

Are Atheists Unprejudiced? Forms of Nonbelief and Prejudice Toward Antiliberal and Mainstream Religious Groups

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Building on the ideological-conflict hypothesis, we argue that, beyond the religion–prejudice association, there should exist an irreligion–prejudice association toward groups perceived as actively opposing the values of nonbelievers (antiliberal targets) or even as simply being ideologically different: religionists of mainstream religions. Collecting data from three secularized Western European countries (total $N = 1,158$), we found that, though both believers and nonbelievers disliked moral and religious antiliberals (antigay activists and fundamentalists), atheists and agnostics showed prejudicial discriminatory attitudes toward antiliberals, but also toward mere Christians, and atheists did so also toward Buddhists. Prejudice toward antiliberal and mainstream religious targets was predicted uniquely by antireligious critique, occasionally in addition to high existential quest for the antiliberal targets, but in addition to low existential quest and low belief in the world’s benevolence for mainstream religionists. Future studies should determine whether the effects are similar, more pronounced, or attenuated in very religious societies.

Keywords: prejudice, value conflict, atheism, dogmatism, moral liberalism

Supplemental materials: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/rel0000247.supp>

For decades, there has been ongoing research examining the links between religion and prejudice. Overall, typically rigid and coalitional forms of religiosity such as religious fundamentalism and orthodoxy, but also, though to a lesser extent, mere—simply personal—religiosity, beliefs, and practice, predict prejudice toward various kinds of targets (for reviews: Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Ng & Gervais, 2017; Rowatt, Carpenter, & Haggard, 2014; Saroglou, 2016).¹ This includes moral outgroups, such as gays, lesbians, and single mothers, convictional/ideological outgroups, such as atheists and feminists, religious outgroups, that is, reli-

gionists of other faiths, and ethnic outgroups. These links have been demonstrated through both explicit and implicit measures of prejudice (Rowatt et al., 2014) and hold across religions, certainly the monotheistic ones (Clobert, Saroglou, Hwang, & Soong, 2014; Clobert, Saroglou, & Hwang, 2017). These trends have been explained by religious people’s propensities for (a) conservative/authoritarian attitudes (Rowatt et al., 2014) and moral preferences (Deak & Saroglou, 2015) and (b) an epistemic need for cognitive closure (Brandt & Reyna, 2010). Based on that research it is often concluded that atheists and nonbelievers in general are low on cognitive and moral rigidity and thus low in prejudicial attitudes, in particular toward the above-mentioned kinds of targets (Zuckerman, 2009; Zuckerman, Galen, & Pasquale, 2016).

Is this indeed the case? We argue that nonbelievers too should show some prejudice, at least toward specific targets. The aim of the present work was to first provide theorization favoring the idea of an association between irreligion and prejudice. Second, we empirically investigated this question by focusing on (a) attitudes toward targets that can be conceived as relevant outgroups for

This article was published Online First January 7, 2019.

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This study is a part of the doctoral dissertation of Filip Uzarevic, with a fellowship from the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research, under the supervision of Vassilis Saroglou, who participated in all steps of this work, except the data collection. Antonio Muñoz-García collaborated in data collection and in the preparation of the article.

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¹ We often use the word *mere* in this article when referring to “religionists,” “religious people,” “religiosity,” or “religious belief” to emphasize the distinction between closed-minded religion (fundamentalism, orthodoxy) and the dimension of personal religiosity, that is, the “simple” fact of being a religious believer, practitioner, or being affiliated with a religious group, which does not necessarily imply being a closed-minded or an open-minded religious person.

nonbelievers, and, in particular, outgroup attitudes that may be conceived as either reflecting value conflict concerns or simply constituting group-based prejudice (mere dislike and discrimination) and (b) distinct groups of participants self-identifying as atheists, agnostics, or Christians. In addition, we investigated (c) the unique effect of being antireligious on prejudice, beyond the role of hypothesized underlying relevant cognitive and moral constructs, and whether the hypothesized effects (a–c) hold across (d) three different European countries (United Kingdom, France, and Spain), to rule out the possibility that the findings may be due to the specific cultural and historical context of one single country. In doing so, this work heavily complements, nuances, and extends emerging research in this area. We will detail below the rationale of the main argument and the specific hypotheses.

Nonbelievers' Possible Prejudice

We provide here two series of arguments in favor of the idea that irreligion may or should imply some prejudice, at least toward specific kinds of targets. One series of arguments derives from the limitations of previous research; the others are intrinsically related to the identitarian and ideological aspects of irreligion/atheism.

Clarifying the Low End of the Religiosity Continuum

First, previous reviews of empirical research concluding that nonbelievers are low in moral, ethnic, and religious prejudice are based on studies where religiosity was measured as a continuous variable, from a low to a high end. As already argued (Galen, 2012), it is unclear what exactly the low end corresponds to. Thus, it is uncertain whether low scores on religiosity, implying lower prejudice compared to the highly religious, reflect the attitudes of those who are (a) skeptics/agnostics, (b) clearly atheists, (c) antireligious, (d) spiritual but not religious, or (e) only slightly religious.

Second, there is also research showing that, rather than religiosity per se, it is rigidity in believing or disbelieving that predicts prejudice. Specifically, this refers to a literal rather than symbolic way of thinking when endorsing religious or irreligious ideas—orientations that are referred to in that model as, respectively, religious orthodoxy and antireligious external critique (Duriez, Dezutter, Neyrinck, & Hutsebaut, 2007). For instance, both of these orientations imply ethnic prejudice (Duriez et al., 2007; Saroglou, Lamkaddem, Van Pachterbeke, & Buxant, 2009). However, this research has not clarified whether or not religious orthodoxy has stronger antisocial consequences than antireligious critique.

Based on the above observations, we argue that, instead of (only) using religiosity as a continuous variable, comparing participants who self-identify as religious versus nonreligious, that is, atheists or agnostics, can provide critical evidence for clarifying the possible link between irreligion and prejudice. Moreover, as will be developed in a latter section, distinguishing between atheists and agnostics, as well as between antireligious orientation (“external critique”) and simply being a nonbeliever, will provide additional information regarding nonbelievers' possible prejudicial attitudes.

Irreligion as Ideology and Identity and Possible Targets of Prejudice

Two additional arguments come from a more general perspective of the psychology of intergroup relations, the psychology of ideology, and the psychology of social identity. Beyond possible internal variation among various types of nonbelievers, reasons to be irreligious, and ways to express or not disbelief (Lee, 2014; Silver, Coleman, Hood, & Holcombe, 2014), nonbelievers in general can be conceived as constituting a superordinate, rather ideological, group of those who do not hold religious beliefs and related values and worldviews. This allows for the possibility of prejudice by nonbelievers, at least some kinds of them, toward other groups who oppose or simply do not share the nonbelievers' views.

Irreligion as ideology. First, nonbelievers hold values, ideas, beliefs, and worldviews, including visions for an optimal society and the future of humankind and the world (Coleman, Hood, & Streib, 2018; Zuckerman et al., 2016). This points to the ideological character of irreligion, even if this ideology may in principle be less structured and unifying than a religious believer's ideology. Nonbelievers' values, ideas, and worldviews are to some degree integrated because they are all marked by a “godless” vision of humankind, society, and the world.

