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## **Religion and psychology of values: « Universals » and changes**

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### **Introduction**

The idea that values hold a privileged place within religious and spiritual life is a traditional conception. Nevertheless, this common general idea may be examined through a variety of disciplinary approaches. What is meant exactly by “privileged place”? The fact that religion is supposed to promote values in general? Or some values more than others and some even not at all? Or that it mainly promotes values that are in correspondence with what is considered important and socially desirable because it is assumed to contribute to individual well-being and social cohesion? In this text, an effort will be made to integrate this question into the psychology of values by reviewing the psychological studies that have investigated how individual religiosity in general and some religious dimensions in particular are associated with the importance attributed to a series of values as they are structured within Schwartz’s (1992) model of values. This theoretical model, dominating today’s psychology of values, has been empirically validated in more than 60 countries from the five continents.

#### *Religion and values: which direction of causality?*

If a link exists between religiosity and values, nothing can be automatically assumed with regard to the direction of the causality. A common theoretical hypothesis is that religions — as large sets combining cognitions and beliefs, ethics and specific rules, ritual and practices, communities and specific experiences — have an impact on the importance attributed to various types of values by some people as a consequence of their religious affiliation or identity, internalization of religious discourse, emotional religious experiences, or identification with specific religious and spiritual models.

The other hypothesis of a reverse (possibly complementary) causality is not to be excluded. In terms of individual differences, it is likely that some people (more than others, controlling for all other elements), by their individual characteristics, i.e. personality, education, socialization, show specific tendencies for some values, and consequently are more inclined to look for socio-ideological frameworks (beliefs, world views, sets of traditions, communities, spiritualities, moral codes) that are in resonance with, provide support to, or amplify these values. Some studies indicate that the second hypothesis of an individual predisposition for some values has an empirical foundation. On the one hand, individual differences in the degree of importance attributed to values reflect differences in personality traits to an important extent (Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994; Roccas et al., 2002), the latter being known to partially originate in genetics (Plomin & Caspi, 1999). On the other hand, genetic

differences seem to some extent to predict individual differences in religiosity, both in religious affiliation and specific religious dimensions (D'Onofrio et al., 1999). This effect could be understood as a translation of genetics into individual differences in personality dispositions.

Another theoretical hypothesis is that if something specific characterizes the link between religiousness and values, this could be the willingness for coherence and integration across values. Such a perspective is inspired by the integrative character of religion in general, whose main characteristic may be the fact that it encompasses many components, i.e. emotions, ritual, moral rules, beliefs, and community, into a coherent and harmonious whole (Hinde, 1999). We will treat this question in an indirect way: are there values that share some similarities and can constitute a subgroup when examining the associations between individual religiosity and values? Similarly, are there conflicts or strong oppositions between some values? Another question will also be treated, at least indirectly: if privileged links exist between religion and certain values, are the latter also the ones that have priority in social valorization or, in more technical terms, in social desirability? Moreover, we will pay careful attention to an additional question. Is there some constancy in the pattern of values that are privileged or discredited within a religious context, when we compare different countries, religions, and religious denominations? Or do we come across strong differentiation as a function of underlying theological and anthropological differences? Finally, could this pattern of the religion-values associations vary as a function of other variables such as the socio-economic development or historical context of the groups involved?

Other hypotheses could be advanced. For example, through its integrative character and its concern for an ultimate finality in human actions, religion could be suspected of favoring the promotion of terminal values (values relative to the ends and goals of individual existence) and leaving instrumental values (values relative to means, ways of behaving) in the background. However, this hypothesis cannot be verified here because in Schwartz's (1992) model we do not find the distinction between these two types of values which were present in the previous model of values by Rokeach (1973). In addition, sociologists of values have criticized this distinction between means and ends: whereas the two types of values can be distinguished in the present moment, the distinction loses its pertinence when applied to a process that continues over the time (the means may become ends at a later stage).

