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# Religion Explained The Evolutionary Origins Of Religious Thought Pascal Boyer

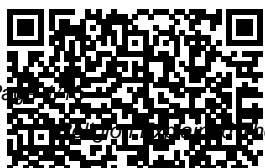
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How Religion Works

May, 18 2024

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Oxford University Press Religion Explained The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought Basic Books <b>Blueprint</b> Princeton University Press	be described and explained with the same precision and success as the rest of nature." Thus argues evolutionary psychologist Pascal Boyer in this uniquely innovative book. Integrating recent insights from evolutionary biology, genetics, psychology, economics, and other fields,	Boyer offers precise models of why humans engage in social behaviors such as forming families, tribes, and nations, or creating gender roles. In fascinating, thought-provoking passages, he explores questions such as: Why is there conflict between groups? Why do people believe low-
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value	human	in question.
information	motivation	Not only
such as	for group	will they
rumors? Why	formation	encounter a
are there	and	wealth of
religions?	cooperation.	information
What is	"Cool and ca	from the
social	ptivating...It	humanities,
justice?	will change	the social
What	forever your	sciences and
explains	understandin	the natural
morality?	g of society	sciences,
Boyer	and	but the book
provides a	culture."—Da	will also
new picture	n Sperber,	serve as an
of cultural	co-author of	invitation
transmission	The Enigma	to look
that draws	of Reason	beyond the
on the	"It is	horizons of
pragmatics	highly recom	their own fi
of human com	mended...to	elds."—Eveli
munication,	researchers	ne Seghers,
the	firmly	Evolutionary
constructive	settled	Studies in
nature of	within one	Imaginative
memory in	of the many	Culture
human	single	<i>A Little History of</i>
brains, and	disciplines	<i>Religion</i> Vintage

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An essential reference for the new discipline of evolutionary cognitive neuroscience that defines the field's approach of applying evolutionary theory to guide brain-behavior investigations.

Early Humans and the Origins of Religion

WestBow Press

This debut book boldly seeks to argue competitively in the same intellectual field as famous atheists such as RICHARD DAWKINS, CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, and BERTRAND RUSSELL, and to do so in the spirit and style of such famous Christian apologists as C.S. Lewis and RAVI

ZACHARIAS, drawing heavily on basic science, history, physics, psychology, paleontology, anthropology, archeology, neurology, child development and even science fiction. It describes the evolution of the human brain in ancient hominids allowing humans to eventually conceive a non-physical realm (the spirit world), and as the mind evolved intellectually from primitive animism to Christology, God revealed himself gradually as the developing hominid brain became able to comprehend new ideas. For Believers, the author presents a new, intellectually satisfying way to understand and defend the Bible. For both Skeptics and Believers, a worldview is offered that is

spiritually meaningful and scientifically sound.

*The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Ethics and Violence*

Harvard

University Press

This book presents a detailed argument to support the view that religion as a cultural practice cannot be properly explained without knowledge of the evolved cognitive mechanisms by which humans process information. This publication has also been published in paperback, please [click here for](#)

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details.

The Evolutionary  
Origins of a Good

Society Bloomsbury  
Publishing

Political, intellectual,  
and academic  
discourse in the  
United States has  
been awash in  
political correctness,  
which has itself been  
berated and defended  
-- yet little

understood. As a  
corrective, Nelson  
and Greene look at a  
more general process:  
adopting political  
positions to enhance  
one's reputation for  
trustworthiness both  
to others and to  
oneself. Phillip  
Nelson and Kenneth  
Greene are Professors  
of Economics in the  
Department of  
Economics at the  
State University of  
New York,  
Binghamton.

**On the Origin of**

**Stories** National  
Academies Press

Today many school  
students are  
shielded from one  
of the most  
important concepts  
in modern science:  
evolution. In  
engaging and  
conversational  
style, *Teaching  
About Evolution  
and the Nature of  
Science* provides a  
well-structured  
framework for  
understanding and  
teaching evolution.  
Written for  
teachers, parents,  
and community  
officials as well as  
scientists and  
educators, this book  
describes how  
evolution reveals  
both the great  
diversity and

similarity among the  
Earth's organisms; it  
explores how  
scientists approach  
the question of  
evolution; and it  
illustrates the nature  
of science as a way  
of knowing about  
the natural world. In  
addition, the book  
provides answers to  
frequently asked  
questions to help  
readers understand  
many of the issues  
and misconceptions  
about evolution. The  
book includes  
sample activities for  
teaching about  
evolution and the  
nature of science.  
For example, the  
book includes  
activities that  
investigate fossil  
footprints and  
population growth  
that teachers of

