



How Religion Works: Towards a New Cognitive Science of Religion (Cognition & Culture Book Series)

By Ilkka Pyysiainen

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Recent findings in cognitive science and evolutionary psychology provide important insights to the processes which make religious beliefs and behaviors such efficient attractors in and across various cultural settings. The specific salience of religious ideas is based on the fact that they are 'counter-intuitive': they contradict our intuitive expectations of how entities normally behave. Counter-intuitive ideas are only produced by a mind capable of crossing the boundaries that separate such ontological domains as persons, living things, *and solid* objects. The evolution of such a mind has only taken place in the human species. How certain kinds of counter-intuitive ideas are selected for a religious use is discussed from varying angles. Cognitive considerations are thus related to the traditions of comparative religion. This publication has also been published in hardback, please [click here](#) for details.

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Review

'How Religion Works "offers one of the best introductions currently available on the growing interest...in the nature and function of religion"' Kelly Bulkeley, "Religious Studies Review"

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About the Author

Ilkka Pyysiainen, Ph.D. (1993), University of Helsinki, is Academy Research Fellow at the Academy of Finland. He has published numerous articles and edited the volume *Current Approaches in the Cognitive Study of Religion* (Continuum, 2002).

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