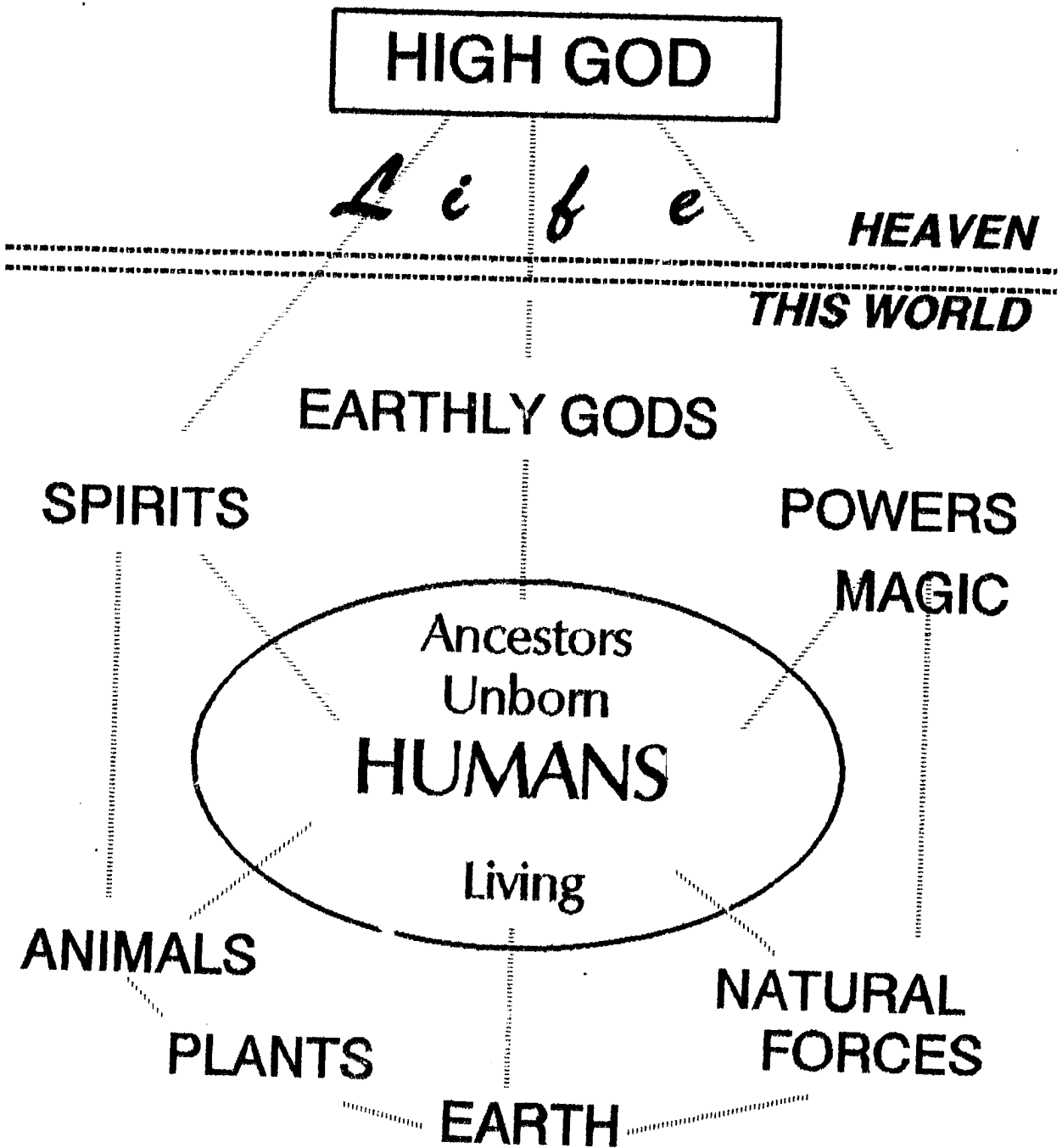
Curse - Reality

# **TRIBAL WORLDVIEW**

- **earthly spirits: earth and sky are full of spirits**
- **these are capricious, so humans must placate them**
- **there are battles between different groups and tribes**
- **tribes have territories and territorial gods who fight for them**
- **the focus is on humans and good lives on this earth**
- **evil is misfortune**

# ANIMISTIC WORLDVIEW

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# **WORLDVIEW DIFFERENCES**

## **TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

### ***Organic Analogy***

- value relationships
- transactional
- less predictable world
- adapt to circumstances  
accept failures as  
beyond our control
- morality – maintaining  
good relationships

## **MODERN SOCIETIES**

### ***Mechanistic analogy***

- value order
- controlling
- highly predictable world
- plan, set goals, hold  
people responsible for  
failures
- morality based on  
impersonal laws

## **TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

## **MODERN SOCIETIES**

### ***Wholistic***

- fuzzy relational categories:  
both-and
- no supernatural  
natural split
- little specialization
- culture one whole  
with religion at  
the center

### ***Segmented***

- digital intrinsic categories:  
either-or
- supernatural  
natural dualism
- high specialization
- culture divided into  
domains: public-  
private, religion-  
politics-economics-



## **TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

### ***Group Orientated***

- sense of corporate, related self
- stress harmony
- group decision making
- group ownership
- sharing
- strong sense of identity

## **MODERN SOCIETIES**

### ***Individual Centered***

- sense of self-made self
- stress self-fulfillment
- personal decision making
- individual ownership
- self-reliance
- search for identity, loneliness

## **TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

## **MODERN SOCIETIES**

### ***Concrete-functional Logic***

- focus on wholes
- look at concrete relationships
- analogical logic
- stories, proverbs
- link forms and meanings in signs

