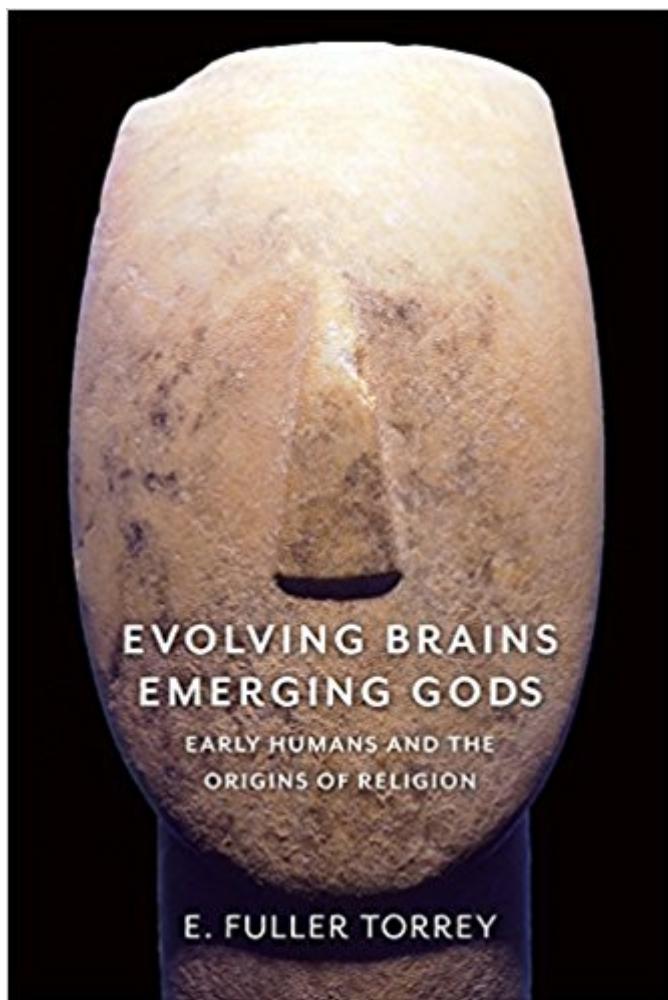


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# Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods: Early Humans And The Origins Of Religion



## Synopsis

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 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A unique scholarly approach to the subject that is sure to be influential and highly regarded. (Robert Sapolsky, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn Professor of Biology, Neurology, and Neurosurgery, Stanford University) In *Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods*, E. Fuller Torrey offers a scholarly and insightful treatise on the neuroscientific relationship between humanity and deities. In his twenty-first book, one senses a profound vision of the hereafter in the arc of this eminent mental health advocate and researcher's career, from whom we hope there will be more to come. (Jeffrey Lieberman, Jeffrey Lieberman, chair of psychiatry, Columbia University Medical Center and psychiatrist in chief of the New York Presbyterian Hospital, past president of the American Psychiatric Association) An excellent text that throws new light on where religious ideas come from. (Patrick McNamara, Director of the Laboratory of Evolutionary Neurobehavior, Boston University) A masterful synthesis that merges the archaeological and anthropological evidence for the evolving elaboration of religious activity with the fossil evidence for the neurobiological evolution of the human brain and the psychological evidence for the evolution of the human mind housed within that evolving brain. (Michael Rosenberg, University of Delaware) Presented in a manner that is accessible to nonscientists....[an] insightful, thought-provoking work. (Publishers Weekly)

*Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods* locates the origin of gods within the human brain, arguing that religious belief is a byproduct of evolution. Using data ranging from ancient skulls and artifacts to brain imaging, primatology, and child development studies, this book traces how new cognitive abilities gave rise to new behaviors. Torrey details the neurobiological sequence that explains why the gods appeared when they did, connecting archeological findings including clothing, art, farming, and urbanization to cognitive developments.

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