Indeed, substantial psychological and sociological research carried out across the world has shown that nonbelievers tend to consistently endorse liberal moral values, in particular autonomy, and the corresponding political preferences and give low consideration to conservative ideas (Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Zuckerman, 2009; Zuckerman et al., 2016). Nonbelievers also value critical and evidence-based thinking, rationality, and science (Farias, 2013). Strongly valuing rationality results in the moralization of it and a willingness to punish those who are perceived as irrational (Ståhl, Zaal, & Skitka, 2016). Thus, as nonbelievers generally tend to be liberals, they should express, similarly to conservatives vis-à-vis liberals, an intolerance of groups that are dissimilar to them or that threaten their values or resources. This idea has recently been proposed as the ideological-conflict hypothesis, with initial evidence confirming some symmetry between liberals and conservatives on being prejudicial toward each other (Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014; see also Brandt & Van Tongeren, 2017, for application to the religious domain).

We thus expected nonbelievers, as holding an ideology, that is, underlying values, ideas, and worldviews, to show prejudice at least toward people who can be perceived to threaten the core values of irreligion and secularism, in particular individual autonomy and societal pluralism. At least in the Western secularized societies, irreligion at the individual level highly corresponds to moral liberalism at both the individual and the collective levels, as well as to a secular, nonpredominantly religious, vision of the society (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Thus, individual autonomy and societal pluralism should be perceived to be threatened by traditional religious sources of authority that promote conservative, collectivistic, and uniformizing moral values. Typical examples of such possible outgroups are religious and moral antiliberal outgroups, respectively, (a) religious fundamentalists and (b) antigay activists. Religious fundamentalists tend to impose their antisecular and antiliberal worldviews and religious authority-based moral

norms on society, including nonfundamentalist religious believers. Antigay activists, beyond just a personal disapproval of homosexuality, deny others the right to choose alternative lifestyles regarding sexuality, family, and parenting. Research indeed shows that, across all major world religions and cultural zones, compared to the religious, nonbelievers are typically more tolerant and accepting of homosexuality and gay rights, including gay marriage and parenting, and are so across religions and cultures (Saroglou, 2019, for a review). Importantly, international data confirm a unique influence of religiosity versus irreligion on the attitudes toward homosexuality and gay rights, beyond the role of moral values and political preferences (Hoffarth, Hodson, & Molnar, 2018). Finally, recent experimental evidence indicates that nonbelievers are also unwilling to help antigay activists (Van der Noll, Saroglou, Latour, & Dolezal, 2017).

Irreligion as identity. Second, though to a much weaker extent than religious people whose affiliation to a community and/or a larger tradition is an important, even critical, dimension of their proreligious orientation (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010), nonbelievers can be conceived as self-identifying with informal, though real, groups: networks, virtual groups, or philosophical traditions—not to mention the possibility of belonging to an organized group of atheists or skeptics. Thus, ingroup favoritism and perhaps outgroup derogation may be possible outcomes of attachment to such a formal or informal community. Moreover, nonbelievers are aware of being perceived as an outgroup by believers and hold relevant metastereotypes, that is, perceptions of believers' stereotypes about them (Saroglou, Yzerbyt, & Kaschten, 2011).

We thus investigated whether people who self-identify as nonbelievers would express prejudice toward *mere religionists*, that is, people who are *affiliated with mainstream religions*, such as Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists. If, as research shows, nonbelievers, compared to the religious, are more open to experience (Saroglou, 2017), less dogmatic (Moore & Leach, 2016; but see Uzarevic, Saroglou, & Clobert, 2017), and less prone to transmit only their own worldviews to their children (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1997), one should expect nonbelievers to show prejudice only toward the clearly antiliberal groups—antigay activists and fundamentalists—but not toward citizens simply belonging to major world religions. Moreover, in European secularized countries, the State's neutrality toward all convictions and faiths is normatively supposed to imply a lack of prejudice toward, and a tolerance of, various religionists (but see Kamiejski, Guimond, De Oliveira, Er-Rafiy, & Brauer, 2012, for evidence on prejudicial outcomes of endorsing the French principle of "laicity"). Alternatively, because of their mere social identity as nonreligious, nonbelievers may show typical prejudicial attitudes toward "simple" outgroups, that is, people who are simply religious without necessarily being a threat to secular values.

The Present Study

In sum, we expected nonbelievers, given the ideological aspect of disbelief and its related values, to show prejudice toward antiliberal religious and moral outgroups, that is, religious fundamentalists and antigay activists. This was investigated in three European countries—United Kingdom, France, and Spain. We also examined, considering the identitarian aspect of nonbelief,

whether this would extend or not to targets who are simply religious, that is, belong to one of the major world religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

Extending Emerging Research

In doing so, this work aims to extend and conceptually, methodologically, and cross-culturally solidify emerging evidence from very recent research on closed-mindedness and prejudice as a function of low religiosity. Specifically, nonbelievers in three European secularized countries, compared to Christians, were found to show greater intolerance of contradiction and a lower readiness to take a perspective different from one's own even on nonreligious issues (Uzarevic et al., 2017). Moreover, Brandt and Van Tongeren (2017, in the United States) and Kossowska, Czernatowicz-Kukuczka, and Sekerdej (2017, in Poland) found that those who scored low on measures of religious fundamentalism or religiosity, or those who scored high on antireligious ("external") critique, tend to dislike, and have negative attitudes toward, Christians/Catholics and political or moral conservatives. Perceived symbolic threat, including the threat to individual rights, seemed to partly explain the effects.² However, these two studies used only continuous religious measures, thus making it impossible to know whether the effects were attributable strictly to nonbelievers or also to those low in religiosity. Moreover, only Christians, a traditional dominant religious group in the respective countries, were examined as the religious target, whereas here we extend the consideration to include other religious groups (Muslims and Buddhists) who constitute minorities in the respective countries while at the same time being major world religions like Christianity. Finally, only indicators of global disliking/negative attitudes were used, rather than specific indicators of prejudicial, discriminatory, behavioral intentions.

Thus, to tap into the prejudicial, discriminatory, quality of the attitudes under study and not confound them with global disliking, we focused on various kinds of attitudes toward outgroups typically used in social psychological research on prejudice and in international studies examining intergroup relationships. These included (a) liking–disliking (a feeling thermometer); (b) and (c) (un)willingness to have the target as a political representative and as a spouse, both attitudes potentially denoting value conflict between the secular versus religious visions of society and family; and (d) (un)willingness to have the target as neighbor. The latter can reasonably be accepted as a clearer or stronger indicator of discrimination versus social acceptance: choosing which neighborhood to live in is a fundamental right in democratic societies. Furthermore, as a "reference" outgroup, we also measured attitudes toward an ethnic outgroup (Chinese). This would serve to help distinguish, for the nonbelievers, between ideological outgroups and a nonideological outgroup, ethnic prejudice having

² In another study in the United Kingdom (Ysseldyk, Haslam, Matheson, & Anisman, 2012), participants self-identifying as atheists or Christians (Study 1) or also as Jews or Muslims (Study 2) mentioned their (dis)liking (thermometer) of various religious outgroups, but this was after experimental manipulation and assignment to different conditions. Also, in an analysis of the European Values Study data, nonbelievers showed an unwillingness to "accept people from a different religion", but no specific religions were mentioned or distinguished (Ekici & Yucel, 2015).

typically been found to be lower among nonbelievers compared to religious people.

