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Brain Scan Of Nuns Finds No Single 'God Spot' In The Brain, Study Finds

Aug. 30, 2006 — A new study at the Université de Montréal has concluded that there is no single God spot in the brain. In other words, mystical experiences are mediated by several brain regions and systems normally implicated in a variety of functions (self-consciousness, emotion, body representation). The study published in the current issue of *Neuroscience Letters* was conducted by Dr. Mario Beauregard from the Department of Psychology at the Université de Montréal and his student Vincent Paquette.

"The main goal of the study was to identify the neural correlates of a mystical experience," explained Beauregard. "This does not diminish the meaning and value of such an experience, and neither does it confirm or disconfirm the existence of God."

Fifteen cloistered Carmelite nuns ranging from 23 to 64-years-old were subjected to an fMRI brain scan while asked to relive a mystical experience rather than actually try to achieve one. "I was obliged to do it this way seeing as the nuns are unable to call upon God at will," said Beauregard. This method was justified seeing as previous studies with actors asked to enter a particular emotional state activated the same brain regions as people actually living those emotions.

This study demonstrated that a dozen different regions of the brain are activated during a mystical experience. This type of research became very popular in the United States in the late 1990s. Some researchers went as far as suggesting the possibility of a specific brain region designed for communication with God. This latest research discredits such theories.

About the Université de Montréal

Founded in 1878, the Université de Montréal today has 13 faculties and together with its two affiliated schools, HEC Montréal and École Polytechnique, constitutes the largest centre of higher education and research in Québec, the second largest in Canada, and one of the major centres in North America. It brings together 2,400 professors and researchers, accommodates more than 55,000 students, offers some 650 programs at all academic levels, and awards about 3,000 masters and doctorate diplomas each year.

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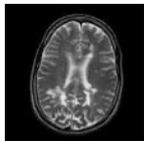
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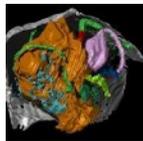
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