



Dr. Tony Huntley

The Biological Basis for Morality, Religiosity, and Belief in God

**Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Orange County Chapter**

Saturday, April 17 at 2:00 pm

Irvine Ranch Water District¹ 15600 Sand Canyon Ave. (at Waterworks) in Irvine

Dr. Tony Huntley received undergraduate degrees in biology and chemistry from the University of California at Irvine. While at UCI, he was involved in the psychophysiological study of sleep. He was part of the founding of the second medical sleep lab in the United States at UCI in 1976. He received a masters of science in biology from the California State University at Fullerton. Following this he completed his doctoral work at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where he spent 12 years studying the physiology of sleep and diving practices in the northern elephant seal. Presently, Dr. Huntley is the co-chair of Biological Sciences at Saddleback College, where he teaches the biology majors' core classes, evolution, animal behavior and oceanography.



Significant recent research has led to a much greater scientific understanding of the biological origins and correlates for morality. Dr. Huntley will argue that morality is an outcome of natural and sexual selection and that it emerges in its complex human form about the time that the human brain and capacity for speech appear. However, certain “altruistic behaviors” can be seen in several non-human species; thus we can follow the biological evolution of moral behaviors. Studies using functional MRI seem to indicate that specific regions of the brain are associated with moral belief systems, religiosity and belief in God. In the 1990’s several Italian researchers described “mirror neurons” that fire both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another animal. These neurons, so often suggested for the origin of language and imitation in birds and primates, may also be correlated with the evolution of empathy. Thus, it may be possible to actually look into the brain and see both the regions and the cells responsible for what we call moral behavior.

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