Distinguishing Between Different Forms of Nonbelief and Between Unique Versus Nonunique Effects

There is nonnegligible variability among nonbelievers (Silver et al., 2014). Nonbelief can be expressed as atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, nonreligious spirituality, or secularism. For the purposes of the present work, we focused on two major types of nonbelievers, that is, atheists and agnostics, who together usually represent the substantial majority of nonbeliever participants. *Atheism* typically implies the disbelief in the existence of God, whereas *agnosticism* implies uncertainty or abstention regarding the question of the (non)existence of God (Baggini, 2003). Atheism is often perceived as a stronger disbelief attitude and as being critical of religion(s). Religious beliefs and related values and worldviews (e.g., there is an afterlife, you can speak with God through prayer) are more clearly in contrast with the atheist perspective (e.g., there is no afterlife, speaking with an inexistent being raises serious questions) than the agnostic perspective (e.g., we simply do not know and thus do not judge) and may thus appear to be more threatening. Nevertheless, being agnostic may, in practice, imply living more similarly to an atheist than a religionist. We thus expected that, if anything, atheists, compared to agnostics, would show stronger or more extended—from the antiliberal targets to the religionists of all major religions—negative outgroup attitudes. Similarly, they should show more rigidity/lower flexibility compared to agnostics, in relevant cognitive, moral, and interpersonal dispositions (see below).

Furthermore, in line with the distinction between atheism as disbelief and the mere lack of religious belief, as well as in continuation with previous research mentioned above having distinguished between low/null religiosity and antireligious critique, we included the External Critique subscale of the Post-Critical Belief scale (Duriez et al., 2007) that taps into the deconsideration of religion as being fully problematic for rationality, individual autonomy, and societal progress. We expected *antireligious critique* to predict prejudice toward antiliberal targets but also toward mere religionists. Moreover, we expected antireligious critique to uniquely predict prejudice, above the effects of hypothesized related cognitive, moral, and interpersonal dispositions, namely existential quest, truth-oriented rigid moral deontology, and belief in the world and people's benevolence. We detail below the rationale for using these three constructs.

Existential quest, in extension of previous work on the quest orientation in the religious domain (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993), has been defined as valuing doubt and showing readiness to question one's own beliefs and attitudes—be they proreligious, nonreligious, or other—regarding existential issues (Van Pachterbeke, Keller, & Saroglou, 2012). High existential quest should thus predict a generalized tolerance of/low prejudice toward various kinds of ideological groups, including major religions. Dogmatic nonbelievers, that is, those low in existential quest, on the other hand, should do the opposite by expressing prejudice against major world religions. An alternative hypothesis is that existential quest should predict an intolerance of the “intolerant,” that is, negative attitudes toward antiliberal targets (antigay activists and fundamentalists), who are quest's ideological opponents due to the threat

they pose for individual autonomy and societal pluralism on moral and existential issues (see Batson, Denton, & Vollmecke, 2008, for a study showing that religious quest predicts tolerance of fundamentalists, but not when they support antiliberal causes).

Moreover, nonbelievers, in particular atheists, strongly endorse factual truth, rationality, and science, not only as instrumental values, that is, a means to achieve a high end, but also as terminal values, that is, ends themselves. In other words, they tend to highly moralize factual truth and rationality (see Ståhl et al., 2016, for work on moralized rationality). Thus, in dilemmas where deontology to respect truth (factual or rational) is in conflict with prosocial concerns (e.g., ruining a pleasant dinner to disparage paranormal beliefs), nonbelievers should prefer factual truth and rationality over the possible antisocial consequences. We thus expected nonbelievers' *truth-oriented nonconsequentialist moral deontology* to predict prejudice toward moral and religious outgroups.

Finally, distrust has been found to explain religious people's prejudice against atheists (Ng & Gervais, 2017). We expected a rather similar mechanism to explain atheists' prejudice toward those who hold opposite views. Previous research has shown a positive association between religion and basic world assumptions, which include, among others, trust and belief in the benevolence of people and the world (e.g., Van Cappellen, Saroglou, Iweins, Piovesana, & Fredrickson, 2013). We thus suspected that nonbelievers, in particular atheists and the antireligious, that is, those scoring high in external critique, should be characterized by doubt and *suspicion regarding the benevolence of the world and other people*, which could contribute to their negative attitudes toward conservatives and members of the major world religions.

Nevertheless, antireligious critique should show additive and unique effects on prejudice, beyond the role of existential quest, truth/rationality-oriented moral deontology, and belief in the benevolence of the world. As we developed earlier, antireligious views constitute well-constructed, rich, and complex sui-generis ideologies, including numerous views concerning human functioning, the understanding of societies' past and present, and the vision for the world's future; and attitudes toward specific targets (e.g., homosexuals) are specifically predicted by low religiosity, beyond moral values and sociopolitical orientation.

In sum, we expected atheists, compared to agnostics, to show lower cognitive, moral, and interpersonal flexibility and stronger or more extended prejudicial/discriminatory attitudes toward moral and religious outgroups—but not an ethnic outgroup. Similarly, antireligious critique should predict such negative attitudes, and its role would be unique, beyond the underlying role of low cognitive, moral, and interpersonal flexibility.

Method

Participants

The participants were 1,158 adults (18–74 years old, $M = 27.17$, $SD = 9.62$; 47% women). They were residents or nationals of the United Kingdom, Spain, or France ($ns = 574, 349$, and 235). The participants in the United Kingdom and France were recruited online, through the crowdsourcing platforms Crowdfunder and Prolific Academic, as well as Facebook, and online forums. The data from Spain were collected offline, from a sample of University students. Participants reported being atheist (378), Christian

(375), agnostic (246), Muslim (11), Buddhist (12), Jewish (4), or “other” (63)—choices offered by the researchers. Other participants (69) did not report an affiliation. Thus, the main comparisons between convictional groups were made on atheists, agnostics, and Christians (across the three countries, total $N = 999$), whereas the regressions included all participants. In addition to the 1,158 participants, 250 others were not included in the analyses because of (a) incorrect or no responses to three trap questions aimed to control for the quality of the online survey responses ($n = 199$), (b) being younger than 18 years ($n = 36$), (c) nationality and residence other than British, French, or Spanish ($n = 7$), or (d) indications of a second trial by the same participant ($n = 8$). We aimed to collect at least 50 participants per cell, that is, each convictional group in each country. In the United Kingdom, data collection quickly resulted in many nonreligious participants and thus we collected additional data to have a more balanced sample.

Measures

The study was announced as an investigation of the cognitive and emotional factors in various decisions. Data were collected in 2016. It took approximately 10–20 min to complete the survey, which was in English, Spanish, or French, depending on the country.³

Truth/rationality-oriented moral deontology. We measured factual truth/rationality-oriented moral deontology, as a rigid (antisocial, nonconsequentialist) morality, using two dilemmas each describing a hypothetical conflict between respecting factual or rational truth and following interpersonal prosocial concerns. The first dilemma, taken from Van Pachterbeke, Freyer, and Saroglou (2011), concerned a choice between telling the truth and not putting a friend’s life at risk: a friend, very ill at the hospital, asks you about the firm he has dedicated his life to. You know that the firm, now directed by his son, is doing very poorly. The second dilemma, in the context of a big annual family dinner, concerned expressing one’s own position and criticizing another person’s endorsement of paranormal beliefs in the existence of ghosts as irrational and false, or saying nothing to preserve a pleasant family atmosphere. The dilemmas were constructed in a way that participants had to choose one of two options, that is, the prosocial one (coded as 0) or the nonprosocial deontological one in favor of truth/rationality (coded as 1). We subsequently summed the two scores for each participant.

Existential quest. Participants were presented the Existential Quest scale (Van Pachterbeke et al., 2012) measuring flexibility in existential beliefs and worldviews, specifically, valuing doubt and being open to questioning and changing one’s own existential beliefs and worldviews (7-point Likert scales; seven items, with two additional ones of the scale not included, as referring specifically to religion). Sample items are, “In my opinion, doubt is important in existential questions” and “My way of seeing the world is certainly going to change again” (α in the present data = .70).

