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Science and God: An automatic opposition between ultimate explanations

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Abstract

Science and religion have come into conflict repeatedly throughout history, and one simple reason for this is the two offer competing explanations for many of the same phenomena. We present evidence that the conflict between these two concepts can occur automatically, such that increasing the perceived value of one decreases the automatic evaluation of the other. In Experiment 1, scientific theories described as poor explanations decreased automatic evaluations of science, but simultaneously increased automatic evaluations of God. In Experiment 2, using God as an explanation increased automatic evaluations of God, but decreased automatic evaluations of science. Religion and science both have the potential to be ultimate explanations, and these findings suggest that this competition for explanatory space can create an automatic opposition in evaluations.



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Causal explanation; Religion; Science

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