

# The Evolution of the Idea of God from the Aryans to the Semites

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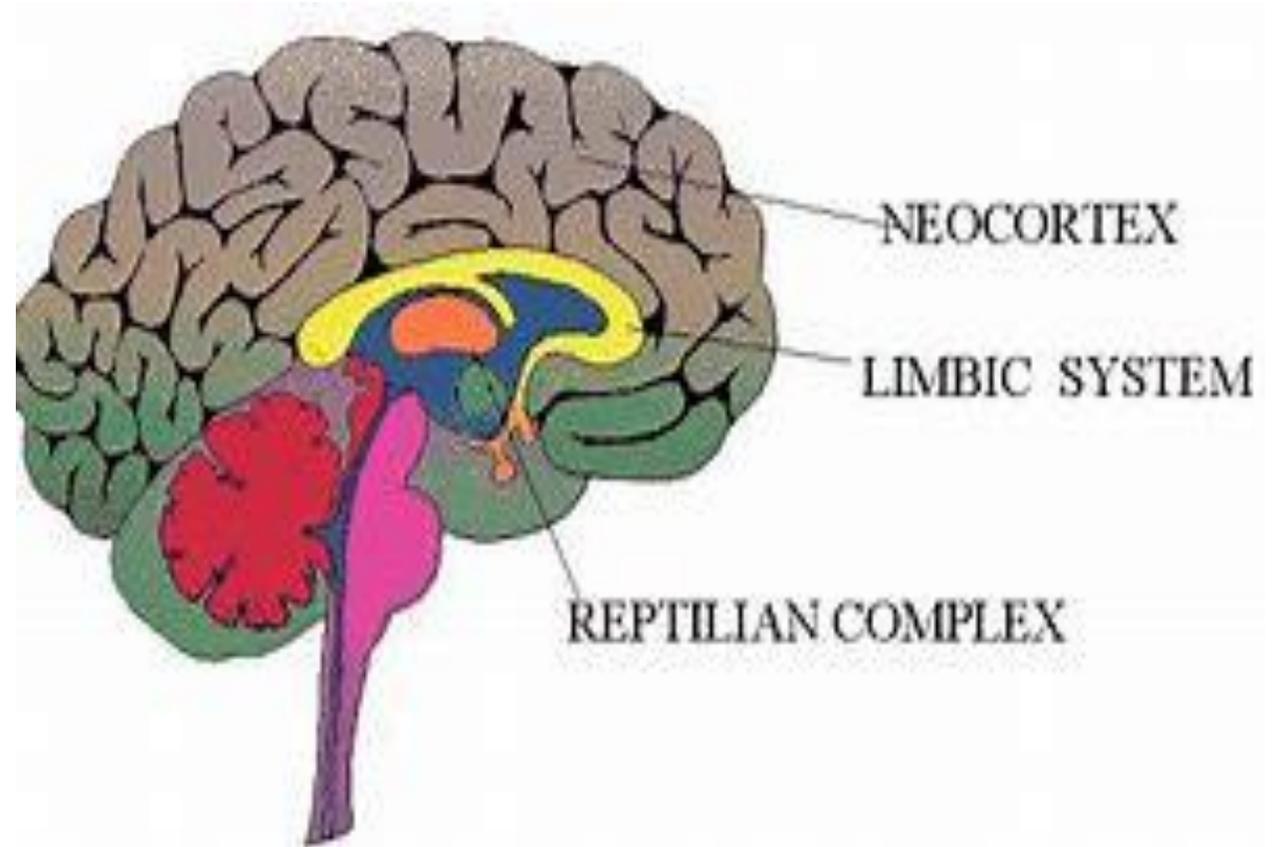
## What are faith and religion?

- 1) Savages' religion do not involve faith rather only rites.
- 2) only advanced religions involve faith: the faith in a superior entity: a God: the *unseen*.
- “Religion” says Spencer, “consists of the belief in the omnipresence of something that goes beyond the intellect.

In ancient times faith was an almost unknown concept. There was no faith or creed, even though people needed to ask for protection during their life. They invoked animals, stones, through rites and not through faith: 1) Totemism, 2) Animism, 3) Naturism.

- But before developing any faith, man had to develop his social organization, his language, his ability to use his hands to work with tools. In brief, his brain had to go through a more sophisticated phase involving also language with its system of symbolic communication. The part of the brain included while processing higher order cognitive functions connected with religion, is the neocortex. Mirror neurons also play their own part. Jay Gould suggests that religion may have grown out of evolutionary changes favoring larger brains, thus developing group coherence, which inevitably suggested the notion of mortality. Ontogeny and Phylogeny, 1977.