### ***Abstract-analytical Logic***

- break into parts
- look at abstract analytical categories
- algorithmic logic
- propositions, proofs
- separate forms from meanings in signs

## **TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

### ***Ritualistic-Mythic***

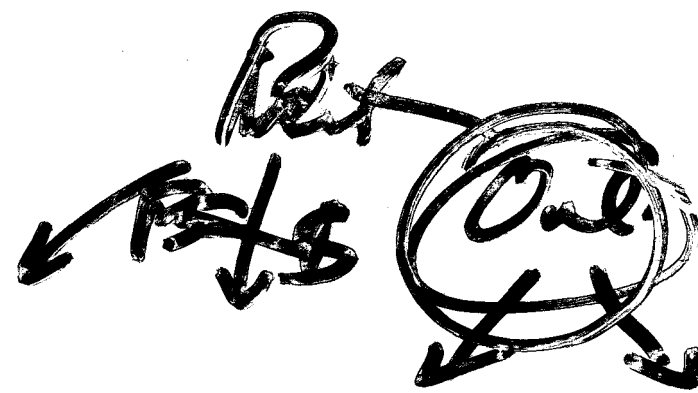
- world is full of mystery
- everything is linked

## **MODERN SOCIETIES**

### ***Verbal-Propositional***

- world is direct and immediate
- everything is discrete

→ HUMAN  
TRIBAL SOCIETIES



5. ORAL SOCIETIES:

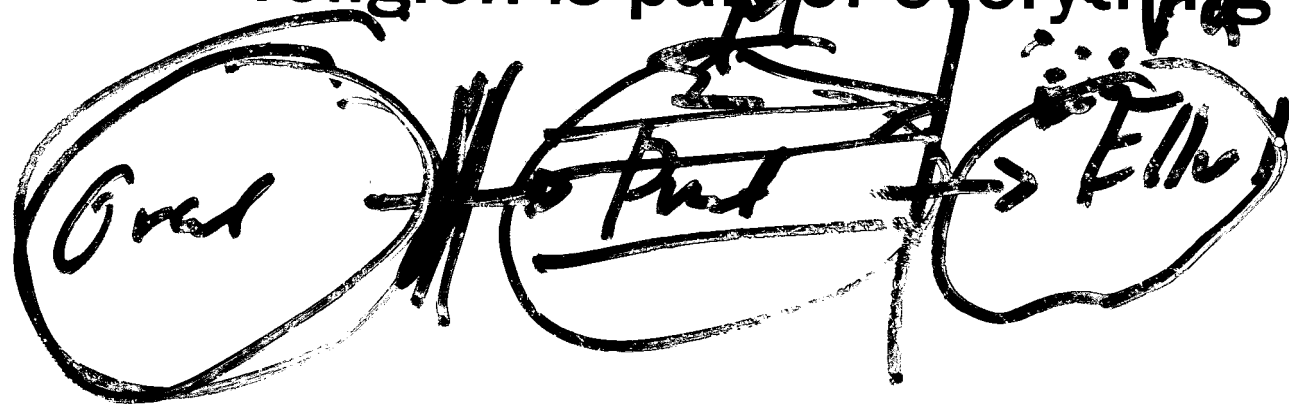
- store information in memories using songs, stories, rituals, proverbs
- tie forms and meaning in signs

6. WHOLISTIC VIEW OF LIFE:

- little specialization
- religion is part of everything



Oral



# TRIBAL SOCIETIES



## 7. RELIGION:

- distant high god, this world is full of capricious spirits, ancestors
- supernatural powers are widespread: witchcraft, evil eye, magic, mana
- focus on existential questions that deal with this life
- seek well-being, harmony, peace
- concern is power, not rational consistency

# **WORLDVIEW DIFFERENCES**

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## ***TRADITIONAL***

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## ***MODERN***

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### **1. Organic Focus**

- value relationships
- less predictable wrld.
- transactional
- adapt to fate, and circumstances; accept failures as beyond our control, or as intentional acts be people, spirits, ancestors, etc.

### **Mechanical Focus**

- value possessions
- highly predictable wrld.
- control
- plan, set goals, hold people responsible for failures

# **WORLDVIEW DIFFERENCES**

## **TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

### ***Organic Analogy***

- value relationships
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beyond our control
- morality – maintaining  
good relationships

## **MODERN SOCIETIES**

### ***Mechanistic analogy***

- value order
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people responsible for  
failures
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impersonal laws

## **2. Wholistic**

- supernatural  
natural
- animistic zone

## **3. Concrete- Functional Logic**

- intuitive, circular  
logic
- stories, parables
- form = meaning

## **Dualistic**

- supernatural  
natural
- excluded middle

## **Abstract, Analytical, Algorithmic Logic**

- analytical, linear logic
- abstract propositions
- form/meaning



#### **4. Ritual-Myth-Totem**

- mystery
- nondiscursive commun.

#### **Verbal-Logical**

- little mystery
- discursive communic.

#### **5. Group Oriented**

- = sharing
- corporate sense of related self
- strong sense of identity
- group ownership

#### **Individualism**

- self reliance
- definite sense of constructive self
- isolation, anomie, alienation
- private property

#### **6. Sound Oriented**

#### **Visual Oriented**

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## **MODERN SOCIETIES**

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## **7. Particularist**

- treat each thing as particular

## **8. Existential**

- focus on here and now and self

## **9. Space**

- land, people, god are sacred

## **Universalist**

- look for universals

## **Ultimate**

- focus on cosmic story

## **Time**

- secular time and space