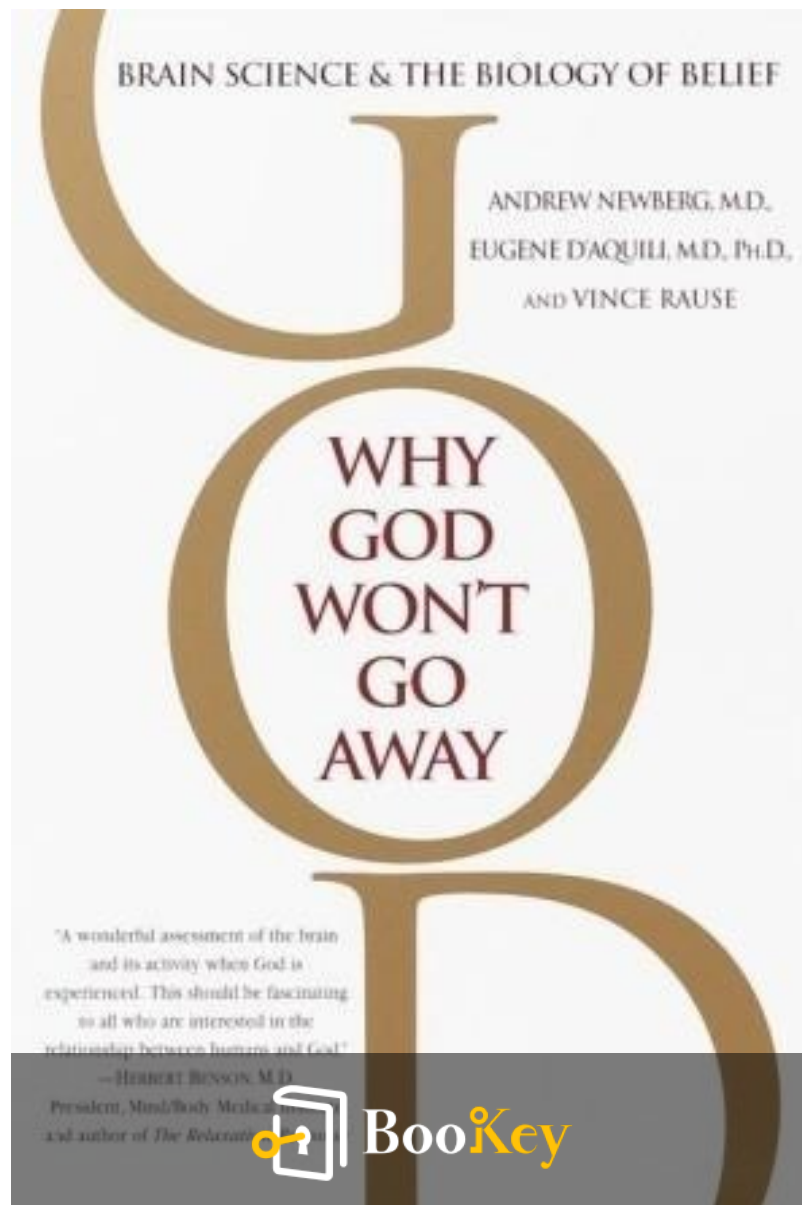


# Why God Won'T Go Away PDF

**Andrew B. Newberg**



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# Why God Won'T Go Away

Exploring the Neuroscience Behind Our Enduring  
Spiritual Yearning.

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## About the book

In "Why God Won't Go Away," researchers Andrew Newberg and Eugene d'Aquili delve into the enduring human desire to connect with a greater power, exploring why over seventy percent of Americans continue to believe in God even in our modern, technologically advanced society. This groundbreaking work introduces readers to neurotheology, an innovative field examining the intricate relationship between spirituality and the brain. By merging cutting-edge scientific research with profound insights into consciousness and spirituality, Newberg and d'Aquili illuminate the miraculous neurological processes that shape our perception of the divine. This compelling book challenges readers to consider both the miraculous and the biological aspects of humanity's lasting bond with God.

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## About the author

Andrew B. Newberg is a prominent neuroscientist and researcher whose work focuses on the intersection of neuroscience, spirituality, and consciousness. With a medical degree and a background in psychiatry, Newberg has dedicated his career to exploring how religious and mystical experiences can be understood through the lens of brain function and imaging technologies. He is the author of several influential books and has published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals, contributing significantly to the field of neurotheology. Newberg's interdisciplinary approach combines scientific rigor with an open-minded exploration of the spiritual dimensions of human experience, making him a leading voice in the study of how belief systems impact the brain and overall well-being.

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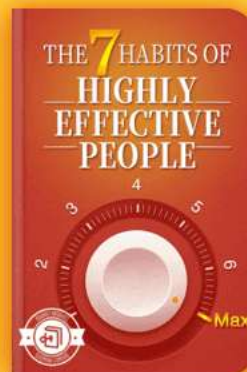


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# Summary Content List

Chapter 1 : A Photograph of God?: An Introduction to the Biology of Belief

Chapter 2 : Brain Machinery: The Science of Perception

Chapter 3 : Brain Architecture: How the Brain Makes the Mind

Chapter 4 : Myth-making: The Compulsion to Create Stories and Beliefs

Chapter 5 : Ritual: The Physical Manifestation of Meaning

Chapter 6 : Mysticism: The Biology of Transcendence

Chapter 7 : The Origins of Religion: The Persistence of a Good Idea 128

Chapter 8 : Realer Than Real: The Mind in Search of Absolutes

Chapter 9 : Why God Won't Go Away: The Metaphor of God and the Mythology of Science

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## Chapter 10 : Epilogue: So Just What Is Neurotheology Anyway?

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# Chapter 1 Summary : A Photograph of God?: An Introduction to the Biology of Belief



## 1A PHOTOGRAPH OF GOD? An Introduction to the Biology of Belief

In a university lab, a young Buddhist meditator named Robert prepares for a deep meditation while researchers Andrew B. Newberg and Dr. Eugene d'Aquili use a length of twine to signal when he reaches a transcendent peak in his practice. Their goal is to explore the neurological connections between religious experiences and brain activity by capturing Robert's brain activity during moments of deep meditation.





Robert, during meditation, describes experiencing a profound connection to all creation, suggesting that his inner self transcends individuality. Despite skepticism from the scientific community about the subjective nature of such experiences, Newberg and d'Aquili believe that these moments can be objectively studied. After monitoring Robert's meditation, they use a SPECT camera to analyze brain activity, revealing significant changes in a brain region responsible for spatial orientation. Increased blood flow in this area correlates with higher brain activity, but Robert's peak meditation shows a marked decrease in this activity, suggesting a potential blinding of the brain's orientation mechanisms.

This decrease indicates that Robert's brain may interpret the absence of sensory information as a dissolution of boundaries between self and the universe, aligning with descriptions of mystical experiences in various cultures. The researchers report similar findings across different subjects, including Franciscan nuns, suggesting that such transcendent experiences are not mere illusions but are grounded in observable neurological processes.

Through their research, Newberg and d'Aquili propose a biological basis for the spiritual urge, raising questions about how evolution has shaped religious experiences. They



theorize that spiritual encounters might be intrinsic to human biology, leading to a shared neurological capacity for achieving a sense of unity with a greater reality.

The central aim of the book is to explore these connections between biology, myth, and spirituality, examining how neurological mechanisms drive the formation of religious beliefs and experiences. Ultimately, the book invites readers to delve into the mysteries of the mind and self, posing fundamental questions about the nature of reality and human experience.

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## Example

**Key Point:** Exploring the neurological connections between spirituality and brain activity can reveal shared human experiences.

**Example:** Imagine sitting in a quiet room, practicing deep meditation like Robert. As you settle into your thoughts, you begin to feel an overwhelming connection to the universe around you. You may notice your sense of self fading, sensations of time slipping away; a profound oneness envelops you. This captivating experience isn't just a fleeting moment; science shows it may be rooted in your brain's biology. The experiments conducted by Newberg and d'Aquili highlight how these extraordinary spiritual feelings correspond with specific brain functions, suggesting that these unique moments of transcendence are not only personal but rather universal experiences that may have evolved as part of our human nature. It's a striking realization that your mind's responses could map onto shared, profound encounters—drawing connections between the spiritual and neurological elements of life.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The relationship between biology and spirituality in human experiences.

**Critical Interpretation:** Newberg and d'Aquili's exploration of the neurological basis for spiritual experiences suggests that such moments may be biologically intrinsic. However, readers should critically assess this viewpoint, understanding that measuring subjective experiences through objective neurological data is inherently complex and might overlook personal, cultural, and existential dimensions. This approach draws from reductionist interpretations in neuroscience, which some scholars like Robert E. Ornstein and V.S. Ramachandran argue can fail to encompass the full richness of human spiritual experiences, indicating the need for caution in claims that all mystical phenomena arise solely from biological processes.



# Chapter 2 Summary : Brain Machinery: The Science of Perception



Section	Summary
Brain Machinery: The Science of Perception	This section discusses the relationship between the brain and perception, illustrated by a robotics experiment showing AI's limitations in perceiving and integrating sensory inputs compared to the complexity of the human brain.
The Complexity of Living Brains	Living brains have intricate neural networks that provide effective perception and reaction to the environment, unlike modern AI, which struggles to match even basic organisms' adaptive behaviors.
Cerebral Cortex: The Seat of Human Nature	The neo-cortex is crucial for higher-order cognitive functions, enabling language, art, and culture through the integration of sensory input to form meaningful perceptions.
Left and Right Hemispheres	The left hemisphere focuses on analytical thinking and language, while the right hemisphere handles intuitive thought. Both are necessary for complex mental operations.
Assembling Perceptions	Sensory data undergoes multiple processing levels in the brain, leading to coherent perceptions through the integration of sensory input, memories, and emotions.
Association Areas and Mystical Potential	Key association areas facilitate mystical experiences by connecting sensory input with emotional and cognitive responses, enhancing our understanding of reality.
The Relationship of Mind and Brain	The interplay between brain processes and the mind emphasizes their interconnectedness, suggesting that mind and brain form a unified entity which underpins spiritual experiences.