Basic world assumptions: Benevolence. Two subscales of the World Assumptions Scale (Janoff-Bulman, 1989) measuring the belief in the (a) benevolence of the world and (b) benevolence of people were used (2×3 items; 7-point Likert scales). Respective sample items are, “There is more good than evil in the world” and “Human nature is basically good.” Because the two subscales

were highly intercorrelated, $r = .57$, we averaged the two scores for each participant to obtain a single index of belief in a benevolent world (α at the item-level = .85).

Prejudice. We assessed prejudice against six target groups, that is, moral/antiliberal, religious, and ethnic: (a) religious fundamentalists and (b) antigay activists, two groups threatening liberal and secular values; (c) Muslims, a religious outgroup, often perceived in the West as possibly threatening the above values; (d) Catholics, a proximal religious outgroup for the nonbelievers but an ingroup for Christian participants; (e) Buddhists, a distal, typically perceived as nonthreatening, religious outgroup; and (f) Chinese people, an ethnic outgroup. For each target, we used four items. Three items measured *social distance*, as is common in international surveys, with participants being asked: “Please indicate the degree to which you would or would not like to have the person mentioned below as: (1) a neighbor; (2) a political representative; and (3) a husband/wife” (answers ranged from 1 = *totally dislike* to 7 = *totally like*). The fourth item for each target was a feelings thermometer item from 0 (*cold/unfavorable*) to 100 (*warm/favorable*).

For the analyses, we used, for each target, a global index of prejudice after reversing, standardizing by country, and then averaging the four items (α s for the six targets ranged from .80 to .90). Supplemental Table S1 in the online supplementary material provides more detailed information focused on three distinct indicators of prejudice, that is, the feelings thermometer, a “mere” social distance (disliking as a neighbor), and a social distance that one could, to some extent, justify by perceived conflicts on values (disliking as a spouse and as a political representative). Finally, for the economy of presentation, we also aggregated the targets and created two global measures of prejudice, one toward the antiliberal groups (fundamentalists and antigay activists) and the other toward the religionists, that is, Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims (respective α s = .55 and .78).

Antireligious critique and religiosity. Five items of the so-called External Critique subscale of the Post-Critical Belief Scale (short version: Duriez, Soenens, & Hutsebaut, 2005; 7-point Likert scales) were used to measure participants’ level of antireligious critique, that is, viewing religion as rationally indefensible and as an illusory defense used by the weak, thus being fully critical of religion. A sample item is, “Faith is an expression of a weak personality” (α in the present data = .82). Finally, a three-item index of religiosity was used (importance of God, importance of religion in life, and frequency of prayer), as well as a one-item index of the importance of spirituality in life. This measure was highly interrelated with antireligious critique, $r = -.60$.⁴

³ Almost all of the measures used (world assumptions-benevolence, measures of prejudice toward various religionists, existential quest, religiosity, and external critique) have been used in previous research in these three languages, in particular in an international study that included France and Spain, with translations and back-translations from the English original. Moreover, in the present data, all of the above measures, including the measures of prejudice toward each of the five targets, showed satisfactory equivalence between the three national samples, Tucker’s Phi equivalence ranging from $\varphi = .92$ to $\varphi = .99$.

⁴ For exploratory purposes, we also measured locus of control, intolerance of contradiction, regulatory focus, and one item measuring trust. These measures failed to differentiate between the three groups, thus we did not include them in further analyses.

Results

Means and standard deviations of all measures, including global measures of prejudice toward the six targets—distinctly and aggregated in two broad categories, that is, antiliberal groups and

mainstream religious groups—by country, and separately for atheists, agnostics, and Christians, are shown in Table 1. Descriptive statistics for distinct indicators of prejudice (thermometer, liking as a neighbor, liking as a spouse and political representative) are detailed in Supplemental Table S1 in the online supplementary

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of All Measures by Country and Convictional Group

Variables	Atheists	Agnostics	Christians	Comparisons		
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
United Kingdom (<i>N</i> s = 246, 136, 89)						
Religiosity	1.09 (0.27)	1.54 (0.82)	3.86 (1.78)	308.25	.000 ^{a,b,c}	.57
Closed-mindedness						
Antirelig. critique	5.16 (1.13)	4.33 (1.25)	3.18 (1.49)	86.75	.000 ^{a,b,c}	.27
Existential quest	5.34 (0.77)	5.50 (0.74)	5.00 (0.90)	10.82	.000 ^{a,b}	.04
Truth/ration. Morals	1.02 (0.71)	0.79 (0.68)	0.64 (0.64)	11.22	.000 ^{a,c,d}	.05
BWA-benevolence	4.69 (1.05)	4.78 (0.98)	4.79 (1.16)	0.43	.650	.00
Disliking of						
Antiliberals	0.12 (0.70)	-0.03 (0.70)	-0.43 (0.87)	18.69	.000 ^{a,b}	.07
Antigay activists	0.09 (0.86)	-0.00 (0.85)	-0.45 (1.14)	11.45	.000 ^{a,b}	.05
Religious fundamentalists	0.15 (0.78)	-0.06 (0.86)	-0.42 (1.11)	14.27	.000 ^{a,b}	.06
Religionists	0.12 (0.76)	-0.12 (0.70)	-0.14 (0.74)	6.78	.001 ^{a,c,d}	.03
Muslims	0.11 (0.86)	-0.15 (0.79)	-0.01 (0.95)	3.78	.024 ^c	.02
Catholics	0.17 (0.87)	-0.07 (0.79)	-0.43 (0.76)	17.39	.000 ^{a,b,c}	.07
Buddhists	0.09 (0.84)	-0.15 (0.78)	0.02 (0.84)	3.66	.027 ^c	.02
Chinese	0.01 (0.84)	-0.01 (0.79)	0.03 (0.84)	0.06	.940	.00
France (<i>N</i> s = 89, 42, 64)						
Religiosity	1.23 (0.44)	1.77 (0.89)	3.44 (1.74)	75.02	.000 ^{a,b,c}	.44
Closed-mindedness						
Antirelig. critique	5.15 (1.06)	4.59 (0.78)	3.75 (1.29)	30.55	.000 ^{a,b,c}	.24
Existential quest	5.11 (0.95)	5.58 (0.92)	4.91 (1.01)	6.29	.002 ^{b,c,d}	.06
Truth/Ration. morals	1.00 (0.74)	1.00 (0.77)	0.66 (0.65)	4.95	.008 ^{a,b}	.05
BWA-benevolence	3.89 (1.11)	4.00 (1.06)	4.09 (0.98)	0.66	.516	.01
Disliking of						
Antiliberals	0.07 (0.67)	0.26 (0.52)	-0.23 (0.84)	6.69	.002 ^{a,b}	.07
Antigay activists	0.03 (0.96)	0.30 (0.61)	-0.21 (0.98)	4.08	.018 ^{b,d}	.04
Rel. fundamentalists	0.11 (0.87)	0.22 (0.64)	-0.25 (1.03)	4.53	.012 ^{a,b}	.05
Religionists	0.17 (0.72)	0.03 (0.57)	-0.16 (0.63)	4.72	.010 ^{a,d}	.05
Muslims	0.19 (0.87)	-0.13 (0.65)	0.05 (0.90)	2.11	.125	.02
Catholics	0.21 (0.87)	0.29 (0.74)	-0.49 (0.81)	16.54	.000 ^{a,b}	.15
Buddhists	0.12 (0.90)	-0.07 (0.71)	-0.05 (0.78)	1.08	.342	.01
Chinese	-0.03 (0.79)	-0.01 (0.77)	0.09 (0.80)	0.40	.668	.00
Spain (<i>N</i> s = 43, 68, 222)						
Religiosity	1.19 (0.32)	1.91 (0.92)	4.11 (1.53)	133.47	.000 ^{a,b,c}	.45
Closed-mindedness						
Antirelig. critique	4.84 (1.21)	4.74 (1.05)	3.51 (1.18)	44.21	.000 ^{a,b}	.21
Existential quest	4.78 (1.05)	4.85 (0.89)	4.55 (0.89)	3.27	.039 ^d	.02
Truth/ration. morals	0.77 (0.72)	0.78 (0.67)	0.75 (0.65)	0.05	.954	.00
BWA-benevolence	4.07 (0.91)	4.05 (0.92)	4.27 (0.85)	2.25	.107	.01
Disliking of						
Antiliberals	0.40 (0.51)	0.14 (0.72)	-0.13 (0.69)	12.92	.000 ^{a,b}	.07
Antigay activists	0.41 (0.46)	0.10 (0.84)	-0.11 (0.84)	8.46	.000 ^{a,d}	.05
Rel. fundamentalists	0.39 (0.77)	0.17 (0.88)	-0.15 (0.82)	9.67	.000 ^{a,b}	.06
Religionists	0.09 (0.70)	0.04 (0.66)	-0.03 (0.62)	0.92	.398	.01
Muslims	-0.13 (0.81)	-0.09 (0.74)	0.06 (0.80)	1.65	.194	.01
Catholics	0.50 (0.85)	0.30 (0.85)	-0.21 (0.74)	21.98	.000 ^{a,b}	.12
Buddhists	-0.09 (0.81)	-0.08 (0.78)	0.05 (0.80)	1.00	.370	.01
Chinese	-0.24 (0.82)	-0.05 (0.78)	0.08 (0.68)	3.73	.025 ^{a,d}	.02

Note. Antirelig. = antireligious; BWA = basic world assumptions; ration. = rationality. Significant differences are mentioned following Tukey post-hoc tests after significant ANOVA. The difference between nonbelievers and Christians is mentioned when both groups differed from Christians in the same direction, though one or both nonsignificantly (following less conservative *t*-tests after a significant analysis of variance). The measures of prejudice here are the global measures including all four items (see *Method*).

^aatheists-Christians. ^bagnostics-Christians. ^catheists-agnostics. ^dnonbelievers (atheists and agnostics)-Christians.

material. A series of distinct, by country, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined possible differences in the relevant variables between the three convictional groups. When the results were significant, subsequent post hoc analyses were conducted; the significant differences are also mentioned in Table 1. Below we report first how nonbelievers, both atheists and agnostics, or the nonbelievers taken as a whole with both groups differing from Christians in the same direction, differed from Christians. Second, within nonbelievers, we compare atheists and agnostics. Third, between-targets differences in attitudes are tested within each convictional group of participants. Finally, the unique effect of antireligious critique is tested through regressions.

Nonbelievers Compared to Believers

Individual differences. Nonsurprisingly, atheists and agnostics were higher than Christians on antireligious critique in all countries. In addition, compared to Christians, both atheists, 95% CI [-0.56, -0.10], and agnostics, 95% CI [-0.75, -0.24], in the United Kingdom, and nonbelievers as a whole in France, 95% CI [-0.65, -0.06], and Spain, 95% CI [-0.48, -0.06], scored higher on existential quest. Moreover, nonbelievers also tended to be higher than Christians in factual/rational truth-oriented, rigid (nonprosocial), moral deontology, in two of the three countries: United Kingdom, 95% CI [-0.46, -0.14], and France, 95% CI [-0.56, -0.13]. Within each country, no difference was observed between the three groups in belief in the benevolence of the world.

Global measures of prejudice. As far as global attitudes toward outgroups are concerned (see also Table 1), nonbelievers—both atheists and agnostics or the two groups together—in all three countries expressed significantly more prejudice compared to Christians toward the two antiliberal groups, that is antigay activists and religious fundamentalists, 95% CI ranging from lower -0.76 to upper -0.05 (see Table 1, for indicators of global prejudice).

Furthermore, as also indicated in Table 1, consistently across the three countries, that is in a country of Anglican tradition (United Kingdom) and in countries of Catholic tradition (France and Spain), atheists and agnostics liked Catholics significantly less than Christians did (for atheists: 95% CI ranging from lower -1.02 to upper -0.35; for agnostics, from lower -1.16 to upper -0.09). This difference was not only due to Christians strongly liking their ingroup, but also to some discriminatory dislike among the nonbelievers: indeed, nonbelievers reported liking Catholics less than Chinese and Buddhists.

Finally, within each country, there were no significant differences between Christians and nonbelievers on attitudes toward mainstream religious outgroups (Muslims and Buddhists), and the ethnic outgroup (Chinese). There was only one exception, in Spain, with Christians liking the Chinese less than nonbelievers did (see Table 1).

Distinct indicators of prejudice. The above findings were also present when focusing on distinct indicators of prejudice, that is, the thermometer, liking as a political representative and spouse, and liking as a neighbor (see Supplemental Table S1 in the online supplementary material). This included, within each country, nonbelievers' higher dislike, compared to Christians, of both antiliberal targets; this was significant in 17 out of 18 comparisons (Two

comparisons \times Three measures \times Three countries), $ps < .05$. This also included, within each country, nonbelievers' lower liking, compared to Christians, of Catholics, as well as their lower liking of Catholics compared to their liking of Buddhists and Chinese; this was significant in 15 out of the 18 comparisons, $ps < .05$.

Agnostics Compared to Atheists

The above-mentioned analyses also provide information on some differences between atheists and agnostics. Across the three countries, when results were significant (post hoc tests following the ANOVAs), they confirmed the idea of agnostics being less closed-minded than atheists (see Table 1). Specifically, compared to atheists, agnostics were less strong in their antireligious critique in the United Kingdom, 95% CI [0.52, 1.14], and France, 95% CI [0.08, 1.05], higher in existential quest in France, 95% CI [-0.90, -0.04], and less morally rigid in the U.K., 95% CI [0.05, 0.40].

Moreover, when inspecting the means (Table 1; see also Supplemental Table S1 in the online supplementary material), atheists occasionally showed stronger dislike, compared to agnostics, for religious fundamentalists (in the United Kingdom; 95% CI [0.04, 0.39]) and antigay activists (Spain, 95% CI [0.07, 0.56]). Furthermore, in the United Kingdom, atheists also more strongly disliked, compared to agnostics, all mainstream religious groups (Catholics, Muslims, and Buddhists; 95% CI ranging from lower 0.03 to upper 0.47). No significant differences between atheists and agnostics, on any type of prejudice, were found in France and Spain.

Within-Group Discrimination Between Targets

Interesting evidence also emerged when examining within-group differences in the way the various outgroups are treated, and then comparing the three convictional groups in these within-group differences. Figure 1 depicts mean scores of social closeness with the various targets, distinctly by convictional group of participants and by country. For this figure, and the within-group comparisons between targets, we aggregated the three 7-point indicators—willingness to have a target as neighbor, spouse, and political representative (The fourth indicator was a 100°C thermometer measure). This was to ensure the readability of the Figure and the results by providing each time the mean level of closeness—and thus the degree of liking or disliking—with respect to the midpoint of the scale, what facilitates appreciation of differences in attitudes as denoting either “less liking” or “more disliking.”

Figure 1 suggests that the three convictional groups shared, across all three countries, high similarity in their “ranking” of the various targets on a liking/disliking continuum, plus several slight differences. Note that Catholics are an outgroup for nonbelievers but an ingroup for Christians. The other targets are clear outgroups, that is, antiliberal (antigay activists and religious fundamentalists), religious (“threatening” Muslims and “non-threatening” Buddhists), and ethnic (Chinese).

We thus computed repeated measured ANOVAs using the aggregate score of these three indicators of prejudice for each target. Antiliberal groups, that is, antigay activists and funda-

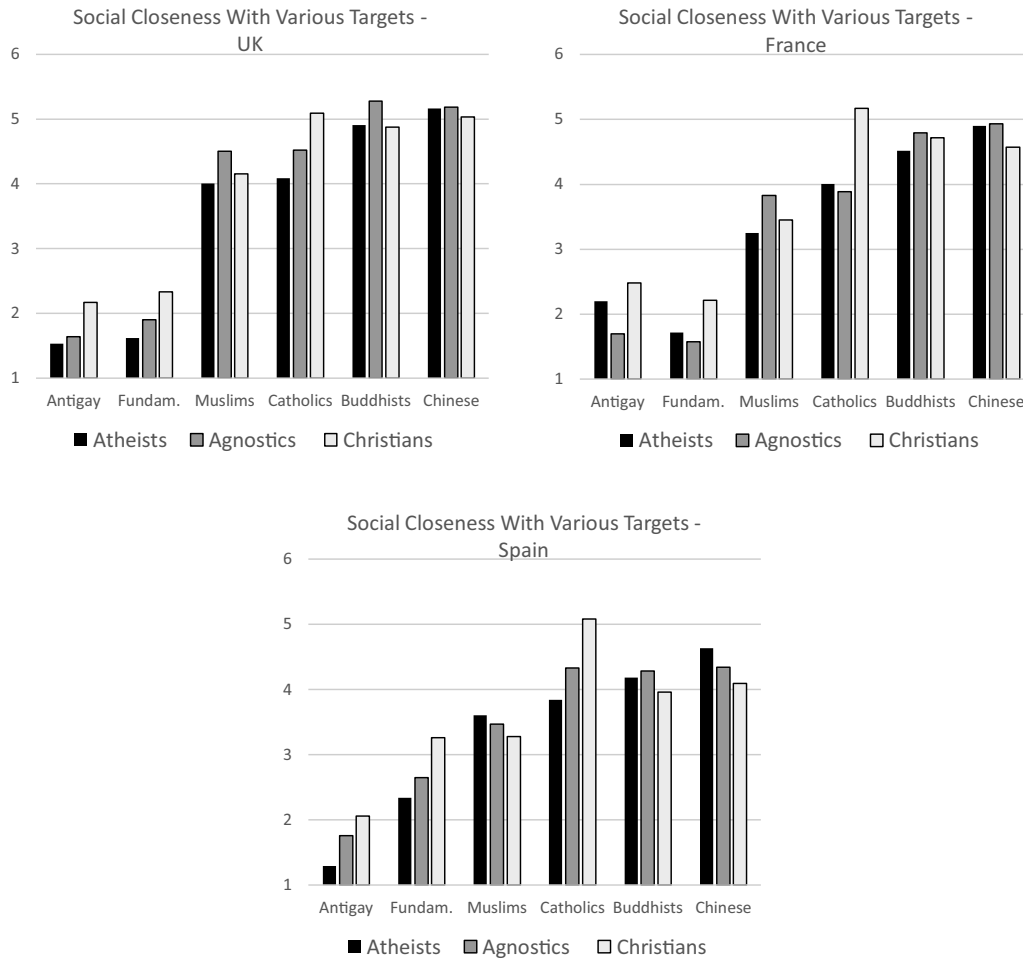


Figure 1. Desired social closeness (average scores of liking the target as neighbor, as political representative, and as spouse, in a 1 to 7 scale) with various moral, religious, and ethnic targets, by participants' convictional group, that is, atheists, agnostics, and Christians, and by country.

mentalists, taken together, were highly disliked (the mean scores of the liking measures are well below the midpoint of the scale in Figure 1), and more disliked compared to the two religious outgroups, Muslims and Buddhists, taken together. This was the case for all three convictional groups, that is, atheists, agnostics, and even Christians, in the United Kingdom (respective F s = 992.71, 484.35, and 125.53, all $ps < .001$; 95% CI ranging from lower -3.40 to upper -1.86), France (respective F s = 173.21, 216.82, and 68.85, all $ps < .001$, 95% CI ranging from lower -3.04 to upper -1.32), and Spain (respective F s = 83.35, 77.75, and 87.20, $ps < .001$, 95% CI ranging from lower -2.54 to upper -0.76).

Moreover, Muslims received very average mean scores of liking, being less liked than Buddhists and Chinese by all three convictional groups in the U.K. (respective F s = 204.33, 70.21, and 47.71, $ps < .001$; 95% CI ranging from lower -1.17 to upper -0.56), France (F s = 79.12, 31.41, and 34.67, $ps < .001$; 95% CI ranging from lower -1.79 to upper -0.66), and Spain (F s = 20.26, 41.30, and 115.23, $ps < .001$; 95% CI ranging from lower -1.17 to upper -0.44). Furthermore, as

mentioned in a previous section, both groups of nonbelievers liked Catholics less than Buddhists and Chinese, 95% CI ranging from lower -1.10 to upper -0.51 (United Kingdom), from -1.32 to -0.45 (France), and from -0.97 to -0.17 (Spain). The only exception were agnostics in Spain (95% CI ranging from -0.33 to 0.37). Finally, atheists liked Buddhists less than Chinese in the United Kingdom, $F = 12.09$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-0.40, -0.11]$, France, $F = 5.14$, $p = .026$, 95% CI $[-0.72, -0.05]$, and Spain $F = 5.12$, $p = .029$, 95% CI $[-0.85, -0.05]$.

Prejudice as a Function of Antireligious Critique

Beyond between- and within-group differences, we also investigated whether antireligious critique, that is, the continuous variable denoting strong de-consideration of religion, predicts prejudice, and whether it does so uniquely, thus beyond the role of the relevant individual differences measured—existential quest, truth-oriented rigid moral deontology, and belief in the benevolence of

the world.⁵ For the economy of presentation, we focus here on two aggregated targets of prejudice, distinctly for each country: (a) *antiliberal groups*, that is, the average of the global prejudices toward antigay activists and religious fundamentalists, and (b) *mainstream religious groups*, that is, the average of the global prejudices toward Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists. (For the distinct analyses for each of the six targets analyses, see [Supplemental Table S2](#) in the online supplementary material).

Thus, within each country, for each of these two targets of prejudice, we carried out a hierarchical multiple linear regression, with antireligious critique as the only predictor in Step 1, and with the other three variables, that is, existential quest, moral deontology-truth, and belief in benevolence, as additional predictors in Step 2 (see [Table 2](#)). (We did not additionally enter religiosity as a predictor to avoid undesirable artificial outcomes due to the conceptual and empirical overlap of this variable with low external critique). Consistently across the three countries, antireligious critique predicted alone, but also uniquely and beyond the occasional role of the other variables, dislike for both antiliberal targets and religionists of the mainstream religions, with the effect sizes remaining almost the same in Step 2. Moreover, low belief in a benevolent world predicted dislike of religionists in the United Kingdom and France, and a dislike of antiliberal targets in Spain. Finally, existential quest predicted low dislike of religious groups in France, but high dislike of antiliberals in the United Kingdom.⁶

Discussion

In this work, participants self-identifying as atheists, agnostics, or Christians from three countries—United Kingdom, Spain, and France—expressed their attitudes toward (a) moral and religious antiliberal groups, that is, antigay activists and religious fundamentalists; (b) religionists of three major religions varying in proximity with the dominant culture and possibly valence (Catholics, Muslims, and Buddhists); and (c) an ethnic outgroup, that is, Chinese. Consistently across the three countries, nonbelievers (atheists and agnostics) expressed more prejudicial attitudes, (a) compared to the religious believers, toward the two antiliberal targets, as well as (b) toward Catholics, not only compared to the more positive religious believers' judgment (possibly being interpretable as ingroup favoritism) but also compared to their own, nonbelievers', more positive evaluation of Buddhists and Chinese. Atheists, in particular, went "further" by even expressing, consistently across the three countries, less positive attitudes toward the "exotic" (distant) religious outgroup (Buddhists—usually perceived positively in European societies) compared to the "exotic" ethnic outgroup (Chinese).