#### *Psychology of values in the 1990s: Schwartz's model*

Since the 1990s, psychology of values has been dominated, not without reason, by the model of Schwartz, which has replaced the previous operationalization of values by Rokeach (1973). According to Schwartz (1992), values are desirable, transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives. The hierarchy of values is progressively formed during childhood, is stabilized during adolescence, and can be remodeled during adulthood.

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Several series of studies from almost 60 countries have allowed for the validation of Schwartz's theoretical model. The model suggests that a large number of values (indeed, more than 50 single values) can be structured into 10 meta-values or value types. This hierarchical structure is found to be stable across these countries representing different cultures from the five continents. Attempts to find other values beyond these 10 types have failed, a finding suggesting that the model of Schwartz is rather exhaustive of the different values essential to human beings. Another pan-cultural universal, beyond minor cross-cultural differences, seems to be the values hierarchy, i.e. the order of importance

people attribute to each of the 10 value types (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). Within each society, however, interesting individual differences can be observed in the importance attributed to values. This is also the case when groups are compared between each other (e.g., Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). Finally, several series of empirical studies demonstrated that importance attributed to specific values is predictive of number of specific behaviors related, for instance, to study and professional choices, prosocial (cooperation) and antisocial (delinquency) behaviors, political preferences, intergroup relations, and environmental attitudes.

The 10 (types of) values, their definition, and the corresponding single values that are included in each of the 10 (types of) values are provided in Table 1 (for more theoretical issues, see Schwartz, 1992). These values are measured by a corresponding instrument, the Schwartz Value Survey, that allows for empirical investigations. In addition, theory and consecutive research have demonstrated that these values are structured into a set (circumflex model) where both conflicts-oppositions and similarities-congruencies between values can be observed (see Figure 1).

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As far as similarities-congruencies are concerned, a first observation (Figure 1) is that each of the 10 values shares a common motivational goal with the value that is next to it in the circumflex model. For instance, Hedonism and Stimulation have in common the goal of provoking an emotionally pleasant sensation, whereas the motivation shared by Hedonism and its other “neighbor” value (Achievement) is to put an emphasis on personal, individual satisfaction. A second way to consider similarities and oppositions between values is to realize that some values taken together constitute larger sets of values, and these sets are in opposition with each other following two almost orthogonal axes (see also Figure 1). A first conflict exists between *Conservation-Continuity* values (Tradition, Conformity, Security) that refer to stability, certainty, and social order, and *Openness to change* values (Stimulation and Self-Direction) that refer to novelty and personal autonomy. A second conflict opposes values reflecting *Self-transcendence*, i.e. the promotion of the well-being of others, close ones (Benevolence) or others in a broad sense (Universalism), to values reflecting *Self-enhancement* and the pursuit of personal interests (Achievement, Power). A 10<sup>th</sup> value (Hedonism) is located between Openness to change and Self-enhancement.

### **Values and religion in empirical studies: a universal pattern?**

#### *A meta-analysis of 21 samples from 15 countries*

In the last fifteen years (til 2004) that the Schwartz’s model has dominated psychology of values, 21 studies have been published with data from 15 countries providing results on the associations between religiosity and values. All the studies used the same methodology, i.e. a questionnaire including, first, Schwartz’s validated instrument, and second, measures or indexes of religiosity. Most samples were constituted by students but adult samples were also included. We carried out a quantitative meta-analysis of these 21 studies, a statistical method that allows for measuring the “mean effect size”, i.e. the average importance of the association weighted by the number of participants in each study. Ten mean effect sizes were thus provided, for the associations between religiosity and the 10 values, respectively (Saroglou et al., 2004).

