

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-33991-9 - Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text

Brian Morris

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All the great thinkers who have set the intellectual tenor of our times – Hegel, Marx, Tylor, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber, and Freud – had a lifelong and abiding interest in the nature and significance of religion, and many of their crucial works were in fact devoted to explicating its origin and function. In this important, scholarly, wide-ranging, and readable text, Brian Morris provides a lucid outline of the nature of the explanations of religious phenomena offered by these writers, together with an account of the historical and cultural context in which they were developed, and of their relationship to the thinkers' broader social theories. In so doing, he also unravels the many theoretical strategies in the study of religion that have been developed and explored by later anthropologists, cogently discussing functionalist, intellectualist, symbolist, interpretive, structuralist, psychological, and ideological approaches. As well as covering the classical authors and the debates surrounding their work, Dr. Morris offers perceptive discussions of more contemporary scholars, such as Jung, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Eliade, Lévi-Strauss, Evans-Pritchard, Douglas, Turner, Geertz, and Godelier.

Written from the standpoint of critical sympathy, and free of jargon, this book – the first of its kind since Evans-Pritchard's pioneering *Theories of Primitive Religion* – is an invaluable guide to the writings on religion of all the major figures in anthropology. It will be indispensable for all students of anthropology and of the social sciences generally as well as for those interested in comparative religion.

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**To my friends
George and Helen Welsh**

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For your teachers, they must be nature and history.

William Morris, *The Lesser Arts* (1887)