Religious Systems
Religion

- Is a set of cultural knowledge of the supernatural that people use to cope with the ultimate problems of human existence
RELIGION

• Consists of a Belief in the existence of the Supernatural and of ways of dealing with it.

• One way of explaining and responding to the unknown
Religion

• Religion is a universal

• People look to answer the question “WHY”

• Explaining and responding to the unknown
  – Problems of Meaning
  – Problems of Death
  – Problems of Fate
The Anthropological Perspective

- Anthropologists describe and seek general propositions about religion
- does not evaluate particular religious systems
- Or argue the existence of God, but studies the beliefs and attitudes that go along with the cultural beliefs
RELIGION

• In the anthropological view,
  – religion is a part of culture
  – human-made part of the universe

  – Anthropocentric View
  • humans see themselves as the center of all things
The Behavioral Environment

- Environment as conceived by the individual
- Includes animate and inanimate elements
- The individual does not react to the environment but to the behavioral environment that the culture has constructed

- The thoughts and behaviors are adaptive
Functions of Religion

• Explanatory function - religion answers questions for which there are no other answers

• Validation function - it supports the basic institutions, values, goals of a culture - Social Control

• Integration function - religion pulls the members of the group together
Religion and Culture Change

• Revitalization Movements
  – social movements often of religious nature with the purpose of totally reforming a society
  – associated with rapid culture change
  – domination of western society over non-Western society
Ghost Dance

- Cultural Stress from outside culture
- time of cultural distortion
- religious movement with a “promised leader”
Cargo Cults - Melanesia

- Western goods into the island
- Europeans in control because they controlled the cargo
- Explain cargo supernaturally
- Cargo cults imitated European actions
  - built landing strips, towers
  - built docks