The increasing use of meta-analytic research strategies is the consequence of a serious methodological debate in social and psychological sciences originating from the assumption that it is the accumulation of results from many similar studies that can produce solid and coherent scientific

knowledge, rather than interesting but fragile information collected from isolated studies that also often give the impression of having inconsistent results. A quantitative meta-analysis disputes the arbitrary character of previous strategies in reviews of empirical studies where scholars drew conclusions after having counted the percentage of studies that confirmed the hypothesis (on the basis of a magical but arbitrary significance level) against the total number of (published) studies that tried to test it. The meta-analysis attempts to estimate the (mean) size (power) of the effect across the whole spectrum of the studies concerned. It also attempts to demonstrate either a relative homogeneity of the effect — if the results from all studies go in a similar direction — or the conditions (e.g., moderators) that can explain the opposite, i.e. heterogeneity of the effect — if some studies indicate a bigger, lower or absent effect or even one in an opposite direction than in other studies.

The studies we found and reviewed in our meta-analysis mainly included samples from European and Mediterranean countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey) but also from the USA and Mexico. They can thus be considered as representative of populations with a Christian background (mostly Catholics, but also Protestants and Greek Orthodox) as well as populations from Jewish and Muslim traditions (see Saroglou et al., 2004, for more details). Finally, the meta-analysis was based on a total of 8851 participants.

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Figure 2 allows for a visual inspection of the results (in terms of average correlations weighted by the number of participants per study) for all the studies taken together. Based also on what the ranges of correlations indicated across the different studies (see Saroglou et al., 2004), it turned out that in all 21 samples religiosity corresponds to high importance attributed to **Conservation-Continuity** values. This is clearly the case for the values *Tradition* (correlations varied from .10 to .64, mean correlation = .45) and *Conformity* ( $r_s$  varied from .11 to .45, mean  $r = .23$ ). Notice that the link of religiosity with Tradition decreases when the item “devout” is dropped from the Tradition subscale but remains important ( $r = .25$ ; Saroglou & Galand, 2004; Schwartz & Huisman, 1995). Similarly across all samples, high religiosity is a sign of small importance attributed to values typical of **Openness to change** and **hedonism**, i.e. *Self-Direction* ( $r_s$  varied from .01 to -.37, mean  $r = -.24$ ), *Stimulation* ( $r_s$  varied from -.08 to -.44, mean  $r = -.26$ ), and *Hedonism* ( $r_s$  varied from -.19 to -.49, mean  $r = -.30$ ).

In a weaker way, but still meaningful and almost systematic across studies, religiosity tended to be negatively associated with **Self-enhancement** values, i.e. *Power* ( $r_s$  varied from .03 to -.29, mean  $r = -.09$ ) and *Achievement* ( $r_s$  varied from -.01 to -.32, mean  $r = -.11$ ). As far as the **Self-transcendence** values are concerned, people high in religiosity are inclined towards a limited openness to others and the world. Except in three studies, religiosity was generally positively associated with *Benevolence* ( $r_s$  varied from -.11 to .43, mean  $r = .14$ ) but negatively related to *Universalism* (mean  $r = -.09$ ). Interestingly, the latter negative effect was mainly due to the Mediterranean countries (Greece, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey) that, comparatively to the other countries represented in the meta-analysis (mean  $r = -.01$ ), provide the image of a religiosity not open to the ideals of Universalism, as defined in Schwartz’s model ( $r_s$  varied from -.08 to -.55, mean  $r = -.26$ ). Finally, with regard to the value of *Security*, an interesting contrast comes out between countries depending on the status of the Church and its relations with the State: in ex-communist countries from Eastern and Central Europe (notice that data were collected in the early 1990s)

religious people do not seem to be preoccupied by Security values (Roccas & Schwartz, 1997), whereas in the other countries, a weak but positive association exists between religiosity and Security.