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<p>science can use to introduce principles of evolution. Background information, materials, and step-by-step presentations are provided for each activity. In addition, this volume: Presents the evidence for evolution, including how evolution can be observed today. Explains the nature of science through a variety of examples. Describes how science differs from other human endeavors and why evolution is one of the best avenues for helping students understand this distinction. Answers frequently asked questions about</p>	<p>evolution. Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science builds on the 1996 National Science Education Standards released by the National Research Council--and offers detailed guidance on how to evaluate and choose instructional materials that support the standards. Comprehensive and practical, this book brings one of today's educational challenges into focus in a balanced and reasoned discussion. It will be of special interest to teachers of science, school administrators, and interested members of the community.</p>	<p><u>The Roots of Religion</u> Wiley-Blackwell With contributions from founders of the field, including Justin Barrett, E. Thomas Lawson, Robert N. McCauley, Paschal Boyer, Armin Geertz and Harvey Whitehouse, as well as from younger scholars from successive stages in the field's development, this is an important survey of the first twenty-five years of the cognitive science of religion. Each chapter provides the author's views on the contributions the cognitive science of religion has made to the academic study of religion, as well as any shortcomings in the field and challenges for the future. Religion Explained? The</p>
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Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-five Years calls attention to the field whilst providing an accessible and diverse survey of approaches from key voices, as well as offering suggestions for further research within the field. This book is essential reading for anyone in religious studies, anthropology, and the scientific study of religion. University of Michigan Press

Many of our questions about religion, says renowned anthropologist Pascal Boyer, are no longer mysteries. We are beginning to know how to answer questions such as

"Why do people have religion?" Using findings from anthropology, cognitive science, linguistics, and evolutionary biology, *Religion Explained* shows how this aspect of human consciousness is increasingly admissible to coherent, naturalistic explanation. This brilliant and controversial book gives readers the first scientific explanation for what religious feeling is really about, what it consists of, and where it comes

from.

## **The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion**

Cambridge University Press

This ambitious, interdisciplinary book seeks to explain the origins of religion using our knowledge of the evolution of cognition. A cognitive anthropologist and psychologist, Scott Atran argues that religion is a by-product of human evolution just as the cognitive intervention, cultural selection, and historical survival of religion is an accommodation of certain existential and moral elements

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that have evolved in the human condition.	elucidate the perennial questions about religion: What is its purpose? How did it arise? What is its source? Why does every known culture have some form of it? Their answer is deceptively simple, yet at the same time highly complex: The brain creates religion and its varied concepts of God, and then in turn feeds on its creation to satisfy innate neurological and associated social needs. Brain science reveals that humans and other primates alike are afflicted	by unavoidable sources of stress that the authors describe as "brainpain." To cope with this affliction people seek to "brainsoothe." We humans use religion and its social structures to induce brainsoothing as a relief for innate anxiety. How we do this is the subject of this groundbreaking book. In a concise, lively, accessible, and witty style, the authors combine zoom-lens vignettes of religious practices with discussions of the latest research
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on religion's neurological effects on the brain. Among other topics, they consider religion's role in providing positive socialization, its seeming obsession with regulating sex, the common biological scaffolding between nonhuman primates and humans and how this affects religion, and evidence that the palliative effects of religion on brain chemistry are not matched by nonreligious remedies. In a new preface to the

paperback edition, Lionel Tiger discusses the paradoxical effects of religion--on the one hand, producing masterpieces of art and architecture and, on the other, fueling violence throughout history and into the present. This fascinating book provides key insights into the complexities of our brain and the role of religion, perhaps its most remarkable creation. *Minds Make Societies* Routledge In his bestselling *The Moral Animal*, Robert Wright applied the principles

of evolutionary biology to the study of the human mind. Now Wright attempts something even more ambitious: explaining the direction of evolution and human history--and discerning where history will lead us next. In *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny*, Wright asserts that, ever since the primordial ooze, life has followed a basic pattern. Organisms and human societies alike have grown more complex by mastering the challenges of internal cooperation. Wright's narrative ranges from fossilized bacteria to vampire bats, from stone-age villages to the World Trade Organization, uncovering such surprises as the benefits of barbarian

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hordes and the useful stability of feudalism. Here is history endowed with moral significance—a way of looking at our biological and cultural evolution that suggests, refreshingly, that human morality has improved over time, and that our instinct to discover meaning may itself serve a higher purpose. Insightful, witty, profound, Nonzero offers breathtaking implications for what we believe and how we adapt to technology's ongoing transformation of the world.

*Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art,*

*and Custom*  
Columbia University Press  
The cognitive science of religion is a new discipline that looks at the roots of religious belief in the cognitive architecture of the human mind. The *Roots of Religion* deals with the philosophical and theological implications of the cognitive science of religion which grounds religious belief in human cognitive structures: religious belief is 'natural', in a way that even scientific thought is not. Does this

new discipline support religious belief, undermine it, or is it, despite many claims, perhaps eventually neutral? This subject is of immense importance, particularly given the rise of the 'new atheism'. Philosophers and theologians from North America, UK and Australia, explore the alleged conflict between truth claims and examine the roots of religion in human nature. Is it less 'natural' to be an atheist than to believe in God, or gods? On the other hand, if we can

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explain theism psychologically, have we explained it away. Can it still claim any truth?

