

Since the awareness they felt did not seem to be a body part or substance like **uvulas** or **lymph**, they came up with a new, invisible, “part” and called it **Spirit** or **Soul** (at least, that’s what we call it now).

A few of the humans became very curious about this indeed. After all, there were many new questions to answer. Where does this soul come from? In what part of the body does it live? Why is it here? Where does it go **when we die**? What spirits exist besides those we see? What powers do they have? ...Someone clearly needed to study these weighty issues...

One hot Summer day around noon, while hunting (or perhaps gathering), Ugh (remember Ugh?) approached his brother-in-law Grugh. “Hey Grugh,” he said, “Mind if I knock off for the rest of the month and ponder the mysteries of the universe?”

Grugh gave Ugh his best sidelong sneer, “What’r ya gonna eat? Haw!” and popped Ugh a good one on the temple with his crude hunting (or perhaps gathering) implements. And to think Ugh had chosen to ask Grugh because he was so easygoing.

**Clearly, Ugh needed to find a way to make his career choice of “Professional Wondering” more acceptable to his peers.**

He had to make others interested enough in these deep questions to **support** Ugh so he could work full-time toward answering them.

*This thing about getting others interested turns out to be a difficult problem.* Ugh could not believe how bored people became when he tried to tell them his guesses about the soul. Frequently he got popped on the temple.

It seemed people were only interested in themselves, in the tribe, in the **here-and-now**. Food, shelter, sex, sleep. They were Content, not Curious. And they did not see any reason they should each have to work that much harder hunting and gathering just so Ugh could daydream his days away.

Disgruntled, Ugh had to keep pulling his own weight and so he confined his wondering to his spare time, always looking for a way to justify **Full-Time Wondering**. He could always renounce the tribe and live the life of an ascetic, a wandering mendicant. But mendicants and ascetics hadn’t been invented yet. Besides, it would **suck eggs**.

**Now here’s where it gets interesting:** One day Ugh was pondering the mysteries of the soul *at the same time* that he was trying to make this hobby more **valuable** to the tribe...

“I know I’m on to something here,” he thought, “but those idiots don’t care! When they see what I find out they’ll think twice!” and similar angry ruminations. Which led him to; “What would cause them to need me? How could my knowledge help them? Could it help them to know things about their spirits, or other spirits? Could certain actions make their spirits stronger, live longer? Could unseen spirits be petitioned for some benefit?” Of course he didn’t use these exact words. His exact words were “Mffddf. Grrrgnn. Rif!” but the gist is the same.

Ugh didn’t know it, but he was experiencing a **Conflict-of-Interest**. He was mixing his desire for *knowledge of the unknown* with his desire to be *valued by others*, and he never realized that he was unconsciously **altering his theories** to help meet his own need to be valued.

He began experimenting with magic spells and prayers to supplicate the unseen spirits in order to benefit the tribe, to strengthen his own spirit or just to impress babes. Amazingly (or not so amazingly, considering his conflict of interest) he “discovered” several prayers and spells that seemed to work! When he became sick, he cast a spell and sure enough, he seemed to get better! He tried it on several members of the tribe and frequently they got better too! People began to pay more attention to this mystical guy who studied spirits. Spirits became “cool!”

By and by he addressed some other questions in the same manner, like Where does the soul go

after death? Now, Ugh’s would never have said something as self-serving as “The soul spends eternity either tormented in a Hell or basking in a wonderful Heaven, depending on how much they believed my theories during their lives.” No. That would be much too obviously self-serving. No-one would have believed it. Ugh wouldn’t have believed it. It makes no sense, anyway. Why should there be such bizarre places, and why would your beliefs determine which place you go? But with his newly acquired habit of Conflict-of-Interest he unconsciously allowed himself to go part way: “After you die, you join the ancestors (the “Old Ones”), assuming they let you. If you have **appeased** them sufficiently during your life. Otherwise you wander as a miserable ghost forever.”

“But Ugh,” said Grugh (now Ugh’s chief deciple), “How do we appease the ancestors?”

“Funny you should ask,” replied Ugh, “It just so happens I chat with them from time to time in my various extremely subtle and complex ceremonies and incantations, and the Old Ones keep me posted on the appropriate supplications, prayers and sacrifices to show that you really care about them. Gee, I’m starved; got anything to eat around here?”

