

Edward Slingerland

In this talk I will argue that one of the best ways for evolutionary and social psychologists to get beyond the WEIRD (Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic) problem in studying religion from a scientific perspective is to expand their subject pool to include past minds. Our inability to run controlled experiments on dead subjects imposes some limits on the usefulness of this data, but I will argue that it is more than outweighed by the diversity, accessibility and sheer quantity of data from dead minds.

Focusing on the issue of body-mind dualism in early China, I will explain how implicit psychological mechanisms and assumptions can be extracted from textual evidence, and illustrate some novel, digital humanities techniques for analyzing texts and sharing scholarly opinion about the religious historical record