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Dear editors,

We are pleased to submit a new manuscript, "The Origins of Religious Disbelief: A Dual Inheritance Approach" for your consideration. The past years have seen a proliferation of excellent theoretical and empirical work on the cognitive and evolutionary foundations of religion in top interdisciplinary journals. Religion is a core feature of human nature, yet a comprehensive evolutionary approach to religion must account for religious disbelief. Potentially more than 2 billion people don't believe in God or gods, thanks to underreporting of atheism (............). Prominent theories of religion make quite different predictions al............s, and predictors of religious disbelief. We sought to pit these theor............

In our paper, we report results of a large, nationally representative (USA) sample that we paired with preregistered analyses to empirically evaluate three prominent theoretical approaches (secularization theory from sociology and social psychology, cognitive byproduct from cognitive science of religion and evolutionary psychology, and a dual inheritance approach that draws heavily from work in cultural evolution). We test these theories by evaluating the predictive strength of four different pathways to religious disbelief emerging from distinct literatures (Norenzayan & Gervais, 2013). In the end, our results most closely match the predictions of a dual inheritance perspective.

Beyond implications for the evolutionary and cognitive study of religion, this work speaks to enduring disagreements about the roles of transmitted vs. evoked culture, content- vs. context-biased cultural learning, and the core components of belief and disbelief more broadly. Some of these disagreements are key fault lines between different schools of human evolutionary thought. We also muse on several meta-scientific points about the varieties of replication, the importance of formal theory, and the need for diversity in samples and approaches for a generative science. Thus, this work speaks directly to a key challenge in evolutionary theories of religion, but also will be of interest to social scientists more broadly. Thank you for your attention to our manuscript.

Sincerely,

Will Gervais, Maxine Najle, Sarah Schiavone, and Nava Caluori