## 2 BRAIN MACHINERY: The Science of Perception



In this chapter, the author discusses the intricate relationship between the brain and perception, illustrating significant points through a detailed account of a robotics experiment. In the early 1980s, scientists observed a robot navigated a limited, cluttered space, demonstrating the challenges faced by artificial intelligence in perceiving its environment. The robot's simplistic, visual-based perception made it dependent on changing sensory inputs without the ability to integrate past experiences—resulting in painfully slow progress. This experiment highlighted the limitations of artificial intelligence compared to living organisms, underscoring the complexity of the human brain developed through millions of years of evolution.

## **The Complexity of Living Brains**

The brain's intricate neural networks, built from evolutionary experience, allow organisms to perceive and react to their environments effectively. In contrast, modern artificial intelligence, despite remarkable computational capabilities, struggles to replicate the seamless perception and responsiveness exhibited by even basic life forms like toddlers or animals. The evolution of brains is marked by





increasing complexity, allowing for sophisticated sensory processing and adaptive behaviors that enhance survival.

## **Cerebral Cortex: The Seat of Human Nature**

The cerebral cortex, particularly the neo-cortex, is essential for high-order cognitive functions and defines human intelligence through the ability to create language, art, and culture. The diverse structures within the cerebral cortex work in harmony to bind sensory input and form meaningful perceptions, impacting our experiences and actions significantly.

## **Left and Right Hemispheres**

The left hemisphere is mainly responsible for analytical thinking and language processing, while the right allows for intuitive and holistic thought. Both sides contribute to complex mental operations, demonstrating that understanding relies on the cooperative functioning of the entire brain rather than isolated areas.

## **Assembling Perceptions**



Sensory data undergoes multiple levels of processing within the brain, beginning in primary receptive areas and progressing to secondary and association areas. The latter play a crucial role in integrating sensory input, memories, and emotions into coherent perceptions. This integration process culminates in our conscious experience of the world.

## **Association Areas and Mystical Potential**

The chapter identifies key association areas involved in producing mystical experiences: the visual association area, orientation association area, attention association area, and verbal conceptual association area. These areas interconnect sensory input with emotional and cognitive responses, essential for understanding our reality and fostering spiritual experiences.

## **The Relationship of Mind and Brain**

The author concludes with an exploration of the dynamic interplay between the brain and the mind. The brain generates the mind by processing sensory data into thoughts, emotions, and perceptions. This synergy highlights the profound connection between biological functions and



consciousness, suggesting that the two cannot be cleanly separated. Thus, mind and brain emerge as interconnected aspects of one entity, forming the foundation for spiritual experiences and the mind's mystical potential.

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# **Chapter 3 Summary : Brain Architecture: How the Brain Makes the Mind**

## **3 BRAIN ARCHITECTURE**

### **How the Brain Makes the Mind**

Meister Eckhart, a medieval mystic, highlighted that our understanding of reality is constructed by the brain rather than being direct experiences. The brain processes sensory information, assembling it into thoughts and perceptions, leading to a subjective experience of reality that raises questions about the nature of spiritual experiences. Studies of Tibetan meditators and Franciscan nuns reveal a connection between spiritual experiences and observable brain activity, suggesting that spiritual experiences are neurologically generated but don't negate their existence.

### **Your Arousal and Quiescent Systems**

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The autonomic nervous system comprises two main branches: the sympathetic (arousal) and the parasympathetic (quiescent) systems. They manage essential bodily functions and emotions, working in contrast to balance our responses. Both systems can be activated simultaneously during extraordinary states, including those induced by meditation or rituals, indicating their potential role in spiritual experiences.

## **Autonomic States and Spiritual Experience**

1.

### **Hyperquiescence**

: Extreme relaxation, often achieved through meditation or ritual, leading to a blissful mental state.

2.

### **Hyperarousal**

: Intense excitement and focus. experienced in activities like

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# **Chapter 4 Summary : Myth-making: The Compulsion to Create Stories and Beliefs**

## **MYTH-MAKING: The Compulsion to Create Stories and Beliefs**

The evolution of myth-making can be traced back to our Neanderthal ancestors, who displayed the earliest signs of protoreligious behavior by ceremonially burying their dead, suggesting a complex understanding of death and an early form of belief in an afterlife. This act illustrates that myths are not merely relics of the past but remain foundational to modern religions, encompassing deep truths about human existence.

### **The Nature of Myths**

Myths have a significant role: they offer resolutions to existential dilemmas, helping individuals cope with the fear of death and the mysteries of existence. Joseph Campbell describes myths as ancient yet timeless narratives that reflect



fundamental truths and principles about human experience. They serve to connect people with their inner selves in ways that pure logic cannot achieve.

## **The Cognitive Imperative**

The human brain's evolution has equipped us with a "cognitive imperative"—an intrinsic drive to create meaning from our experiences, especially in the face of uncertainty and fear. This drive is shaped by our brain's advanced capabilities to conceptualize abstract thoughts and anticipate dangers, leading to the need for understanding our mortality and existential concerns through myth.

## **The Biological Basis of Myth-Making**

Myth-making is rooted in specific neurological functions, primarily located in the parietal lobe, which supports causal and binary thinking. These cognitive functions—such as linking events to causes and framing experiences as dualities—form the backbone of myth creation. Early humans, endowed with these cognitive abilities, began to confront and articulate the spiritual dimensions of life, leading to the formation of complex mythologies.



## **The Process of Myth Creation**

The genesis of myth often starts with deep psychological and existential questions that need resolution. When faced with the mystery of death, individuals engage their cognitive capacities to create narratives that reconcile oppositional ideas—life and death, good and evil. This process can be traced to moments of ‘Eureka’ insights, where a sudden realization unites the logical and emotional aspects of thought, generating a powerful sense of belief and community around shared narratives.

## **Universal Themes in Myths**

Cultural similarities across myths suggest that common structural archetypes exist in all human minds. Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell illuminate how essential archetypal motifs—such as creation and resurrection—continuously arise in stories throughout different cultures. This universality points to the underlying neurological processes that inform our mythology.

## **Conclusion**



Myths serve as vital narratives that allow humans to confront and resolve their existential fears. They evolved as powerful cognitive responses to our deepest mysteries, shaped by the brain's structure and functions. Understanding these origins is essential as they highlight our innate need to create meaning through storytelling.

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## Example

**Key Point:** Myths help us cope with the fear of death and provide meaning to existence.

**Example:** Imagine standing on the edge of a vast cliff, staring into the unknown that is life itself. You feel the weight of uncertainty pressing down on you, but then you're drawn to stories told around a campfire, tales of heroes and otherworldly journeys that address life's biggest questions. Just like the Neanderthals who revered the dead, you too long for understanding and comfort, seeking connections in these narratives that transcend logic. These myths weave together your deepest fears and desires, nurturing a sense of community and belonging, allowing you to navigate life's complexities and confront mortality with courage.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The Intrinsic Nature of Myth-Making and Its Psychological Foundation

**Critical Interpretation:** The chapter emphasizes that myth-making is not merely a cultural artifact but a profound psychological necessity for humans, developed from ancient cognitive processes designed to confront existential fears. While Newberg presents this viewpoint as a foundational aspect of human experience, it is crucial to recognize that interpretations of myths can vary significantly across cultures and individual beliefs, indicating that the author's perspective may not universally apply. Scholars like Viktor Frankl and Karen Armstrong highlight the multifaceted nature of spirituality and myth in understanding human existence, suggesting that alternative frameworks exist beyond Newberg's cognitive imperative, thereby encouraging critical engagement with his ideas.





# Chapter 5 Summary : Ritual: The Physical Manifestation of Meaning

## RITUAL: The Physical Manifestation of Meaning

At a jazz concert in a candlelit cathedral, a businessman named Bill experiences profound emotional connection through music that incorporates the howls of wolves. As he and others begin to howl together, they share a unique, primal sense of unity. This collective experience illustrates how music can facilitate a neurological mechanism, allowing individuals to transcend their sense of self and connect with a larger community.

## RITUAL AND UNITY

The concert, while not a traditional ritual, serves the same purpose: it unites participants in a shared experience, fostering a sense of connection that is spiritual rather than religious. Rituals universally aim to transcend individual isolation and immerse participants in something greater. Religious rituals often seek to unify individuals with a higher



power, but secular rituals also facilitate social cohesion.

## **THE EVOLUTIONARY ROOTS OF RITUAL**

Historically, rituals have played a crucial role in human survival by fostering group identity and cohesion, enhancing cooperation within clans. Anthropologists have increasingly recognized the biological underpinnings of ritual, suggesting that such behaviors likely evolved to promote communication and reduce aggressiveness among group members.

## **THE NEUROBIOLOGY OF RITUAL**

Rituals can elicit emotional responses and lead to feelings of transcendence. Engaging in rhythmic behaviors alters bodily functions regulated by the hypothalamus and the autonomic nervous system, creating altered states of consciousness. The success of rituals depends on merging rhythmic actions with meaningful ideas, turning beliefs into visceral experiences.

