

## 2007 Minns Lecture Series

### *The Experience of Religious Varieties: Psychology of Religion for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

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#### *Psychology of Religion for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Although the psychology of religion has yet to receive the institutional support it needs to fulfil its promise, few disciplines are as important today for our self-understanding and collective future. Touching upon topics that range from the perennially fascinating—including prayer and healing, the neuroscience of mystical encounters, dreams, and near-death experiences—to the socially critical—such as fundamentalism, intergroup conflict, and terrorism—this talk will introduce the psychology of religion as a field whose time has come.

Wednesday, March 14, 2007, 7:30 p.m.

First Church in Boston

#### *Spiritual Immigrants and Religious Refugees: the Psychology of Unitarian Universalism*

What are Unitarian Universalists really like? What might theists, mystics, pagans, and scientifically inclined atheists who identify themselves as UUs hold in common? Surprisingly little is actually known about the personal experiences, individual differences, and psychological variables that have led people to this eclectic tradition. This talk will report some preliminary research revealing the nature of Unitarian Universalism on a different level and in a new way.

Thursday, March 15, 2007, 7 p.m.

King's Chapel, Boston

#### *The Modern Missionary Position: the Psychology of Fundamentalist Sects in Global Context*

Since 9/11 few of us have been able to look at religious and cultural differences in the same way. But what can psychology tell us about how we got from the burning bush to creationism, Al Qaeda, and George Bush? While critically evaluating fundamentalism this talk will also challenge us to recognize some of its shortcomings in ourselves. No matter what our theological stance, even the mentality of terrorism may not be entirely alien to some of our own, very human impulses.

Wednesday, March 21, 2007, 7 p.m.

First Parish Cambridge

*What it Means to be Human: Creativity, Mental Illness and Religious Experience*

At least since Plato some kinship of spirit has been assumed between the poet, the madman, and the seer. But how could the noblest expressions of our humanity and of our greatest genius be related to the disintegration of mind? This talk presents some of my research developing the Extraordinary-Ordinary Novelty (EON) theory of personality, creativity, and religious experience. It shows how psychology may now offer a more satisfying, less pathology-oriented explanation of this definitively human relationship.

Thursday, March 22, 2007, 5:30 p.m.

Harvard Divinity School, Braun Room

*Challenges for the Psychology of Religion: Fundamentalism, Meaning-Making, and the Future of Religion*

Taken together, globalization, fundamentalism, cultural conflict, and our vastly expanded scientific powers over the physical world may pose the most serious long-term threat to the survival of humanity. This talk will explore how the psychology of religion can help us better understand this dangerous cultural cocktail and the crisis of meaning-making at its core.

Tuesday, March 27, 2007, 5:30 p.m.

Meadville-Lombard School of Theology, University of Chicago

*Homo Syntheticus: Art, Religion, and the Future Human*

The psychology of religion can make significant contributions to the new kind of self-understanding required by our explosively changing world. A relevant cultural trend towards the fusion of creativity with spirituality has arrived in the modern West at the very moment of this critical need. But given what we are, and what problems we face, what might we have to become? This talk proposes two new epithets (*homo syntheticus* and *homo mirans*) to denote the fundamental “human difference” and explore our prospects as a species.

Thursday, April 5, 2007, 5:30 p.m.

Starr King School for the Ministry, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA