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Believing is considered to be a mental process heuristically labelled „credition“ that is made manifest in its fullest form by the human brain. Believing involves the recognition of signals in the form of probabilistic representations from the internal or external world in association with attribution of subjective meaning to them. This experiential process is perpetuated and gains the perception of continuity through declarative and procedural learning. Therefore, believing enables probabilistic cost/reward predictions that guide behaviour. Experimental work in systems neurophysiology has provided insight into the rapid evolution of cerebral network activity in the order of milliseconds affording believing. Social neuroscience has pointed out that these neuroscientific principles apply to meaning systems according to which individuals relate themselves to social groups and societies. Against this background the question of what is the contextual picture for the formation of religion is addressed as follows:

This presentation is based on the hypothesis that believing is brought about by fundamental brain processes that can be object of neuroscientific investigation. Thereby, it is possible to bridge the gap between human brain work and the notion of religion. It will be shown that in the individuals the mental processes underlying believing develop during infancy in relation to the evolution of language comprehension, theory of mind, and empathy. The constituents of believing are propositions provided to the individuals by narratives and the relevance associated with them by the subjects. These mental constructs are reinforced by rituals which are practiced in families, groups and societies. Thereupon the senses of in-group belonging, safety, and meaning of life develop which are likely to have been operational in the formation of cultures from pre-historical times onwards. As cross-cultural studies have shown, the neurobiological machinery in the human brain appears suitable to afford different cultural products including religions.