## **THE RITUAL-MYTH CONNECTION**

Rituals transform spiritual stories into lived experiences,



bridging the gap between human and divine. This transformation gives participants a physical sense of connection to their spiritual beliefs, enhancing the power of the mythological narratives seen across cultures.

## **WHY WE ACT OUT MYTH**

The brain's tendency to enact thoughts suggests a biological drive to perform rituals that express myth. By acting out these myths, individuals may discover rhythmic behaviors that trigger transcendent feelings, merging neurological and cultural elements essential for effective rituals.

In summary, rituals serve as powerful mechanisms that allow individuals to experience unity and transcendence, intricately tied to both neurological processes and cultural myths. They demonstrate the deep-rooted human need for connection, meaning, and the experience of the sacred, blending biological function with cultural significance to create profound spiritual experiences.



# Chapter 6 Summary : Mysticism: The Biology of Transcendence

Section	Summary
Introduction to Mystic Experiences	Introduces Sister Margareta Ebner's mystical experience, questioning whether such experiences are divine or psychological.
Scientific Perspectives on Mysticism	Discusses how modern science often sees mystical experiences as psychological issues, referencing Freud and research linking them to mental conditions. Genuine experiences may arise from healthy brain responses.
Defining Mysticism	Evelyn Underhill's definition of mysticism is presented as a conscious relationship with the Absolute, highlighting strong emotions and a sense of unity across various mystical traditions.
Training for Mystical Union	Different cultures use rigorous training to achieve mystical experiences by quieting the ego and enhancing the divine connection.
Mysticism and Mental Health	Studies indicate people with mystical experiences may have higher psychological well-being, challenging the view that such states arise from confusion.
Distinguishing Mysticism from Mental Illness	Clarifies the difference between joyful mystical experiences and distressing psychotic experiences, noting cultural distinctions in beliefs.
The Neurobiology of Mystical Experience	Explains neurological processes behind mystical experiences, including brain areas that promote unity and selflessness during meditation.
The Unitary Continuum	Introduces the "unitary continuum" which spans from everyday connections to profound mystical experiences, triggered by various activities.
Neurological Mechanisms of Meditation	Describes how meditation affects brain function differently, with passive techniques clearing the mind and active techniques focusing on devotion.
Evolutionary Insights	Explores how mystical experiences may originate from neurological systems linked to sexual arousal and reproduction, connecting sensations to transcendent experiences.
Conclusion: The Spiritual and Scientific Intersection	Reflects on the profound spiritual implications of mystical experiences despite their biological roots, leading to further exploration of consciousness and perceptions of God.

## 6 MYSTICISM: The Biology of Transcendence



## Introduction to Mystic Experiences

The chapter opens with the story of Sister Margareta Ebner, a 14th-century German nun, who describes a profound mystical experience during prayer. This raises the question of whether such experiences are divine encounters or merely psychological phenomena.

## Scientific Perspectives on Mysticism

Modern scientific understanding often interprets mystical experiences as symptoms of psychological issues or brain dysfunction. Freud posited that they stem from an infantile desire for unity, while some medical research supports the idea that these states can be linked to mental conditions like schizophrenia or temporal lobe epilepsy. However, research suggests that genuine mystical experiences are not necessarily the result of mental impairment: they may arise

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# **Chapter 7 Summary : The Origins of Religion: The Persistence of a Good Idea**

## **128**

### **7 THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION**

#### **The Persistence of a Good Idea**

Friedrich Nietzsche's declaration that "God is dead" reflects the belief of many rationalistic thinkers that religion would fade with the advancement of science and education.

However, in today's age of scientific enlightenment, religion continues to thrive, suggesting there might be deeper reasons for its persistence. Contrary to the view that adherence to religion stems from ignorance or psychological weakness, evidence indicates that these beliefs arise from mystical experiences deeply rooted in human neurology. The evolutionary advantage of religious beliefs, linked to health benefits and community support, suggests that these traits have been favored over time.



## Religion and Health Benefits

Research has shown that individuals practicing religious faith tend to enjoy better health and longevity, experiencing fewer physical ailments. Additionally, they demonstrate superior mental health metrics, including lower rates of substance abuse, divorce, and mental illness compared to the general population. The communal support and values promoted by religions may play critical roles in these improved health outcomes.

## Religion and Control

The psychological and existential benefits of religion can be tied to its capacity to grant believers a sense of control over life's uncertainties. This control is often linked to a higher power that provides hope and meaning amidst existential dread. The promises of religious faith, serving as sources of protection and purpose, have likely played vital roles in human history and survival.

## The Origins of Religion

Mystical experiences can occur spontaneously and are not



limited to those actively seeking them. Such experiences may form the foundation of religious faith, allowing individuals to derive a sense of divine presence and support, even under non-spiritual contexts. The development of primitive religions may have arisen from interpreting these mystical encounters as interactions with higher powers, embodying hopes and reassurance.

## **The Role of Mystical Experience**

All religions can trace their roots back to mystical encounters that provide insights into fundamental truths. However, to form a coherent religious belief system, these experiences must be translated into rational thoughts. Sociocultural factors further shape the evolution of these beliefs and rituals, giving rise to the various organized religions we see today.

## **The Neurological Basis for Religious Experience**

Humans possess innate neurological capacities that facilitate transcendent experiences, which could have conferred evolutionary advantages. The machinery of the mind that generates these profound experiences may suggest that there



is a genuine aspect to spiritual realities beyond mere neurological activity.

## **A Window to God?**

While mystical states are rooted in brain function, the nature of these experiences raises questions about their validity.

They may serve as a window to deeper realities or perceptions of a higher existence, challenging conventional scientific understandings of reality and suggesting the potential for a divine dimension to existence.



# **Chapter 8 Summary : Realer Than Real: The Mind in Search of Absolutes**

## **8 REALER THAN REAL: The Mind in Search of Absolutes**

### **Introduction to Mystical Claims**

The text discusses the theories regarding the universe's nature and the mystics' claims of another plane of existence that transcends the material world. While common sense leads us to reject these mystical realities, it is argued that mystical experiences have observable neurological bases rather than being mere delusions.

### **The Nature of Reality**

There are two forms of reality: objective external reality and subjective internal reality. The chapter explores the philosophical debate between these realities, suggesting that one must be more fundamental than the other. Scientific



thought has historically suggested that material reality is the primary reality, yet mystics argue for a deeper existence beyond this.

## **The Limits of Scientific Measurement**

The text critiques the scientific paradigm which asserts that anything not measurable is not real. The authors challenge this view, proposing that the neurological basis for spiritual experiences may still reflect genuine realities.

## **Mystical Experiences and the Brain**

The authors began their research with a material understanding of the brain but eventually hypothesized that it could access self-transcendent states. They explore how SPECT scans reveal neurological activity during spiritual experiences, leading to a deeper understanding of these moments' significance, even if they cannot definitively prove the nature of that experience.

## **Concept of Absolute Unitary Being**

The text introduces the concept of Absolute Unitary Being,





reflecting a state experienced by mystics that transcends ordinary consciousness. Despite the difficulty in articulating this state, it is presented as a profound awareness that encompasses all existence.

## **The Development of the Self**

The process by which the self is constructed is explored, emphasizing its creation through reification and comparison within the brain. The distinction between the self and the mind is emphasized, presenting the self as formed from neural components provided by the mind.

## **Neurobiological State of Awareness**

The chapter argues that in certain neurological states, the self can dissolve, leading to a pure awareness that perceives reality as an undifferentiated whole. This notion aligns with the mystics' experiences, challenging the traditional views of the self and reality.

## **Mystical Reality and its Validation**

Although personal experience is necessary to truly



understand the claims of mystics, the text suggests that scientists who have contemplated the universe's nature often reach conclusions resonating with mystical insights.

## **The Final Assertion**

The chapter concludes by affirming that if Absolute Unitary Being is indeed a more profound reality, it must encompass the self and external reality. While empirical proof remains elusive, the alignment between neurology and mystical claims points toward a rational possibility of a higher reality, reinforcing that the mind can reach beyond subjective distractions to perceive a greater unity.



# **Chapter 9 Summary : Why God Won't Go Away: The Metaphor of God and the Mythology of Science**

## **9. Why God Won't Go Away: The Metaphor of God and the Mythology of Science**

### **Introduction to C. S. Lewis's Perspective**

C. S. Lewis, known for his intellectual defense of Christianity, conveys in his poem that God transcends comprehension and description, highlighting that literal interpretations of God are mere symbols of a deeper truth. This viewpoint aligns with Eastern mystical traditions like Buddhism and Taoism but poses challenges for Western monotheistic religions, which define God as a distinct entity.

### **The Unknowability of God**

In Western mysticism, particularly in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, God is perceived as ineffable. Concepts like



Kabbalistic Ein-Sof and Rabi'a al-Adawiyya's insights emphasize that attempting to articulate God's nature can lead to misunderstanding. Mystics collectively conclude that God is the essence of existence and cannot be boxed into personal images.

## **The Role of Mystical Experience**

Mysticism reveals God as unknowable, with only direct encounters illuminating true divine nature. Even if individuals cannot reach higher states of consciousness, insights from mystics teach that God exists beyond simplistic definitions. This acknowledgment encourages a broader understanding of spiritual experiences across religions.

## **The Interconnected Nature of Religions**

All religions express interpretations of the same ultimate

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# Chapter 10 Summary : Epilogue: So Just What Is Neurotheology Anyway?

## EPILOGUE

### Neurotheology: An Overview

The book "Why God Won't Go Away" has sparked significant interest and debate within both religious and scientific circles. One primary aim of the authors is to demonstrate that science and religion can coexist without contradiction, suggesting a need for both perspectives.

