

Analytic atheism revisited

To the Editor — We appreciate the efforts of this research team¹ in their replication attempt of the second study reported in ref. ². Given the present results and a previous preregistered non-replication³, we no longer have confidence in the finding that viewing pictures of *The Thinker* reduces self-reported religious belief (see ref. ⁴ for a more colourful commentary).

This raises the issue of how this result fits in the complex mosaic of other findings about analytic thinking and religious disbelief. While other experimental procedures report effects whereby the triggering of analytic thinking reduce reported religious belief^{2,5,6}, the replication record of such experiments is shaky at best and should be treated as provisional until followed up with more rigorous replication efforts. At the same time, the small correlation between cognitive reflection and religious disbelief (study 1 from ref. ², and refs ^{5,7}) has been replicated in follow-up

studies in high-powered samples and with demographic controls^{8,9}. Interestingly, recent cross-cultural work has shown that this correlation reliably emerges in cultural contexts where religiosity levels are moderate to high, but diminishes or disappears in cultures that are highly secularized, pointing to an interaction of analytic thinking with cultural exposure to religion¹⁰. We look forward to additional research in this area that uses rigorous experimental techniques, better and broader measures of the constructs, and cross-cultural methods to place our knowledge of the cognitive correlates of religious belief on firmer ground. □

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Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.