These findings importantly nuance and extend previous research indicating that low fundamentalism, low religiosity, or high antireligious critique predict a dislike for ideological opponents at the religious and the moral levels, that is, Catholics/Christians, conservatives, and antiabortionists ([Brandt & Van Tongeren, 2017](#); [Kossowska et al., 2017](#)). First, we provided evidence that such attitudes go beyond a simple dislike (feeling thermometer) of antiliberals and religionists to include clear prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes. This was in terms of an unwillingness to have antiliberals and religionists as political representatives or as a husband/wife, which could possibly be explained as a reflection of

a value conflict if religion is perceived to threaten the secular ideals of European societies. But this prejudice also included unwillingness to have antiliberals and religionists even as neighbors. The latter indeed constitutes a strong indicator of discriminatory prejudice.

Second, our findings clarify that it is nonbelief per se (self-identification as atheist or agnostic) that predicts such prejudice and not simply being at the low end of continuous religious variables. The latter is to some extent unclear (as to whether the low end corresponds to being low religiosity or to nonbelief), especially in societies like those of the previously mentioned studies (United States and Poland) that are more religious than the societies of the present study (United Kingdom, France, and Spain). Third, and in line with the previous point, the current findings provide cross-cultural validation of the link between irreligion and prejudice or discrimination, since the findings hold in rather secular European countries where one could expect that society's secular values would imply prejudice only against antiliberal groups but not against religions per se.

The consistency of the above findings across the three countries also suggests that these trends are not due to a very specific historical context. These three countries—United Kingdom,

⁵ On a bivariate correlational level, antireligious critique correlated positively with both types of prejudice, i.e. toward antiliberals and mainstream religions, in all three countries, r s ranging from .15, $p = .007$, to .32, $p < .001$. Existential quest correlated positively with prejudice toward antiliberals in the United Kingdom and France, r s = .09, .13, p s = .043, .060, but negatively with prejudice toward religious groups, r s = -.09, -.12, p s = .038, .071. Belief in a benevolent world was also negatively correlated with prejudice toward religious groups in the United Kingdom and France, r s = -.27, -.21, p s < .001, = .002, and toward antiliberals in Spain, $r = -.15$, $p = .006$. Finally, in the United Kingdom and France, antireligious critique was positively correlated with moral deontology oriented to truth/rationality, r s = .17, .19, p s < .001, = .005, whereas negatively correlated with benevolence, r s = -.09, -.23, p s = .032, .001. In Spain, antireligious critique was positively correlated with existential quest, $r = .18$, $p = .001$.

⁶ Prior to those regression analyses, we conducted similar analyses distinctly for each of the five (plus the ethnic) target groups, and the results converged between targets within categories (antiliberal and religious groups). The findings are detailed in [Supplemental Table S2](#) in the online supplementary material. Of interest to note here are four nuanced findings (Step 2). First, across the three countries (United Kingdom, France, and Spain), antireligious critique predicted negative attitudes toward fundamentalists more strongly ($b^*s = .24, .32, .17$) than those toward anti-gays ($b^*s = .18, .06, .05$). Second, antireligious critique predicted negative attitudes toward all three religionist groups (Muslims, Catholics, and Buddhists) in the United Kingdom (.27, .37, .15) and France (.31, .26, .12), and only toward Catholics (.32) in Spain. Third, the role of low benevolence in predicting negative attitudes was consistent across the three religious target groups in the United Kingdom (-.27, -.18, -.16), and occasionally in France (toward Muslims: -.22) and Spain (toward Catholics: -.13). Finally, in all three countries, low existential quest predicted negative attitudes toward Muslims (-.09, -.16, -.11) and Buddhists (-.13, -.25, -.13), but not Catholics (.03, .00, .08). Furthermore, one could argue that external critique applies only to nonbelievers. Though it makes sense, as past research has typically done, to examine, as we did, the role of external critique in a full sample composed of both religious believers and nonbelievers, we recomputed the above analyses for external critique (as in [Table 2](#)) only among the nonbelievers (i.e., atheists and agnostics). These analyses provided an overall confirmation of the above findings, that is, antireligious critique predicted negative attitudes toward antiliberals in the United Kingdom ($b^* = .21$) and fundamentalists in France (.20) though not in Spain (.05), as well as toward the mainstream religious groups in the United Kingdom (.33) and France (.23).

Table 2
Hierarchical Regressions With Prejudice Against Antiliberal and Religious Targets as Predicted by Antireligious Critique, Beyond Other Predictors

Predictors	Targets					
	Antiliberal (antigay, RFs)			Religious (Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist)		
	<i>b</i> *	<i>t</i> -test	95% CI	<i>b</i> *	<i>t</i> -test	95% CI
United Kingdom						
Step 1 ($R^2_{s_{adj}} = .06, .10$)						
Antireligious critique	.25	5.90***	[.09, .17]	.32	7.84***	[.12, .21]
Step 2 ($R^2_{s_{adj}} = .06, .16$)						
Antireligious critique	.25	5.87***	[.09, .17]	.30	7.37***	[.11, .19]
Existential quest	.09	2.22*	[.01, .17]	-.07	-1.80	[-.14, .01]
Truth/rationality morals	-.02	-0.40	[-.11, .07]	.01	0.24	[-.08, .10]
BWA-benevolence	-.01	-0.22	[-.07, .05]	-.23	-5.71***	[-.22, -.11]
France						
Step 1 ($R^2_{s_{adj}} = .05, .10$)						
Antireligious critique	.23	3.43***	[.05, .20]	.32	5.01***	[.10, .24]
Step 2 ($R^2_{s_{adj}} = .06, .13$)						
Antireligious critique	.24	3.44***	[.06, .21]	.29	4.46***	[.09, .22]
Existential quest	.10	1.56	[-.02, .17]	-.17	-2.67**	[-.21, -.03]
Truth/rationality morals	.05	0.72	[-.09, .19]	.04	0.61	[-.09, .16]
BWA-benevolence	.12	1.78	[-.01, .18]	-.15	-2.28*	[-.19, -.01]
Spain						
Step 1 ($R^2_{s_{adj}} = .02, .03$)						
Antireligious critique	.15	2.74**	[.02, .14]	.17	3.21**	[.03, .13]
Step 2 ($R^2_{s_{adj}} = .03, .03$)						
Antireligious critique	.13	2.39*	[.01, .13]	.18	3.29**	[.04, .14]
Existential quest	.04	0.70	[-.05, .11]	-.06	-1.15	[-.12, .03]
Truth/rationality morals	.00	0.06	[-.11, .11]	-.02	-0.32	[-.12, .08]
BWA-benevolence	-.14	-2.63**	[-.19, -.03]	-.06	-1.15	[-.12, .03]

Note. BWA = basic world assumptions. *N*s = 523, 219, and 348, respectively, for the United Kingdom, France, and Spain.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

France, and Spain—have very diverse historic and present situations in terms of religious heritage, religious diversity, and ideological, societal, and legal confrontation between nonreligious and religious ideologies and groups. For instance, in France, a country of Catholic heritage, nonbelievers today constitute a numeric majority, anticlericalism has been hostile since and following the French revolution, and laicity, that is, the secular character of the State, has been the very first foundational value of the Constitution since 1905. Spain is a traditionally predominantly Catholic country, with secularism and organized atheism still developing. The United Kingdom, a country of Anglican tradition, has a strong history of organized and active ideological atheism. Note also that the three countries differ additionally for their accumulated experience with, and societal model managing of, religious diversity and multiculturalism.