### Research Foundation

The research supporting this theory is extensive, encompassing brain imaging studies and a thorough exploration of neuroscientific, philosophical, and theological literature. The findings aim to bridge the gap between scientific inquiry and spiritual experiences, providing insights into human spirituality and brain function.





## **Mystical Experience and Everyday Religion**

At the core of the theory is the idea that the brain can transcend individual self-perception, driving religious urges. However, not all religious practices are mystical in nature. The authors stress that mystical experiences exist on a continuum, from profound spiritual unity to more common sensations of connection during prayer or community activities.

## **Broader Implications of Neurotheology**

The study of neurotheology aims to explore the relationship between brain function and various aspects of religion, including ethics, community, and emotional experiences of love and forgiveness. Researchers in this field recognize the brain's role in understanding religious impulses and behaviors, which can lead to universal insights applicable across different faiths.

## **Concepts of Metatheology and Megatheology**

Neurotheology could serve as both a metatheology and a



megatheology. The former examines how specific theological principles arise, while the latter seeks universal elements within all religions. This framework encourages a holistic understanding of religious experiences while also addressing the everyday realities of belief.

## **Integrating Science and Religion**

Neurotheology's universal approach is a promising avenue for connecting religion with psychology and human biology, enhancing our understanding of concepts like myth, ritual, and emotional experiences. The framework urges exploration of how theological concepts might be informed by our understanding of brain function.

## **Exploring Myths and Religious Concepts**

The interaction between theology and neurological insights provides a platform to comprehend myths and other religious narratives. Understanding how the brain processes these experiences could lead to renewed interpretations of foundational religious myths.

## **Causality and Human Perception**



The authors address the brain's role in perceiving causality and how this affects religious understanding. Different brain functioning can shape how God and religious concepts are perceived, suggesting a diverse range of interpretations based on neurological processes.

## **Reality and Mystical Experiences**

While neurotheology cannot definitively prove the existence of higher realities, it affirms that mystical experiences feel profoundly real to individuals. This presents an intriguing angle for understanding the nature of different realities, including the notion of a higher state sometimes referred to as the Absolute Unitary Being (AUB).

## **Conclusion**

Though there is much to explore regarding the complexity of religious experiences, neurotheology represents a vital step toward reconciling science and religion, ultimately enriching our understanding of both mental and spiritual realms.





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# Best Quotes from Why God Won'T Go Away by Andrew B. Newberg with Page Numbers

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## Chapter 1 | Quotes From Pages 1-16

- 1.For Robert, this inner self is not a metaphor or an attitude; it is literal, constant, and real.
- 2.It feels like I am part of everyone and everything in existence.
- 3.The mystical experiences of our subjects ... were associated instead with a series of observable neurological events, which, while unusual, are not outside the range of normal brain function.
- 4.We believed that we were seeing colorful evidence on the SPECT's computer screen of the brain's capacity to make spiritual experience real.
- 5.The goal of this book is to present the surprising context for these hypotheses.
- 6.It has been a transforming journey, a journey of



self-discovery toward which I believe our brain compels us.

## **Chapter 2 | Quotes From Pages 17-54**

1. The goal of every living brain, no matter what its level of neurological sophistication... has been to enhance the organism's chances of survival by reacting to raw sensory data and translating it into a negotiable rendition of a world.
2. The expansive neurological distance between the human brain and the nervous system of a worm is difficult to measure, but it is not infinite. The difference is primarily a matter of complexity.
3. These rich, fully integrated perceptions allow us to experience reality as a vivid, cohesive whole that flows smoothly and comprehensibly from one moment to the next.
4. The relationship of mind and brain is so intimately linked... that it seems most reasonable to consider the terms as two different aspects of the very same thing.





5.It is a fundamental requirement of survival: Organisms must tirelessly process a torrent of constantly shifting sensory data.

6.The brain cannot help but generate the thoughts and emotions that are the basic elements of mind.

### **Chapter 3 | Quotes From Pages 55-84**

1.What we think of as reality is only a rendition of reality that is created by the brain.

2.In a reductionist sense, this could support the argument that religious experience is only imagined neurologically, that God is physically 'all in your mind.'

3.Whatever the ultimate nature of spiritual experience might be—whether it is in fact a perception of an actual spiritual reality, or merely an interpretation of sheer neurological function—all that is meaningful in human spirituality happens in the mind.

4.The mind is mystical by default.

5.The limbic system has sometimes been referred to as the 'transmitter to God.'



6. Without the emotional value function, we would move through the world like very intelligent robots.
7. Every event that happens to us or any action that we take can be associated with activity in one or more specific regions of the brain.
8. If God does indeed exist, the only place he can manifest his existence would be in the tangled neural pathways and physiological structures of the brain.





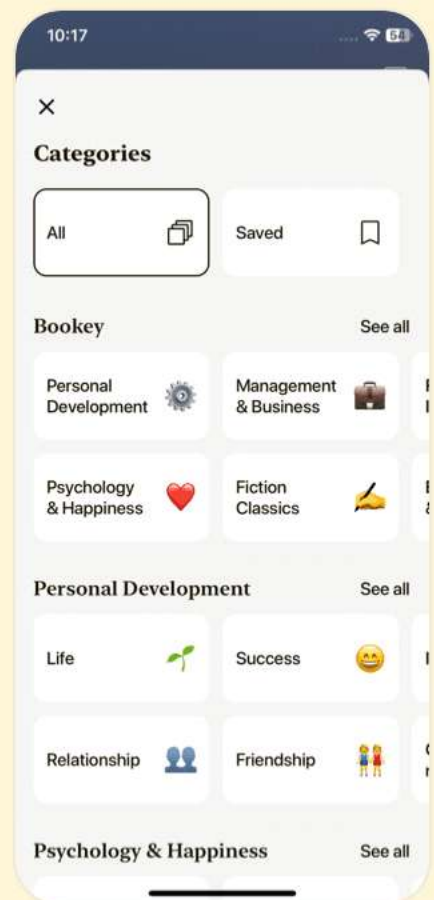
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## Chapter 4 | Quotes From Pages 85-122

1. This poignant and optimistic gesture—history's first-known glimmering of metaphysical hope—tells us two important things about our Neanderthal ancestors: first, that they possessed sufficient brain power to comprehend the inescapable finality of physical death; and second, that they had already found a way to defeat or cope with it, at least conceptually.
2. Mythology is apparently coeval with mankind... signs have been found which indicate that mythological aims and concerns were already shaping the arts and world of Homo sapiens.
3. The power of myth lies beneath its literal interpretations, in the ability of its universal symbols and themes to connect us with the most essential parts of ourselves in ways that logic and reason alone cannot.
4. By learning these stories, and passing them on, our questions about suffering, good and evil, and numerous



other metaphysical problems suddenly become answerable, knowable.

5. We believe myths are structured in this way because the mind makes sense of mythical problems using the same cognitive functions it relies upon to make fundamental sense of the physical world.

6. The chief's intuition about the ultimate destiny of the soul may or may not be true... what matters is the notion that it is based on something deeper than imagination or wishful thinking.

7. [Myths] are telling us in picture language of powers of the psyche to be recognized and integrated into our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever, and which represent that wisdom of the species by which man has weathered the millenniums.

## **Chapter 5 | Quotes From Pages 123-157**

1. I don't know why that happened," says Bill, looking back upon the moment. "There was no signal that I can recall. I don't remember what my



thoughts were, it just seemed to rise up through my body and I just let it out.

2. When everyone was howling, the whole church, that was a very spiritual feeling. Not religious, but definitely spiritual. It's hard to put into words," he says, "there's really no way to explain it.
3. The concert was a ritual, fulfilling both the traditional and neurological definitions of the term.
4. The transcendence of the self, and the blending of the self into some larger reality, is a major goal of ritualized behavior.
5. The fact that the unifying effects of ritual are generated by basic biological function explains the pervasiveness of ritual activity in virtually every culture.

## **Chapter 6 | Quotes From Pages 158-206**

1. How then am I to love the Godhead? Thou shalt not love him as he is: not as a God, not as a spirit, not as a Person, not as an image, but as sheer, pure One.





2. Peace comes within the souls of men when they realize their oneness with the universe.
3. If you consider yourself as 'something,' and pray to Him for your needs, God cannot clothe Himself in you. God is infinite and cannot be held in any kind of vessel that has not dissolved itself into No-thing.
4. The first step in attaining mystical union is to quiet the conscious mind and free the spirit from the limiting passions and delusions of the ego.
5. The goal of all mystical striving is to shed the limits of the self and return to that original condition of wholeness, the primal state of unity with God, or the cosmos, or the Absolute.
6. God visits the soul in a way that prevents it doubting when it comes to itself that it has been in God and God in it.
7. The overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement.
8. Delusional psychotic states can last for years, and they



inevitably drive their victims into progressively deeper states of social isolation. Mystics, on the other hand, are often among the most respected and effective members of some societies.

9. In fact, there would be no discrete objects or beings, no sense of space or the passage of time, no line between the self and the rest of the universe. In fact, there would be no subjective self at all; there would only be an absolute sense of unity—without thought, without words, and without sensation.





