

Theme Issue: Experimental NeuroTheology, Book Review

Andrew Newberg

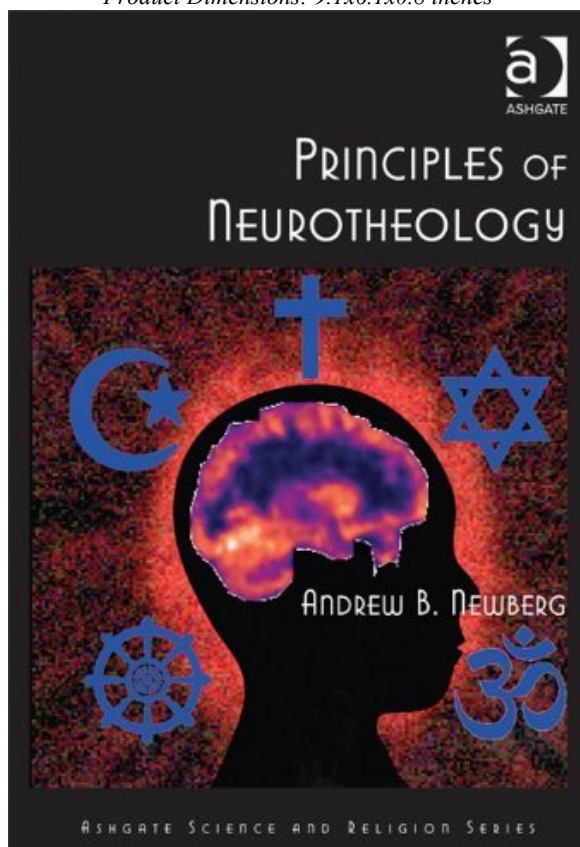
Principles of Neurotheology

Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co.

Michael A. Persinger and Christina F. Lavallee

NeuroQuantology 2010; 4: 600-602

Imprint: Ashgate
Illustrations: Includes 4 b&w illustrations
Published: September 2010
Format: 234 x 156 mm
Extent: 286 pages
Binding: Paperback
Also as Hardback
ISBN: 978-0-7546-6994-4
Product Dimensions: 9.1x6.1x0.8 inches



Principles of Neurotheology is the scholastic integration by the perspicacious Andrew Newberg of two seemingly disparate fields, neuroscience and theology. *Principles of Neurotheology* is not just merely a discussion of God and brain. The multidisciplinary nature of neurotheology requires an integrative framework to discern the mind / brain connection with religion/spirituality; Newberg describes how this can be accomplished. He outlines the problems with the current dialogues between theologians and neuroscientists and delineates the difficulties with the operational definitions as well as the limitations of the current tools of measurement. The necessity to capture the subjective phenomenological experience by appropriate neurophysiological methods is emphasized. For neurotheology to evolve into a reputable scholastic discipline, Newberg provides clear procedures for these problems to be accommodated. In this aspect, Newberg's perspective is from the current crossroads of science and religion, providing a historical, cultural and paradigmatic framework for how these two areas may intersect.

The study of neurotheology, as Newberg argues, by combining theology and neuroscience, can allow human beings to attain answers to some of the fundamental philosophical questions about the nature of reality and the universe. This would ultimately reconcile whether the various religious or spiritual experiences perceived across traditions are truly separate and distinct experiences or if they are merely different interpretations of the same neurophysiological phenomenon. *Principles*

Corresponding author: Michael A. Persinger

Address: Consciousness Research Laboratory Behavioural Neuroscience and Biomolecular Sciences Programs Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario Canada P3E 2C6.

Phone: +01 705-675-4824

e-mail: mpersinger@laurentian.ca

Received Nov 15, 2010. Revised Nov 15, 2010. Accepted Nov 22, 2010.

ISSN 1303 5150

www.neuroquantology.com

of Neurotheology is an essential text for scholars wishing to pursue the field with scientific rigour as Newberg outlines the strengths and weaknesses within the field and provides concrete suggestions for future studies. A robust scientific neurotheology will not only contribute to the field of consciousness research, but also to any other discipline that has focused on the nature of reality.

About the Andrew Newberg



Andrew Newberg, MD

Dr. Andrew Newberg is Director of Research at the Myrna Brind Center for Integrative Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and Medical College. He is also Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He is Board-certified in Internal Medicine and Nuclear Medicine. He is considered a pioneer in the neuroscientific study of religious and spiritual experiences, a field frequently referred to as – neurotheology. His work attempts to better understand the nature of

religious and spiritual practices and experiences. This has been compiled into his latest book, *Principles of Neurotheology*, which reviews the important principles and foundations of neurotheology. Believing that it is important to keep science rigorous and religion religious, he has engaged the topic like few others. He has been fascinated by the implications of this research for the study of the mind, brain, consciousness, morality, theology, and philosophy. He has also been particularly interested in the relationship between the brain, religion, and health. His research has included brain scans of people in prayer, meditation, rituals, and various trance states. He has also performed surveys of people's spiritual experiences and attitudes. Finally, he has evaluated the relationship between religious and spiritual phenomena and health. This includes a recent study on the effect of meditation on memory.

In his career, he has also actively pursued neuroimaging research projects on the study of aging and dementia, Parkinson's disease, depression, and other neurological and psychiatric disorders. He has also researched the neurophysiological correlates of acupuncture, meditation, and alternative therapies, and how brain function is associated with mystical and religious experiences. Dr. Newberg helped develop stress-management programs for the University of Pennsylvania Health Systems and received a Science and Religion Course Award from the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences for his program entitled "The Biology of Spirituality" in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania. He is currently teaching a course in the Department of Religious Studies entitled, "Science and the Sacred: An Introduction to Neurotheology."

Dr. Newberg has published over 100 research articles, essays and book chapters, and is the co-author of the bestselling books, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (Ballantine, 2001) and *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist* (Ballantine, 2009). He has presented his research throughout the world in both scientific and public forums. He appeared on *Nightline*, 20/20, *Good Morning America*,

ABC's World News Tonight, National Public Radio, London Talk Radio and over fifteen nationally syndicated radio programs. His work has been featured in Time, Newsweek, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post,

the Philadelphia Inquirer, and many other newspapers and magazines.

Personal page:
<http://www.andrewnewberg.com/>