Psychology Colloquium / Advanced Seminar in Psychology

Foxhole atheism, revisited: The incorrigible religiosity of being

Mr Jonathan Jong
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2:30 pm, Friday, 2 September 2011
Lecture Hall D350 (Coffs Harbour campus)
Video-linked to Lecture Hall P158 (Lismore campus) and to
A223 (Tweed Heads Gold Coast Riverside campus)

All welcome

About the colloquium. Religion is cross-culturally and historically ubiquitous. The belief in supernatural agents—gods, demons, angels, souls, spirits, and their ilk—seems to be a universal feature of human social cognition. Indeed, recent research suggests that such concepts are natural outputs of adaptive social cognitive mechanisms. However, these cognitive theories do not explain the costly devotion associated with religious beliefs. Whereas many functional and motivational theories have been proposed, the notion that religious beliefs are driven by existential anxieties recurs across the history of ideas. In this talk, we shall see how death-related affect and cognition reveals the incorrigible—even promiscuous—religiosity that possesses us all.

About the speaker. Jonathan Jong is a PhD. candidate at the University of Otago, New Zealand, where he also obtained his BSc(Hons) in 2007. His doctoral research is in the cognitive science of religion and the philosophy of religion, looking specifically at the role of existential anxiety in religious belief and at the philosophical/theological implications of the naturalistic science of religion. His other research interests include the role of anthropomorphism in religious belief, the evolutionary psychology of religion more broadly, Terror Management Theory, the use (and abuses) of psychometric scales and implicit measures, and epistemology as it relates to science and religion.

About the speaker's host. Professor Robert O'Shea, robert.oshea@scu.edu.au

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