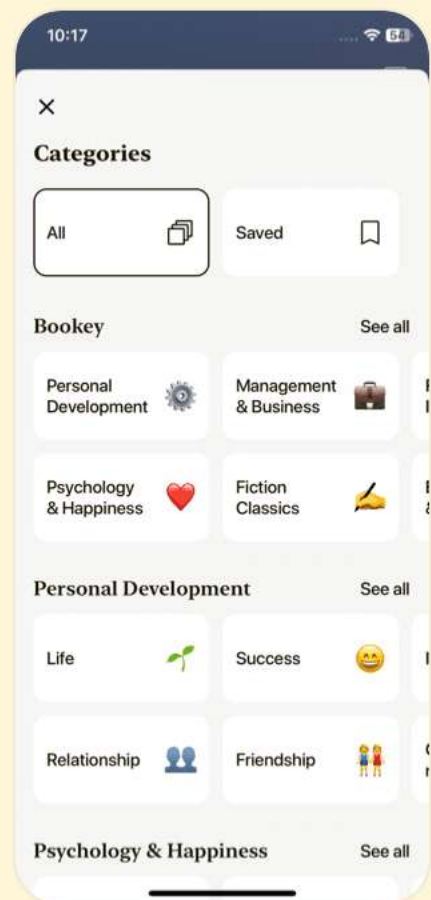
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## Chapter 7 | Quotes From Pages 207-228

1. Religion ... has served as a powerful source of confidence and motivation that has not only shaped much of human history, but may also have been a crucial reason the human race has managed to survive.
2. Each great religion has a similar origin: the spiritual awakening of its founders to God, the divine, the absolute, the spirit, Tao, boundless awareness.
3. The optimism and empowerment granted by this sense of control surely would have improved their psychological outlook, and given them a definite edge in the evolutionary struggle to survive.
4. The authority of that religion and the essential realness of its God are rooted in transcendent experiences of mystical union, whether mild or extremely powerful.
5. It is possible that the hunter's preoccupation with the image of the stag could trigger the same neurological reaction and lead him to a similar unitary state.



## Chapter 8 | Quotes From Pages 229-252

1. The universe certainly is strange, but to the average rationally minded individual, nothing is stranger, no concept can be more bizarre and inexplicable, than the claims of the mystics that another plane of being exists that is literally more real than the reality of the material universe.
2. A fair examination of mystical experience... shows that this is not so easy to do. Mystics are not necessarily the victims of delusion, rather, their experiences are based in observable functions of the brain.
3. If we trust our perceptions of the physical world, we have no rational reason to declare that spiritual experience is a fiction that is 'only' in the mind.
4. It is possible, however, for awareness to exist without the subjective focus of a self.
5. Thus, this life of yours you are living is not merely a piece of the entire existence, but is in a certain sense the whole....

## Chapter 9 | Quotes From Pages 253-277



1. Thus always, taken at their word, all prayers  
blaspheme Worshipping with frail images of  
folk-lore dream, And all in their praying,  
self-deceived, address The coinage of their own  
unquiet thoughts...
2. The high God of Kabbalistic mysticism...sounds very much  
like the Hindu Brahman: a divine concept beyond the reach  
of human understanding, with no form or limits, and no  
distinct personal attributes whatsoever.
3. If you wish to be perfect and without sin, then do not  
prattle about God.
4. Even if we are incapable of the higher states of  
consciousness achieved by a mystic...we can learn that God  
does not exist in any simplistic sense.
5. The personal God has helped monotheists to value the  
sacred and inalienable rights of the individual...but the  
same personal God, Armstrong warns, can become a grave  
liability.
6. If we could arrange energy from within...if we more often





nurtured our companions and promoted their well-being,  
we would suffer much less.

7.If Absolute Unitary Being does, indeed, exist, then science  
and religion find themselves in a paradoxical situation.

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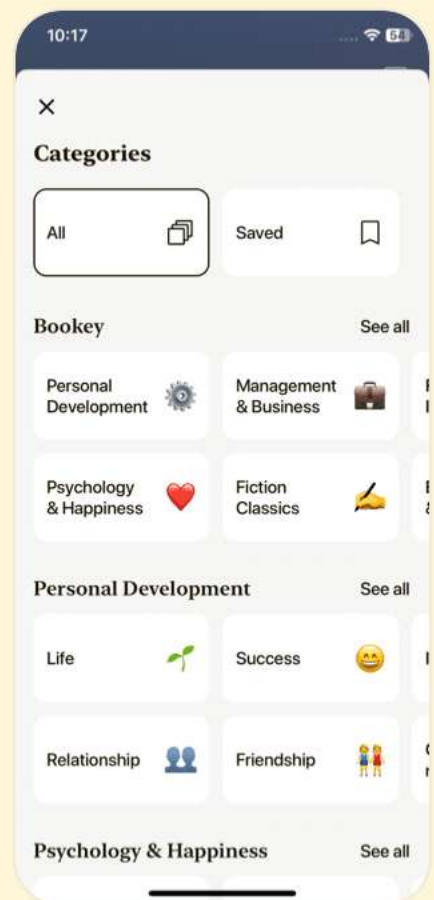
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## Chapter 10 | Quotes From Pages 278-289

1. One need not be wrong for the other to be right.
2. At the heart of our theory is a neurological model that provides a link between mystical experience and observable brain function.
3. Our work tells us that these mystical experiences occur on a continuum.
4. A neurotheological approach, by its very nature, is universal.
5. The ability to explore theology from a neurological perspective can help us to understand, in very powerful ways, the human urge for religion and religious myth.
6. Reality happens in the brain, and while our imaging studies do not prove the existence of a higher spiritual plane, they do strongly indicate that to the brain, these states are as real as any other.
7. The concept of AUB may provide a primal spiritual foundation upon which we can imagine a true megatheology.





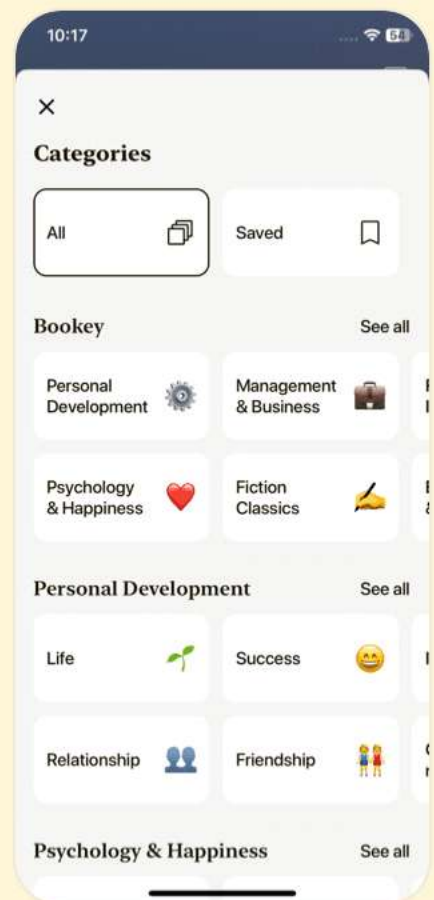
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# Why God Won'T Go Away Questions

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## Chapter 1 | A Photograph of God?: An Introduction to the Biology of Belief| Q&A

### 1.Question

**What does Robert experience during his meditative journey?**

Answer:Robert experiences a deep connection with his inner self, which he perceives as the truest part of who he is. As he meditates, he attains a state of profound realization where he feels interwoven with all of creation, describing it as ‘timelessness and infinity’.

### 2.Question

**How do scientists like Newberg and d’Aquili aim to study the connection between meditation and brain function?**

Answer:They study the relationship between religious experience and brain function by monitoring brain activity during the peak moments of meditation. They use medical imaging technology, such as SPECT scans, to visualize

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changes in brain areas associated with spiritual experiences.

### 3.Question

**What happens to the orientation association area (OAA) in Robert's brain during meditation?**

Answer:During peak meditation, the SPECT scans show a marked decrease in activity in the orientation association area (OAA), suggesting that the brain may interpret the absence of sensory information as a loss of distinction between self and the external world.

### 4.Question

**What implications do the findings about the OAA have for understanding spiritual experiences?**

Answer:The findings suggest that when the OAA is less active, individuals may experience a profound sense of unity with everything around them, indicating that mystical experiences are not mere delusions but can be observed through changes in brain function.

### 5.Question

**What central question guides Newberg and d'Aquili's research?**





Answer: The central question guiding their research is whether they have found a common biological root of all religious experiences and what this understanding means for the nature of the spiritual urge in human beings.

## 6.Question

**What transformation does Newberg experience through his research?**

Answer: Through this research, Newberg undergoes a transformation in his views of religion, life, and self, leading him to reconsider the complex relationship between the mind and spirituality.

## 7.Question

**What does Newberg hope to achieve with this book?**

Answer: Newberg hopes to present the biological drives behind myths and rituals, explore their neurological underpinnings, and demonstrate how spiritual experiences have a scientific basis rooted in brain activity.

## 8.Question

**How does Robert's view of his inner self relate to broader spiritual concepts?**



Answer:Robert's view of his inner self reflects a common spiritual concept across many traditions of achieving enlightenment or union with a greater whole, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all beings.

## **Chapter 2 | Brain Machinery: The Science of Perception| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What lesson can we draw from the struggles of the robot in navigating its environment?**

Answer:The robot's difficulty highlights the importance of adaptability and learning from previous experiences. In our lives, we must develop our own neural pathways to respond fluidly and effectively to constantly changing situations, just as living beings have over millions of years. Instead of being halted by new challenges, we should embrace change and learn to adapt our understanding of the world.

### **2.Question**

**How does the comparison between robots and living**



## **organisms help us understand human complexity?**

Answer: While robots face limitations in processing sensory information, living organisms have evolved intricate neural networks that allow for adaptive behaviors and a deep perception of reality. This complex evolution underscores the sophistication of our brains, which enables us to not only survive but also to create art, culture, and meaningful experiences.

