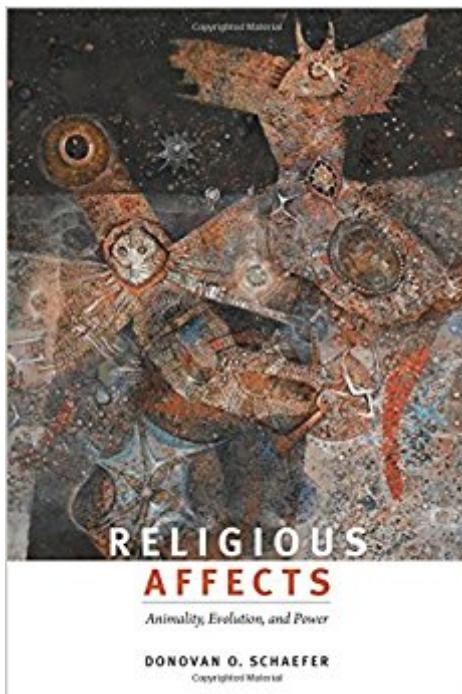


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# Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, And Power



## Synopsis

In *Religious Affects* Donovan O. Schaefer challenges the notion that religion is inextricably linked to language and belief, proposing instead that it is primarily driven by affects. Drawing on affect theory, evolutionary biology, and poststructuralist theory, Schaefer builds on the recent materialist shift in religious studies to relocate religious practices in the affective realm— an insight that helps us better understand how religion is lived in conjunction with systems of power. To demonstrate religion's animality and how it works affectively, Schaefer turns to a series of case studies, including the documentary *Jesus Camp* and contemporary American Islamophobia. Placing affect theory in conversation with post-Darwinian evolutionary theory, Schaefer explores the extent to which nonhuman animals have the capacity to practice religion, linking human forms of religion and power through a new analysis of the chimpanzee waterfall dance as observed by Jane Goodall. In this compelling case for the use of affect theory in religious studies, Schaefer provides a new model for mapping relations between religion, politics, species, globalization, secularism, race, and ethics.

## Book Information

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"Blending seamlessly the most fecund insights of affect theory, evolutionary biology, and critical animal studies, as well as feminist, queer, and postcolonial theories of materiality and embodiment, this bold and trenchant challenge to the ideology of human exceptionalism and its accompanying linguistic fallacy—the refusal to analyze religion and power outside of language and texts—offers a revolutionary and more capacious approach to religion that recovers its

visceral intensity and animal generativity." (Manuel A. VÁfÁsquez, author of *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*) "Religious Affects represents a challenge to decenter our anthropocentric presuppositions more broadly, and, by appealing to human animality, provides a provocative angle for imagining affect over and above the all-toohuman parameters that usually characterize religious studies.... [M]any scholars will find Schaefer's animal religion and his strategies for affective readings of religious phenomena both theoretically exciting and critically useful." (Abigail Kluchin, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 2016-06-01) "Schaefer's book is fascinating, mind-expanding, and entirely worth a read." (Barbara J. King, *The Atlantic* 2016-03-29) "Religious Affects is an original and challenging argument for the discipline, especially to social-constructionist approaches, as it aims to radically reconfigure how we think about religion as a phenomenon grounded in feelings and emotions (affects) that humans share with the animal world." (Matt Sheedy, *Religious Studies Review* 2016-06-01) "For all its breadth in Religious Affects Schaefer develops a well-crafted argument and clarion call: the study of religion must include, at its very core, the study of affect.... Schaefer's project is timely in an urgent sense." (Jonathan Russell, *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 2016-06-03) "Religious Affects offers a new way to use affect theory to understand religion that better accounts for its connections with politics, globalization, and power." (Staci Poston, *Conner Affectsphere* 2016-05-12) "Schaefer . . . is blazing a trail in religious studies." (Jonathan Benthall, *Times Literary Supplement* 2016-06-17)

Donovan O. Schaefer is Departmental Lecturer in Science and Religion at the University of Oxford.

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