This book debates these and related issues.

*God's Brain* Basic Books

Religion is one of the most powerful forces running through human history, and although often presented as a force for good, its impact is frequently violent and divisive. This provocative work brings together cutting-edge research from both evolutionary and cognitive psychology to help readers understand the psychological structure of religious morality and the origins of religious

violence. Introduces a fundamentally new approach to the analysis of religion in a style accessible to the general reader

Applies insights from evolutionary and cognitive psychology to both Judaism and Christianity, and their texts, to help understand the origins of religious violence Argues that religious violence is grounded in the moral psychology of religion Illustrates its controversial argument with reference to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the response to the attacks from both the terrorists and the President. Suggests strategies for beginning to counter the divisive aspects of religion Discusses the role of religion and religious criticism in

the contemporary world. Argues for a position sceptical of the moral authority of religion, while also critiquing the excesses of the "new atheists" for failing to appreciate the moral contributions of religion Awarded Honourable Mention, 2010 Prose Awards

**How Cognition Explains the World Humans Create Basic Books**

Noted science writer Nicholas Wade offers for the first time a convincing case based on a broad range of scientific evidence for the evolutionary basis of religion.

Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science

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Harvard University Press

Examines how the belief in gods has lead to cooperation and sometimes conflict between groups. The author also looks at how some cooperative societies have developed without belief in gods.

Breaking the Spell

Routledge

Evolution, Games, and God explores how cooperation and altruism, alongside mutation and natural selection, play a critical role in evolution, from microbes to human societies. Inheriting a tendency to cooperate and self-

sacrifice on behalf of others may be as beneficial to a population's survival as the self-preserving instincts of individuals.

**How Religion Evolved and Why It Endures**

Praeger  
Religions and mythologies from around the world teach that God or gods created humans. Atheist, humanist, and materialist critics, meanwhile, have attempted to turn theology on its head, claiming that religion is a human invention. In this book, E. Fuller Torrey draws on cutting-edge neuroscience

research to propose a startling answer to the ultimate question. *Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods* locates the origin of gods within the human brain, arguing that religious belief is a by-product of evolution. Based on an idea originally proposed by Charles Darwin, Torrey marshals evidence that the emergence of gods was an incidental consequence of several evolutionary factors. Using data ranging from ancient skulls and artifacts to brain imaging, primatology, and child development studies, this book traces how new

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cognitive abilities gave rise to new behaviors. For instance, autobiographical memory, the ability to project ourselves backward and forward in time, gave Homo sapiens a competitive advantage. However, it also led to comprehension of mortality, spurring belief in an alternative to death. Torrey details the neurobiological sequence that explains why the gods appeared when they did, connecting archaeological findings including clothing, art, farming, and urbanization to cognitive developments. This

book does not dismiss belief but rather presents religious belief as an inevitable outcome of brain evolution. Providing clear and accessible explanations of evolutionary neuroscience, *Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods* will shed new light on the mechanics of our deepest mysteries. Rethinking Religion University of Chicago Press Religion is one of the most powerful forces running through human history, and although often presented as a force for good, its

impact is frequently violent and divisive. This provocative work brings together cutting-edge research from both evolutionary and cognitive psychology to help readers understand the psychological structure of religious morality and the origins of religious violence. Introduces a fundamentally new approach to the analysis of religion in a style accessible to the general reader Applies insights from evolutionary and cognitive psychology to both Judaism and

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<p>Christianity, and their texts, to help understand the origins of religious violence Argues that religious violence is grounded in the moral psychology of religion Illustrates its controversial argument with reference to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the response to the attacks from both the terrorists and the President. Suggests strategies for beginning to counter the divisive aspects of religion Discusses the role of religion and religious criticism in the</p>	<p>contemporary world. Argues for a position sceptical of the moral authority of religion, while also critiquing the excesses of the “new atheists” for failing to appreciate the moral contributions of religion Awarded Honourable Mention, 2010 Prose Awards <i>Religion Explained</i> Univ of California Press For curious readers young and old, a rich and colorful history of religion from humanity’s earliest days to our own contentious times In an era of hardening religious attitudes and explosive</p>	<p>religious violence, this book offers a welcome antidote. Richard Holloway retells the entire history of religion—from the dawn of religious belief to the twenty-first century—with deepest respect and a keen commitment to accuracy. Writing for those with faith and those without, and especially for young readers, he encourages curiosity and tolerance, accentuates nuance and mystery, and calmly restores a sense of the value of faith. Ranging far beyond the major world religions of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, Holloway also examines where religious belief comes from, the search for</p>
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meaning throughout  
history, today's  
fascinations with  
Scientology and  
creationism,  
religiously motivated  
violence, hostilities  
between religious  
people and secularists,  
and more. Holloway  
proves an empathic  
yet discerning guide  
to the enduring  
significance of faith  
and its power from  
ancient times to our  
own.