### **3.Question**

#### **What role does the cerebral cortex play in human cognition according to the text?**

Answer: The cerebral cortex is essential for high-order cognitive functions, integrating sensory input and allowing us to form perceptions of the world. It serves as the center where our self-image, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors converge, enabling us to navigate our environment and interact meaningfully with others.

### **4.Question**

#### **Why is the cooperation between the left and right**



## **hemispheres of the brain significant?**

Answer: The cooperation between hemispheres allows for a richer experience of consciousness. While the left hemisphere is analytical and language-oriented, the right hemisphere engages in abstract thinking and emotional expression. Their integrated functioning is crucial for meaningful human experiences, including communication and creativity.

## **5.Question**

### **In what way do the association areas of the brain contribute to spiritual experiences?**

Answer: Association areas like the visual, orientation, attention, and verbal conceptual areas play crucial roles in interpreting sensory data and emotional contexts. They enrich our understanding of experiences, including mystical and spiritual ones, by integrating various forms of input into coherent perceptions that resonate with our inner lives.

## **6.Question**

### **What is the main relationship between the brain and the**



## **mind as discussed in the chapter?**

Answer: The brain and mind are inseparably linked; the brain processes sensory and cognitive data, which generates the thoughts, feelings, and consciousness we experience as 'mind.' This relationship suggests that our perceptions shape our understanding of reality and spirituality.

## **7.Question**

### **How does the explanation of 'blindsight' contribute to our understanding of sensory processing?**

Answer: 'Blindsight' demonstrates that even when conscious perception is impaired, the brain can still process sensory information at an unconscious level, allowing individuals to navigate their surroundings. This phenomenon indicates the brain's remarkable ability to interpret data and act on it, even without conscious awareness.

## **8.Question**

### **What is the significance of the brain's complexity in terms of survival and human achievement?**

Answer: The brain's complexity enhances our ability to



perceive, react, and adapt to our environment, thereby increasing our chances of survival. This sophisticated processing underpins human achievements in creativity, culture, and technology, marking our evolution as a species capable of profound thought and emotion.

### 9.Question

**How does the brain's function of categorizing 'self' and 'not-self' affect our social interactions?**

Answer:The brain's ability to differentiate between 'self' and 'not-self' shapes our sense of identity and informs our social interactions. Understanding where we stand in relation to others influences our behaviors, empathy, and emotional responses, which are critical for forming connections and navigating social environments.

### 10.Question

**What insight can we gain about the nature of consciousness from the interaction of the brain's structures?**

Answer:The interaction among various brain structures illustrates that consciousness is not a singular experience but





rather emerges from the complex processing of sensory inputs, emotions, and cognitive functions. It emphasizes that our awareness is a dynamic construction shaped by the integration of multiple neural processes.

## **Chapter 3 | Brain Architecture: How the Brain Makes the Mind| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What does Meister Eckhart suggest about the soul's interaction with created things?**

Answer:Meister Eckhart suggests that the soul forms images and likenesses based on its experiences with created things, establishing knowledge only through the voluntary reception and creation of images within the soul.

### **2.Question**

**What fundamental principle of neurology is supported by Eckhart's insights?**

Answer:Eckhart's insights align with the principle that our perception of reality is not direct or objective but constructed by the brain from sensory inputs, leading to a subjective and



interpretative experience of reality.

### 3.Question

**How does the brain process sensory experiences like eating apple pie?**

Answer: The brain processes sensory experiences through different areas: olfactory regions register smells, visual areas identify sights, touch centers recognize textures, and taste areas perceive flavors, collectively constructing the experience.

### 4.Question

**In what way do neurological functions relate to spiritual experiences?**

Answer: Neurological functions suggest that spiritual experiences, while interpreted through the mind, are fundamentally grounded in brain activity, implying that God or spiritual encounters can only be experienced via neurological pathways.

### 5.Question

**What role does the autonomic nervous system play in emotional and spiritual experiences?**



Answer: The autonomic nervous system regulates fundamental body functions such as heart rate and digestion while also influencing emotions and mood, making it essential in the modulation of spiritual experiences.

## 6.Question

**What are the four autonomic states explored in relation to spiritual experience?**

Answer: The four autonomic states are Hyperquiescence (deep relaxation), Hyperarousal (intense excitement), Hyperquiescence with Arousal Breakthrough (combined bliss and energy), and Hyperarousal with Quiescent Breakthrough (ecstatic energy).

## 7.Question

**How is the limbic system connected to spiritual experiences?**

Answer: The limbic system integrates emotions with higher cognitive functions, mediating complex emotional states relevant to spiritual experiences, thus functioning as a 'transmitter to God' for many individuals.



## 8.Question

**What are 'cognitive operators' and why are they important?**

Answer:Cognitive operators are collective brain functions that allow us to think, feel, interpret, and make sense of the world, shaping how we experience spirituality and reality.

## 9.Question

**What does the holistic operator allow us to do?**

Answer:The holistic operator enables us to perceive the world as a whole and understand complex assemblies of elements effortlessly.

## 10.Question

**How does the emotional value operator enhance human experience?**

Answer:The emotional value operator assigns emotional significance to perceptions, motivating our actions and enriching our interactions, essential for survival and social connections.

## 11.Question

**What conclusion can be drawn from brain activation**



## **studies regarding spiritual experiences?**

Answer: Brain activation studies suggest that all experiences, including religious and spiritual ones, are linked to specific brain activity, emphasizing that any manifestation of God occurs within the neural structures of the brain.





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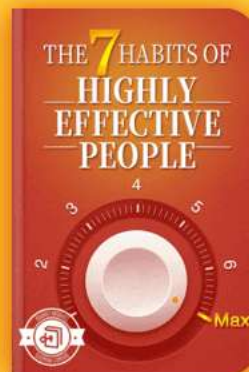


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## **Chapter 4 | Myth-making: The Compulsion to Create Stories and Beliefs| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What does the act of Neanderthals burying their dead indicate about their understanding of death?**

Answer:It indicates that Neanderthals recognized the finality of physical death and had developed a conceptual understanding of it. They also likely believed in some form of life after death, as evidenced by their burial practices, which included provisioning the dead with tools and other items for the afterlife.

### **2.Question**

**How do myths function in relation to the existential fears of humans?**

Answer:Myths serve to alleviate existential fears by providing answers to profound questions about life, death, and existence. They help humans cope with uncertainties and fears, offering narratives that reconcile opposites, such as life and death, and provide a sense of meaning.



### 3.Question

**Why is the term 'myth' not synonymous with 'falsehood' or 'fabrication'?**

Answer:'Myth' comes from the Greek 'mythos,' meaning 'word' with deep authority, and refers to profound truths conveyed through stories that resonate with human experience. Myths can express enduring psychological and spiritual truths, even if their literal events are not historically true.

### 4.Question

**What role do cognitive functions play in myth-making?**

Answer:Cognitive functions, mainly the causal and binary operators, drive the mind to analyze existential questions and generate myths. These functions allow humans to link causes and frame conflicts, which are essential for storytelling and myth creation.

### 5.Question

**How does the cognitive imperative influence human behavior in relation to fear?**

Answer:The cognitive imperative compels humans to seek



explanations and resolutions for their fears, leading them to create myths and narratives that provide comfort and understanding in the face of existential uncertainties.

## 6.Question

**What is the significance of the 'Eureka Response' in myth-making?**

Answer:The 'Eureka Response' is a state of intense insight and emotional resonance that transforms an idea into a deeply felt belief. This moment of clarity can lead to the creation of powerful myths, as it aligns the intuitive and logical aspects of the mind.

## 7.Question

**How do shared experiences and insights contribute to the formation of communal myths?**

Answer:When an individual shares a personally profound insight, it can resonate with others, allowing them to experience similar emotional reactions. This shared resonance helps solidify the belief into a communal myth, reinforcing its power and relevance.



## 8.Question

**Why are myths across cultures often similar in theme and structure?**

Answer:Myths share archetypal patterns that reflect universal aspects of the human experience and cognition. Cultural transmission accounts for some similarities, but fundamental neurological processes contribute to the consistent themes present in myths worldwide.

## 9.Question

**How does the brain's structure support the creation of myths?**

Answer:The brain's parietal lobe is crucial for causal and binary thinking, which are essential for myth-making. This structural capability allows humans to conceptualize opposites and generate stories that make sense of their experiences and existential fears.

## 10.Question

**What marks the transition from individual myth-making to the establishment of broader mythologies?**

Answer:The transition occurs when personal myths, born



from individual insights or experiences, are shared within a community. If these stories resonate on a neurological level with others, they can evolve into comprehensive mythologies that shape the cultural understanding of life, death, and existence.

## **Chapter 5 | Ritual: The Physical Manifestation of Meaning| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What impact did Bill experience during the wolf concert in the cathedral?**

Answer:Bill was initially absorbed into the music, feeling a deep sense of peace. This culminated in a spontaneous eruption of joy where he began to howl, an expression that quickly spread to others around him, creating a collective and freeing experience that he described as spiritual but not religious.

### **2.Question**

**How does the concept of ritual connect individuals to something larger than themselves?**

Answer:Rituals often involve repetitive rhythms and



collective actions that help participants feel connected to one another and to a greater psychological or spiritual reality.

Bill's experience at the concert exemplifies this, as the communal howling allowed everyone to transcend their individual selves and unify in a shared emotional expression.

### 3.Question

**Why are rituals considered important for social cohesion?**

Answer:Rituals serve as structured ceremonies that foster a sense of belonging and commitment to a larger group or cause, thus enhancing cooperation and stability within the community.