Several other findings seem worthy of comment. Our hypothesis that atheists would be more inflexible and prejudicial than agnostics received partial but not full support. They tended first to be lower in existential quest than agnostics (similar trends in all countries). Moreover, atheists in the United Kingdom, compared to agnostics in the same country, were significantly higher in antireligious critique (the trends were similar in France and Spain) and higher in factual/rational truth-oriented rigid moral deontology.

Finally, in the United Kingdom, atheists were more prejudicial than agnostics toward all kinds of religious groups: fundamentalists, Catholics, Muslims, and Buddhists. Though these findings confirm our theoretical rationale on an overall stronger rigidity of atheists compared to agnostics, it remains open for future investigation as to why this was clearer in the United Kingdom compared to France and Spain. It may be that, in the United Kingdom, there still exists a vibrant tradition of active ideological atheism; and/or that France's principle of laicity as a constitutional norm regulating society has obscured more ideological differences between the various kinds of nonbelievers.

Furthermore, and to some extent unexpectedly, the current study also showed that Christian religionists, also consistently across the three countries, shared with nonbelievers the negative attitudes toward the two antiliberal groups, that is, antigay activists and religious fundamentalists, even if not to the same degree. Religious believers clearly showed high social distance with respect to these two groups, with mean scores of the liking attitudes being mostly around 2 and 2.5 in the 7-point scales (see Supplemental Table 1 in the online supplementary material and Figure 1). These mean scores were particularly low compared to the attitudes toward Buddhists and Chinese, for whom most mean scores were above the midpoint of the scale, at least in the United Kingdom and

France—in Spain, Catholic participants showed some ethnic prejudice against Chinese. We interpret these findings, which differ from previous studies in more religious countries (United States and Poland) where fundamentalists were liked by the strongly religious (Brandt & Van Tongeren, 2017; Kossowska et al., 2017), as resulting from the context of secularization. In such contexts, Western Christians increasingly distance themselves from antiliberal moral and religious ideologies (Saroglou, 2019, for review; see also Yancey, 2017).

Nevertheless, it is also of interest to note that, as far as Muslim targets were concerned, both Christians and nonbelievers expressed some suspicion. These targets were much more liked/much less disliked than fundamentalists and antigay activists, suggesting that, at least at the explicit level, Western Europeans seem to clearly distinguish between fundamentalism and mainstream Islam. However, Muslims were still seen more negatively than Buddhists and Chinese, possibly because of the perceived moral conservatism of Islam and the perceived accommodation with modernity of Eastern philosophies.

Interestingly, there was evidence that prejudice toward antiliberal targets (Spain) or religionists (United Kingdom and France) is partly characteristic of people who do not strongly believe that the world and other people are inherently benevolent, in other words among people who feel some kind of distrust of others and the world. Ironically, this parallels research showing that prejudice toward atheists can be explained by a distrust of them (Ng & Gervais, 2017).

Moreover, existential quest also impacted prejudice but in diverging ways: *high* existential quest (i.e., valuing doubt, reconsideration, and the possibility of changing one's own beliefs and worldviews) predicted a dislike of antiliberals, possibly because the latter threaten individual autonomy and societal pluralism. However, it was *low* existential quest that predicted prejudice toward mere religionists, possibly because disliking and discriminating people for the mere fact that they belong to a major world religion indicates closed-minded stereotypical overgeneralization and exclusive association of religion with negative individual and social outcomes. Thus, it is of interest to note that, whereas disliking antigay and fundamentalist people was generally common among believers and nonbelievers, and was also characteristic of those who placed high value on relativism, disliking mainstream religionists was characteristic of the antireligious critique, an orientation found to reflect suspiciousness (Śliwak & Zarzycka, 2012), low prosocial dispositions (Van der Noll et al., 2017, Experiment 2), and rigid and closed-minded attitudes such as dualistic thinking (Desimpelaere, Sulas, Duriez, & Hutsebaut, 1999), ethnocentrism (Duriez & Hutsebaut, 2000), and full opposition to the Muslim veil (Saroglou et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, whereas there was occasional weak evidence that nonbelief (or atheism or external critique) was associated with high existential quest, high truth/rationality-oriented moral deontology, and low belief in the benevolence of the world, antireligious critique uniquely predicted prejudice toward antiliberal and antireligious groups, beyond the role of the above three orientations. It may be that antireligious ideology had independent effects since it encompasses many specific ideas, worldviews, and values with regard to religion and related morality, much in the way that religiosity predicts opposition to gay adoption, abortion, and eu-

thanasia beyond the role of collectivistic morality and low existential quest (Deak & Saroglou, 2015).

Though the main findings were consistent across three countries, future research should aim to replicate and cross-culturally validate them. The religious participants in the present study, especially in the United Kingdom and France, seemed particularly liberal: they scored only slightly below the midpoint of the scale on the antireligious critique measure and they disliked antigay activists and religious fundamentalists. Similarly, data collection in these two countries was carried out online, and research suggests that, among online religious samples, liberals and nonfundamentalists are overrepresented (Lewis, Djupe, Mockabee, & Su-Ya Wu, 2015). Also, in some cases, the size of one of the subgroups (agnostics in France, atheists in Spain) was clearly smaller than the other groups. It is thus important to replicate the present work with even larger samples, in much more religious countries, as well as in countries with religious traditions other than Christian. In those contexts, the contrast between believers and nonbelievers in their attitudes toward antiliberals may be much more pronounced, and believers may be prejudicial toward religionists from other religions. Moreover, the two dilemmas we exploratorily used to tap truth/rationality-oriented rigid moral deontology may have been modest indicators of the construct under study. Furthermore, the irreligion-prejudice association should be further studied through less explicit and more behavioral measures of prejudice. The present results are in line and extend previous work (Brandt & Van Tongeren, 2017; Ekici & Yucel, 2015; Kossowska et al., 2017), but all of the existing studies used self-reported explicit measures of outgroup-related attitudes.

In sum, this work provides evidence advancing our knowledge in several currently emerging research areas: (a) psychology of atheism/irreligion—instead of only perceiving irreligion as the opposite of religion, (b) psychology of prejudice between opposite ideological groups—instead of only seeing prejudice as conservatives' attitudes toward liberal targets, and (c) cross-cultural psychology of individual differences, including ideologies—instead of studying beliefs, ideologies, and their psychological outcomes as being held universally, independently from the cultural, for example, secular versus religious, context of the societies studied. Overall, this work indicates that, in secular Western countries, though Christians tend to distance themselves from antiliberal moral and religious orientations, nonbelievers in general, or antireligious people in particular, compared to the religious, show stronger negative and discriminatory attitudes toward antiliberals, but also, to some extent, less positive attitudes even toward mainstream religionists. Thus, both being irreligious and holding dogmatically irreligious ideas seem to contribute to discriminatory attitudes toward ideological opponents who may or may not threaten liberal values.

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Received January 9, 2018

Revision received October 26, 2018

Accepted November 9, 2018 ■