Ugh was the first **minister**, of a tribal kind now called a Witch Doctor. But he had the key elements of modern priests and ministers: a genuine interest in the unknown combined with an intense desire to support his activities, resulting in theories that tend to cause people to support it.

In time, Ugh the Witch Doctor became very influential in tribal affairs. Any time a major decision had to be made, Ugh was consulted so that the ancestors could advise (and would not become angry!). Individuals would seek him out for personal issues of all kinds.

Now don’t you think for a minute that old Ugh was trying to deceive anyone. He believed it all himself; **such is the power of Conflict-of-Interest**. He felt that he was such an expert in the

spiritual world that if he had a hunch about spirits, it was almost certainly true. The fact is, his Conflict-of-Interest ruined his scientific mind.

Now boys and girls, the “technology” of religious persuasion has improved just a tad since then, and all through the magic of Conflict-of-Interest:

**Goal:** Maximize the worship of Jesus (and, purely incidentally, our organization’s power and influence) by worship promotion & revenue enhancement.

**How:** Appeal to all human emotions possible: *Love, hate, fear, guilt, greed, envy.*

**Examples:**

• **Love:** “Jesus loves you so much! He is the Prince of Peace, the Lamb. He has saved us all! (Don’t you love him, too...?)”

• **Desire:** “Heaven is a place of perfect love, perfect bliss, where all our problems are solved, etc. etc. It is *the* place to go after death.”

• **Fear:** “Hell, on the other hand, is a place of eternal torment, where you’ll go if you don’t worship enough. You don’t want to go there, do you?”

• **Hate:** “Satan steals souls away to Hell. He is the evil one who causes most of the worlds problems. Who’s souls does he steal? Those who don’t worship Jesus enough.

• **Guilt:** “God sent his only begotten son Jesus to die on the cross just so that **you** could have the **opportunity** to be saved from Hell. (By worshipping him and supporting our organization, of course. Yes I realize it makes no sense for God to do this, but that’s what my bosses tell me to say- *Mffidpglggg!*)”

They layer this with additional instructions that God demands that we have total faith in “his word” (such as the Bible); meaning that we can’t question it. The teachings are themselves considered sacred. (Clever, aren’t they?)

Some ministers are so bothered by the self-serving nature of their organizations that they quit, looking instead for a less extreme church. Few (but some) realize that all religious organizations suffer from some degree of conflict of interest; as we have seen, it is their basic motivation!

What can you do? You need to arm yourself with the most important tool in dealing with religious claims: **skepticism**. Learn to recognize self-serving claims like those we’ve discussed. Learn to keep an **open mind** for discussion purposes while still maintaining your core values. Most important; be sure to keep these issues active in your mind: read, discuss, and **wonder!**

**Secular Humanism** is a modern name given to the age-old movement away from the religious domination of the human mind, away from the manipulative and erroneous messages spewing from pulpits everywhere. While some secular humanists are atheists or agnostics, many are strong believers in God. They see through their church’s desire to promote itself. They realize that god isn’t really likely to punish them just for not worshipping enough. Many don’t go to church much or feel too guilty about it, but prefer to keep God in their hearts. If this describes you, then congratulations; you are a secular humanist!

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# On The Origins of Religion



***Just where did faith in God come from? The fanciful history presented here might just change the way you worship...***

Once upon a time, long ago, lived the **Early Humans**. And the Humans were primitive, and Low-Tech, with names like Ugh and Grugh, and could just manage to bury flowers with their dead, paint on cave walls, and chip their crude flint tools.

And some of the humans were **Curious**, and others were **Content**. And those who were curious wondered *who they were*. “Who are we?” they wondered. They wondered what this awareness thing was all about. They noticed that they had **emotions**, and could act on them. And when they saw that their emotions were similar, but not identical, to others in the tribe, they realized that each person had their own separate **personality**.

And they saw the deer, and the lion, and the elephant, and the fish, and though they did not act exactly the same as humans, there were similarities such as expressions of anger, love and so on. And so they supposed that the deer and the lion and the elephant and the fish all had the gift of awareness also, although perhaps a different type of awareness.