### 4.Question

**What are the neurological mechanisms behind the transcendent experience during rituals?**

Answer:Rituals activate the brain's limbic and autonomic systems, leading to altered perceptions of the self and emotion. This process can induce feelings of tranquility and unity, especially through repetitive rhythmic behaviors which blur the boundaries of personal identity.





## 5.Question

**In what ways do secular rituals differ from religious rituals?**

Answer:Both types of rituals serve similar social functions, promoting unity and reducing hostility within groups.

However, secular rituals typically lack explicit spiritual or divine connections, instead focusing on communal identities, like national pride or civic duty.

## 6.Question

**How do myths play a role in the effectiveness of rituals?**

Answer:Myths provide the narrative framework for rituals, imbuing them with meaning. Rituals transform these stories into visceral experiences, helping participants feel a connection to the greater truths they convey, such as the promises of unity with the divine or the universe.

## 7.Question

**What is the evolutionary purpose of ritual behaviors in both animals and humans?**

Answer:Ritual behaviors evolved as a form of communication and social bonding, allowing groups to



establish cooperative identities and enhance survival. They help convey intentions and emotional states, thereby reducing conflict and promoting social harmony.

### 8.Question

**How can ritual lead to altered emotional states?**

Answer:Through rhythmic behaviors and multisensory experiences, rituals can stimulate the brain's emotional centers, leading to heightened states of emotion such as awe, bliss, or spiritual connection. These effects are often compounded by sensory stimuli like sound and smell.

### 9.Question

**Why is it significant that rituals maintain a balance between structure and change?**

Answer:If rituals become too rigid, they may lose relevance and effectiveness; conversely, if they change too much, they can lose their foundational meaning. A successful ritual adapts its content while preserving its core rhythms to remain impactful for participants.

### 10.Question

**What does the participation in rituals suggest about**



**human tendencies?**

Answer:Our compulsion to act out rituals may stem from an innate urge to express and commune through shared experiences, reflecting deep neurological and psychological needs for connection, meaning, and transcendence.

## **Chapter 6 | Mysticism: The Biology of Transcendence| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What does Sister Margareta's experience reveal about the nature of mystical encounters?**

Answer:Sister Margareta's experience suggests that mystical encounters can lead to profound feelings of grace, unity, and divine presence. It indicates that such experiences might not be mere psychological disturbances but can reflect genuine spiritual connections.

### **2.Question**

**How can modern science interpret mystical experiences?**

Answer:Modern science has often viewed mystical experiences through a lens of emotional or psychological



pathology, attributing them to brain dysfunctions or neurotic tendencies. However, recent studies suggest that genuine mystical experiences may arise from healthy, rational minds reacting to profound perceptions.

### 3.Question

**What is Evelyn Underhill's definition of mysticism?**

Answer:Evelyn Underhill defines mysticism as the organic process of achieving the perfect consummation of the Love of God, establishing a conscious relationship with the Absolute, rather than merely vague or confused belief.

### 4.Question

**How do different cultures and traditions define the mystical experience?**

Answer:Across different cultures and traditions, mystical experiences often share themes of unity and transcendence, whether described as losing oneself in divine rapture or achieving enlightenment. These experiences are seen as ultimate spiritual goals transcending cultural distinctions.

### 5.Question

**What neurological processes underlie mystical**



**experiences?**

Answer: The neurological processes involved in mystical experiences include the deafferentation of brain areas responsible for orientation and the sense of self, leading to feelings of unity and transcendence beyond the individual ego.

## **6.Question**

**How does the distinction between healthy and pathological states relate to mysticism?**

Answer: While many views equate mystical experiences to mental disorders, research indicates that those who experience genuine mystical states often enjoy higher levels of psychological well-being compared to the general population, implying a distinction from pathological states.

## **7.Question**

**What role does meditation play in achieving mystical states?**

Answer: Meditation, both passive and active, facilitates the neurological processes that promote self-transcendence,



leading to profound mystical states. These meditative practices effectively quiet the mind and allow a deeper experience of unity with the divine.

## 8.Question

**What evolutionary advantages might mystical experiences confer?**

Answer:Although mystical experiences may not have evolved directly for spiritual transcendence, the cognitive abilities that allow for complex emotional experiences, like love and art, are thought to have developed from simpler survival mechanisms, suggesting a potential evolutionary advantage.

## 9.Question

**How does the experience of 'Absolute Unitary Being' compare to personal experiences of love or beauty?**

Answer:Experiences of 'Absolute Unitary Being' are likened to moments where the ego dissolves, akin to the feelings one might have when lost in music, nature, or love, highlighting that such experiences of unity are part of the human





condition.

### 10.Question

**What is the overarching theme of mystical spirituality across various traditions?**

Answer: The overarching theme among mystical traditions is the quest for union with the Absolute, transcending the individual self to reconnect with a larger reality, emphasizing that despite cultural differences, the core aspiration remains the same.





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## **Chapter 7 | The Origins of Religion: The Persistence of a Good Idea 128| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What did Friedrich Nietzsche mean by saying 'God is dead'?**

Answer:Nietzsche's statement suggested that humanity had outgrown the need for the concept of God, viewing it as a relic of an unscientific past that rational thinking would replace.

### **2.Question**

**Why has religion persisted despite scientific advancements?**

Answer:Religion persists because it fulfills deep-seated psychological needs and provides health benefits, indicating that it is rooted in mysterious and transcendent experiences, not mere superstition.

### **3.Question**

**How does practicing faith positively impact health?**

Answer:Research shows that individuals practicing faith generally have lower rates of chronic diseases, better mental



health, and live longer, making religious involvement comparable to the health risks of smoking.

#### 4.Question

**What role does a sense of control play in religion?**

Answer:Religion provides believers with a sense of control over life's uncertainties, offering hope and meaning through the belief in a higher power that can intervene in their lives.

#### 5.Question

**Can mystical experiences occur spontaneously?**

Answer:Yes, mystical experiences can happen unexpectedly and in various forms, often profoundly affecting individuals regardless of their previous beliefs or intentions.

#### 6.Question

**How might early humans have developed religious beliefs?**

Answer:Early humans may have experienced mystical encounters during stressful conditions, such as a desperate hunt, leading them to interpret these transcendent experiences as contact with powerful spiritual forces.

#### 7.Question



## **What is the relationship between rituals and health benefits?**

Answer:Rituals can promote social cohesion and stimulate physiological responses in the body, leading to improved mental and physical health outcomes.

### **8.Question**

## **How do mystical experiences shape religious beliefs?**

Answer:Mystical experiences provide the foundational truths that religions build upon; the beliefs and practices are interpretations of these profound encounters with the divine.

### **9.Question**

## **Is there scientific support for the reality of mystical experiences?**

Answer:Neuroscientific studies suggest that mystical experiences are genuine neurological events, indicating a potential 'window' to a higher reality, challenging traditional notions of materialism.

### **10.Question**

## **What can we learn from early religious practices regarding spirituality?**



Answer:Early religious practices demonstrate that spirituality might have originated from human experiences of unity and transcendence, which are essential for social bonding and survival.

## **Chapter 8 | Realer Than Real: The Mind in Search of Absolutes| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What is the relationship between the mystical experience and the physical brain according to the chapter?**

Answer:The chapter suggests that mystical experiences have neurological roots, indicating that these experiences are genuine brain functions rather than mere delusions. Research indicates that the brain has mechanisms that can produce states of spiritual transcendence, which can feel as real as any other perception.

### **2.Question**

**How do mystics define their experiences of reality?**

Answer:Mystics describe a primary reality that transcends the material world, often referred to as Absolute Unitary





Being, which encompasses everything and represents a state of pure awareness that cannot be rationally understood. They insist this state feels more real than the ordinary perceptions of people.

### 3.Question

**What philosophical stance is challenged by the findings in this chapter?**

Answer: The commonly held belief that only the material world is the ultimate reality is challenged. The chapter argues that if Absolute Unitary Being is more real, then subjective and objective realities might be contained within this larger reality.

### 4.Question

**What do scientists like Einstein and Schrödinger reveal about their understanding of reality?**

Answer: Einstein expresses a longing for a 'cosmic religious feeling' that transcends individual existence, while Schrödinger emphasizes the oneness of all conscious beings, highlighting a connection to a greater reality beyond the



material world.

### 5.Question

**How does the chapter suggest one might achieve the state of Absolute Unitary Being?**

Answer: To reach Absolute Unitary Being, the mind must transcend its subjective focus; one must detach from the individual self and allow for a pure awareness where distinctions between self and other dissolve.

### 6.Question

**What does the process of reification involve, and how does it relate to the development of the self?**

Answer: Reification is the process by which the brain gives meaning and substance to perceptions, allowing individuals to construct a sense of self through the recognition and categorization of experiences, ultimately leading to a distinct identity.

### 7.Question

**What is the paradox of achieving selflessness to gain a deeper understanding of reality?**

Answer: To achieve a deeper state of pure awareness—where



self and world blend—one must first engage fully with the mind and its processes, despite the paradox that this requires the mind to go beyond its usual sense of self.

### 8.Question

**What does the chapter imply about the validation of mystical experiences?**

Answer:The chapter implies that while mystical experiences cannot be empirically validated by science, they should not be dismissed as illusions, as they provide profound personal insights and meanings that many assert as 'real'.

### 9.Question

**In what way does the author connect the scientific understanding of the brain to spiritual experiences?**

Answer:The author connects the two by asserting that while spiritual experiences can be explained through neural mechanisms, they evoke feelings of realness that challenge the purely material view of reality, suggesting a deeper connection between science and spirituality.

