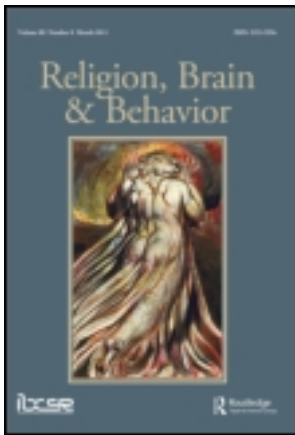


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### Editorial

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## EDITORIAL

This issue reflects the variety of research carried out in the scientific study of religion, and also the scope of RBB's publishing goals.

We present a neuroimaging study from Raymond L. Neubauer that attempts to interpret the phenomenon of the felt-presence of God during improvised personal prayer among Pentecostal Christians. This is a thought-provoking follow-up to the previous issue's book symposium on Tanya Luhrmann's book, *When God Talks Back*, which is an ethnography of Christians whose worship practices involve cultivating a personal relationship with God.

This issue also contains a report on a large survey-based study in New Zealand by Marc Stewart Wilson, Joseph Bulbulia, and Chris G. Sibley. The results of this research deconstruct easy distinctions between religious and secular people and invite us to look deeper. People attracted to secular lifestyles appear to give up religion and superstition at quite different speeds, and some resolutely non-religious people retain strong supernatural beliefs.

The bulk of this issue is a target article by Nathaniel F. Barrett with nine commentaries and a response by the author. The opening gambit is Barrett's "The perception of religious meaning and value: an ecological approach." Barrett points out the strange silence within the scientific study of religion about meaning and value in religious phenomena. Meaning and value are aspects of experiences, beliefs, and practices that religious people prize extremely highly. Barrett argues that an ecological approach can shed light on the sense in which value arises from the engagement of a complex environment by a skilled perceiver. His leading analogy is with the way value emerges from expert musical performances. Barrett's commentators take up his article from a variety of angles before he offers his response.

This high-level exchange indicates the value of keeping philosophical reasoning and analysis in contact with results from the scientific study of religion, theoretical psychology, and cognitive neuroscience. The humanities have a vital interpretative role to play in making sense of results from the scientific study of religion, and also in guiding researchers toward potentially fruitful lines of inquiry.

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