

(<https://www.zmescience.com>)

Home (<https://www.zmescience.com>) > Health & Medicine (<https://www.zmescience.com/category/medicine/>) >

Mind & Brain (<https://www.zmescience.com/category/medicine/mind-and-brain/>)

So you love religion but hate intolerance? Try Buddhism

A new study has found that unlike monotheistic religions, buddhism doesn't promote intolerance – instead, it promotes both selfless behavior and tolerance of people we perceive as unlike ourselves.



by **Mihai Andrei** (<https://www.zmescience.com/author/osamik/>)

— February 19, 2015 (<https://www.zmescience.com/medicine/mind-and-brain/buddhism-tolerance-study-19022015/>)

in **Mind & Brain** (<https://www.zmescience.com/category/medicine/mind-and-brain/>), News (<https://www.zmescience.com/category/science/news-science/>), Offbeat (<https://www.zmescience.com/category/other/offbeat-other/>)

AA

A new study has found that unlike monotheistic religions, Buddhism doesn't promote intolerance – instead, it promotes both selfless behavior *and* tolerance of people we perceive as outsiders.

(<https://cdn.zmescience.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/db8fe641f92b8982629596f49ad3316f.gif>)

Does religion do more harm than good? It seems to be quite a controversial topic, with significant evidence both ways. Some studies have found that religion makes us more altruistic and more likely to help those (<http://psr.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/02/06/1088868314568811.abstract>) around us, while others found that it encourages prejudice against perceived outsiders

Privacy

<http://www.psmag.com/books-and-culture/love-thy-neighbor-not-if-hes-different-15473>).

This new study concluded that Buddhist teachings “activate both universal pro-sociality and, to some extent (given the role of individual differences), tolerance of people holding other religious beliefs or belonging to other ethnic groups”. Magali Clobert

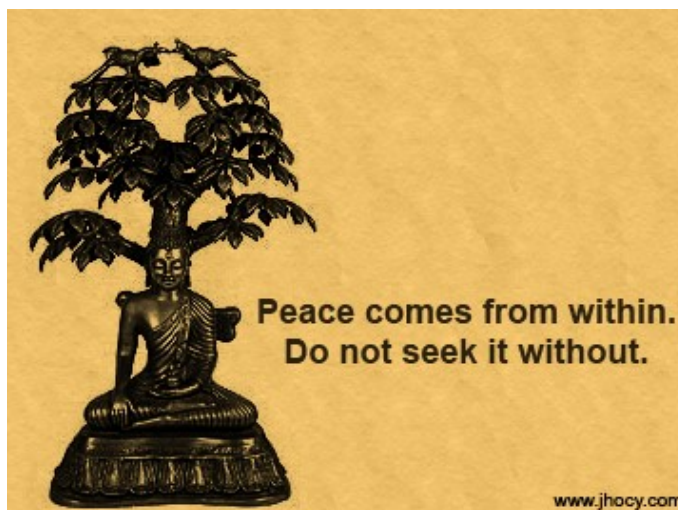
<http://www.uclouvain.be>

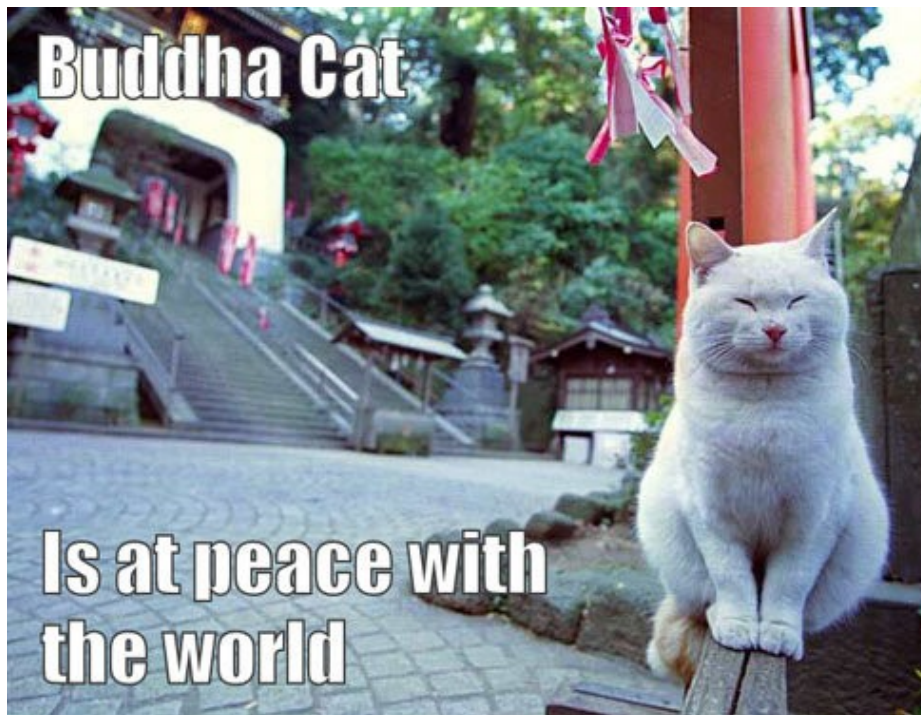
[/en-242799.html](http://www.uclouvain.be/en-242799.html)), a visiting postdoctoral researcher at Stanford University said:

The experiment featured 116 Westerners who had joined Buddhist centers in Belgium who were asked to fill out a series of prejudice-related poll questions, in which they were asked whether they would like to have certain minority group members (including Muslims, atheists, and gays) as a spouse, a neighbor, or a political representative.

“After being primed with Buddhist words,” the researchers report, “participants reported lower explicit negative attitudes toward all kinds of out-groups.”

Of course, this by itself is not enough, because it can be argued that religious converts are not representative for the entire population. In order to further verify their theories, researchers conducted another experiment, with 122 undergraduates from National Taiwan University. (Only 8.5 percent of them identified as Buddhists; the majority were either “folk believers” or atheists). Again, this is perhaps not representative of all populations, but I think it’s quite relevant. The participants were asked to complete a “lexical decision task” which included either Buddhist terms such as “monk” and “reincarnation,” Christian ones such as “church” and “Bible,” or neutral concepts.





(<https://cdn.zmescience.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/buddha-cat.jpg>)

Image source (<https://bodhipunx.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/buddha-cat.jpg>).

“Exposure to Buddhist concepts, compared with neutral and Christian concepts, activated decreased ethnic and religious prejudice,” particularly in people who score low in authoritarianism (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authoritarian_personality).

In other words, exposure to Buddhist concepts and teachings made people more compassionate and tolerant towards outsiders – while Christian concepts didn’t. This seems to indicate that unlike monotheistic religions, Buddhism has a more positive impact on people’s ideas – and while the results need to be duplicated, this raises some serious questions regarding the impact of monotheistic religions like Christianity or Islam in modern society.

Journal Reference Magali Clobert, Vassilis Saroglou, Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Buddhist Concepts as Implicitly Reducing Prejudice and Increasing Prosociality. doi: 10.1177/0146167215571094 (<http://psp.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/02/12/0146167215571094.abstract>)

Andrei's background is in geophysics, and he's been fascinated by it ever since he was a child. Feeling that there is a gap between scientists and the general audience, he started ZME Science -- and the results are what you see today.

Popular in the Community

🌐 (<https://www.zmescience.com>)

📘 (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000131447897>)