### 10.Question

**What path does the chapter indicate for obtaining a**



## **higher understanding of existence?**

Answer: The path involves the journey of introspection and self-exploration that allows one to move beyond the ego, leading to a recognition of universal interconnectedness and the essence of pure awareness.

## **Chapter 9 | Why God Won't Go Away: The Metaphor of God and the Mythology of Science| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What is the primary assertion about the nature of God presented in this chapter?**

Answer: The primary assertion is that God is ultimately unknowable and transcendent, beyond human comprehension and description. The chapter emphasizes that all conceptions of God are merely metaphors or symbols pointing to a deeper, more mysterious truth.

### **2.Question**

**How does C.S. Lewis's poem contribute to the theme of the chapter?**



Answer:C.S. Lewis's poem illustrates the idea that literal interpretations of God lead to misunderstandings. He argues that human prayers and conceptions of God often fall short, as they attempt to define the ineffable through limited symbols, thus blaspheming true worship.

### 3.Question

**How do Eastern and Western mystical traditions compare in their understanding of God?**

Answer:Both Eastern and Western mystical traditions acknowledge that God or the ultimate reality is beyond human understanding. While Eastern religions often reject personification of deities, viewing them as symbols of a singular truth, Western mystics also concur that ultimate God transcends personal attributes, like in Kabbalistic and Islamic thought.

### 4.Question

**What is the significance of the concept 'Absolute Unitary Being'?**

Answer:'Absolute Unitary Being' signifies a state of ultimate



spiritual union where all differentiation fades, and the ego ceases to exist. This state reflects a deeper reality in which God cannot be confined to a personified being but exists as the very essence of existence itself.

### 5.Question

**What role does the mystical experience play in understanding God and religion?**

Answer:Mystical experiences serve as direct encounters with the deeper reality of God, allowing individuals to perceive the unity and interconnectedness of all existence. They affirm that all religions, through their different paths, ultimately aim toward the same spiritual truth.

### 6.Question

**How can the views of personal God versus impersonal higher reality lead to conflict among religions?**

Answer:Belief in a personal God often leads to exclusivity, where adherents consider their God and religion as the unique truth. This can fuel religious intolerance and violence, as groups may feel justified in opposing others whom they





perceive as enemies of their beliefs.

### 7.Question

**What does the chapter suggest about science and its relationship with spirituality?**

Answer:The chapter posits that while science traditionally focuses on material reality and empirical evidence, it may overlook deeper spiritual realities. It argues for a reconciliatory view that both science and religion can lead to greater truths about existence when viewed as metaphorical explorations of reality.

### 8.Question

**What is 'interspirituality' and why is it significant?**

Answer:Interspirituality, as described by Wayne Teasdale, signifies the shared spiritual essence behind diverse religious traditions. It highlights the importance of dialogue and respect among different faiths, suggesting that they all spring from the same fundamental quest for unity and understanding of the divine.

### 9.Question

**What can be inferred about the future of human**



## **spirituality based on the chapter's conclusions?**

Answer: The chapter concludes that as long as humans possess the capacity for mystical experiences, spirituality will persist in shaping human existence. It hints at a hopeful future where understanding transcendent unity may help resolve conflicts and foster compassion across cultures and religions.



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## **Chapter 10 | Epilogue: So Just What Is Neurotheology Anyway?| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What is the core message of neurotheology as presented in the epilogue?**

Answer: The core message of neurotheology is that science and religion can coexist harmoniously; one does not have to negate the validity of the other. It proposes that the neurological functions of the brain play a crucial role in religious and spiritual experiences, suggesting that these experiences stem from our brain's capacity for self-transcendence.

### **2.Question**

**How can neurotheology help bridge the gap between science and religion?**

Answer: Neurotheology offers a universal perspective by examining the similarities in brain functions related to spirituality and religious experiences across all humans. This approach allows for a better comprehension of the shared elements of humanity's spiritual experiences, potentially



integrating scientific insights with religious beliefs.

### 3.Question

**What is the importance of community and ethical behavior in the study of neurotheology?**

Answer:Neurotheology emphasizes that understanding the brain's role in spirituality extends beyond mystical experiences to everyday religious practices such as community bonding, ethics, morality, love, and compassion. These aspects are critical for enriching the understanding of how religion shapes individual behavior and communal relationships.

### 4.Question

**What does the concept of AUB (Absolute Unitary Being) represent in neurotheology?**

Answer:AUB symbolizes a fundamental reality that transcends individual experiences of the divine, serving as a common spiritual foundation upon which varied religious interpretations are constructed. It highlights the potential for a universal understanding of spirituality across different



faiths.

### 5.Question

**How does neurotheology approach myths within religions?**

Answer:Neurotheology examines myths through the lens of brain functions, revealing how we perceive and understand opposites, emotional complexities, and the narrative structures of these myths. This analysis assists in deciphering the universal themes that arise across all religious traditions.

### 6.Question

**Why is it said that every human experience is representative of reality in neurotheology?**

Answer:In neurotheology, it is posited that since all experiences are processed through the brain, they are all valid representations of individual reality. This indicates that mystical experiences can feel more profoundly real to the individual, even if they cannot be objectively verified.

### 7.Question

**What is the significance of exploring the relationship between brain function and spirituality?**





Answer: Exploring the links between brain function and spirituality through neurotheology allows for a deeper understanding of how spiritual experiences originate, how they affect individual behavior and beliefs, and how they may influence broader theological discussions. It provides insights into the neurological underpinnings of religious practices and the human desire for connection with the divine.

## 8. Question

**How can a metatheology and megatheology emerge from neurotheological insights?**

Answer: Metatheology can arise by examining how specific theological principles develop from brain functions, while megatheology seeks to identify universal spiritual themes shared across all religions, such as love, forgiveness, and morality. Both frameworks can facilitate a richer understanding of religion by incorporating insights from neuroscience.





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# Why God Won'T Go Away Quiz and Test

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## Chapter 1 | A Photograph of God?: An Introduction to the Biology of Belief| Quiz and Test

1. Research by Newberg and d'Aquili found that during deep meditation, brain activity in Robert's spatial orientation area increased significantly.
2. Newberg and d'Aquili suggest that transcendent experiences during meditation can be objectively studied through neurological research.
3. The researchers propose that religious experiences are purely subjective and not based on any biological processes.

## Chapter 2 | Brain Machinery: The Science of Perception| Quiz and Test

1. The brain's intricate neural networks are built from evolutionary experience, allowing organisms to perceive and react effectively to their environments.

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2. Modern artificial intelligence can replicate the seamless perception and responsiveness exhibited by basic life forms such as toddlers or animals.
3. The cerebral cortex is essential for high-order cognitive functions and is responsible for defining human intelligence, including the creation of language and art.

### **Chapter 3 | Brain Architecture: How the Brain Makes the Mind| Quiz and Test**

1. Meister Eckhart stated that our understanding of reality is constructed by the brain rather than being direct experiences.
2. The limbic system has no significant role in regulating emotional responses during spiritual experiences.
3. Brain imaging methods like PET and fMRI can provide insights into how the brain operates during spiritual and religious states.







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## **Chapter 4 | Myth-making: The Compulsion to Create Stories and Beliefs| Quiz and Test**

1. Myth-making can be traced back to Neanderthal ancestors, suggesting they had a basic understanding of death and belief in an afterlife.
2. Myths only serve as relics of past societies and do not influence modern religions or beliefs.
3. The human brain's evolution has provided us with a cognitive drive to find meaning, particularly when confronted with existential fears.

## **Chapter 5 | Ritual: The Physical Manifestation of Meaning| Quiz and Test**

1. Rituals serve only religious purposes and do not have any secular applications.
2. The brain's tendency to enact thoughts supports the performance of rituals that express myth.
3. Rituals have no relation to neurological processes and do not enhance emotional responses.

## **Chapter 6 | Mysticism: The Biology of Transcendence| Quiz and Test**





1. Evelyn Underhill defines mysticism as the organic process of achieving a conscious relationship with the Absolute, distancing it from superstitious thinking.
2. Modern scientific understanding always interprets mystical experiences as symptoms of psychological issues.
3. The chapter suggests that individuals who report mystical experiences tend to have lower psychological well-being than the general population.





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## **Chapter 7 | The Origins of Religion: The Persistence of a Good Idea 128| Quiz and Test**

1. Religion has been shown to fade away as science and education advance, according to Friedrich Nietzsche's belief.
2. Research indicates that individuals practicing religious faith tend to have better health outcomes compared to non-believers.
3. Mystical experiences that form the foundation of religious faith are solely limited to individuals actively seeking them.

## **Chapter 8 | Realer Than Real: The Mind in Search of Absolutes| Quiz and Test**

1. Mystical experiences have observable neurological bases and are not mere delusions.
2. Scientific measurement can determine the reality of experiences that are not measurable.
3. The concept of Absolute Unitary Being is presented as a profound awareness that encompasses all existence.



## **Chapter 9 | Why God Won't Go Away: The Metaphor of God and the Mythology of Science| Quiz and Test**

- 1.C. S. Lewis argues that literal interpretations of God are merely symbols of a deeper truth.
- 2.In Western mysticism, God is fully knowable and can be easily articulated.
- 3.All religions have distinct interpretations of God that do not reflect a shared ultimate reality.





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## **Chapter 10 | Epilogue: So Just What Is Neurotheology Anyway?| Quiz and Test**

- 1.The authors of 'Why God Won't Go Away' suggest that science and religion can coexist without contradiction.
- 2.Neurotheology is exclusively focused on understanding only mystical experiences within religious practices.
- 3.Neurotheology affirms that mystical experiences are real to individuals, but it cannot prove higher realities exist.







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