# Neocortex



Totemism: J. G. Fraser, J. Long, B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, G. Grey, C. Strehlow.

- **Totem** means 'token,' implying group-relationship; people are joined by a bond of special kinship, not because of blood relations but they are kin only if they bear the same name. The totem can be transmitted through a maternal, paternal or even through a "mythic ancestor ... ." 90 Fraser.
- "Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities; rituals are ways of acting that are generated only within assembled groups ..."
- Durkheim: "religion is something eminently social. Wherever the society has become sedentary ... the totem is carved on wood and walls."
- The totem also has a religious character."96.... Touching it can cure wounds, illness, etc.. It confers important powers on the totemic species, giving strength, courage, good health, etc.
- Animal or plants drawn on a totem are sacred. Spencer and Gillen. 104

# 1) Animism and 2) Naturism

- 1) For the primitives their mental representations – whether awake or asleep, are equally significant. Dream and waking images are alike; they are the tangible experience of the same person, so each person has a double entity: his body and his self – a soul. This soul is made of a kind of ethereal matter, since it can escape the body, and go somewhere else and meet somebody else. “The soul is even thought to replicate the body’s accidental deformities ... “49 apoplexy, catalepsy, ecstasy were associated to the dream, viewed as a temporary loss of consciousness. The soul, being attached to the body, is not yet a spirit, so it is not object of cult. It becomes sacred when it leaves the body after death, and it will become an evil spirit or a good one, influencing the human life. The spirit can even turn into a divinity, depending on “the importance of the effects ascribed to it.”50 This evolution of the soul turning into divinity is caused by death, so the cult of the dead – the ancestors’ soul started. The rite was the funeral and the first sacrifice was the food offered to the dead, and the first altar was the grave.51 His infantile mind could not distinguish between animate and inanimate beings, so even inanimate had a soul that influenced their phenomena.
- 2) “The souls of men are responsible for health or illness, ...; the souls of things are used to explain phenomena of the physical world: the course of rivers, or the stars, the growth of plants, the reproduction of animals.” says Taylor. “Man needed the help of nature to survive, so he learned to believe in their spirits to be able to “implore their help through offerings and prayers.”

## The Veda — Our Indo-European ancestors — Agni The God Fire

- “Guard us, O Agni, with those boundless glories as with a hundred fortresses of iron” (Hymn xxxi). “... we shall be able to see how Agni, the god of fire (the supreme god of the Aryan Pantheon), being at first but one by the side of many other gods, develops into something much higher. He does not remain one out of many gods. He becomes in the end a supreme god, *the* Supreme God, till his very name is thrown away, or is recognized as but one out of many names by which ancient seers in their helpless language called that which is, the One and All” (Müller:48). In the Veda we go through different religious phases from nature to nature’s gods, and finally to the God of nature. He dwells among the mortals as a guest, as a benefactor of the house, a messenger; he helps men in battles. He has wings, a golden beard and hair, a burning forehead and a tongue made up of many flames. He moves quickly. When he leaves this material shape, He evolves into a supreme deity: the only one God. From polytheism they evolved into henotheism, in the Indian society, in which the god invoked did not cancel the others but, for that particular occasion, he stands alone and supreme.

# Judaism,

# Christianity

# Islam

The symbol of fire occurs in many other religions, and the one which is the monotheistic faith par excellence and the really first one is Judaism. The Hebrews also had to go through many phases before fully accepting Yahweh, as the only one God of the Children of Israel. Yahweh was one of the *El's* sons, to whom *El* assigned the people of Israel. At first, he was called *El Elion*, or *El Olam*, or *El Ro'i*, and only seven centuries later, when He appeared to Moses, his name changed into Yahweh, who firmly pointed out: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20: 2-3). "The only people who ever invented or evolved a pure monotheism at first hand were the Jews" said Grant Allen in *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, Forgotten books, 2015: 180.

• Judaism is the real true religion which first established moral principles man has to follow in order to respect: 1) God, 2) the others, and 3) himself; in other words to lead a true life. Soon followed Christianity enriched by Jesus Christ, a real human being, who taught men to live a pure life, thus, reducing the distance between the *seen* and the *unseen*; after his death he became a spirit and, by being the son of God, he acquired supernatural powers capable to save the whole of humankind. Islam the third in order of time but the essence of the others. The Qur'ān seems to englobe the main points of Judaism and Christianity not only through the sūras recalling the main religious figures (Ibrahim, Maryam, Moses, etc.), but with its principles, too.

In brief, faith is the essence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is the capacity to believe in the *unseen* and not to the *seen* as it happened with Totemism, Animism and Naturism

- Thank you very much for your patience