#### *Social desirability bias?*

One could object that that the above findings should be considered with suspicion because of possible contamination by a social desirability bias. Not only do previous studies suggest some association between religiosity and social desirability, especially with its component of impression management (Gillings & Joseph, 1996; Saroglou & Galand, 2004; Trimble, 1997), but there is also evidence that some of Schwartz's values are in correspondence with social desirability while others may be contrary to it. In two studies, in Israel and Finland, Schwartz et al. (1997) found that social desirability was positively related to values emphasizing social harmony (Tradition, Conformity, Security, Benevolence) and negatively related to values defying conventions and social harmony (Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-Direction, Achievement, Power). The similarity between this pattern of associations and that of the associations between religion and values is striking. However, two elements allow for dismissing the hypothesis of a social desirability bias. First, the same study by Schwartz et al. (1997) suggests that, besides the links of values with social desirability, one has to see a substantial personality trait rather than a self-presentation bias. Religious participants would attribute a strong or a weak importance to this or that value, not to make a good impression on the researcher or out of social conformity, but because they really value the social harmony embodied by these values, a harmony that makes these values socially desirable. Second, in a recent study in Belgium, it turned out that, when the effect of social desirability was neutralized, the associations between religiosity and values still remained significant in most cases (Saroglou & Galand, 2004).

#### *Values and specific religious dimensions*

Obviously, speaking about "religiosity" in general, as has been the case in this text up till now, may appear as too simplistic given the apparent plurality and diversity of specific religious dimensions and pathways. However, such a global variable as "religiosity" allows for grouping together a large number of studies and for carrying out comparisons necessary for the investigation of cross-cultural similarities, what would be impossible if we based ourselves on indicators of specific multiple religious dimensions such as fundamentalism, faith maturity, quest religious orientation, etc. A more important problem is that there are only two or three studies focused on how values relate to such specific religious dimensions.

Two American studies have used the classic distinction in psychology of religion between intrinsic (in motivation) religiosity, extrinsic (in motivation) religiosity, and "quest" religious orientation (valuing doubts and openness to possible changes) (Burriss & Tarpley, 1998; Faiola, 2002). The second study is an unpublished doctoral dissertation; we are thus limited to the first one. It seems that "quest" religiosity contrasts with the pattern presented above because of its discomfort with conservation values and its openness to change values, whereas extrinsic religion differs from intrinsic religion by the absence of valorization of Benevolence and by the valorization of Power (Burriss & Tarpley, 1998). Such a finding can be considered as is in line with Allport's (1950) theorization of the intrinsic dimension as implying internalization of religious values contrary to the extrinsic dimension.

In another study in Belgium with 1695 Dutch-speaking participants (Fontaine et al., 2003), researchers made a distinction between two dimensions-axes: Inclusion vs. Exclusion of Transcendence (a distinction close to the one between believers and non-believers) and Symbolic vs. Literal Thinking (applicable to both believers and non-believers). Crossing out the two axes allows for distinguishing between rigid believers or non-believers and flexible believers or non-believers who

leave an important place to the symbolic interpretation of religious texts. This study suggested that, as far as values are concerned, the first axis (which is closer to the essence of religion) mainly reflects the conflict between Conservation and Openness to change: it is positively related to Tradition and Conformity and negatively related to the hedonistic values and Self-Direction. According to the authors, this dimension is concerned with the conflict between dependence and autonomy, but not with the one between Self-enhancement (see Power and Achievement) and Self-transcendence (Benevolence and Universalism). It is the second dimension, the symbolic vs. literal thinking, that is related positively to Benevolence and Universalism and negatively to Power, Achievement, and Security. The authors advanced the argument that the prosocial character of religion seems to be less a consequence of theological considerations and more likely a function of cognitive structures, perhaps the capacity for perspective taking and for understanding the perspective of others (see the construct of empathy).

#### *Differences between religions?*

In the meta-analysis of the 21 studies (Saroglou et al., 2004) whose findings were presented above, the associations between religiosity and values seemed to be stable across all studies (for some values) or almost all studies (for the other values). Such a cross-cultural consistency implies that the pattern of the associations found expresses a deep psychological reality that seems stable across different religious environments, in this case, samples from different Christian religious denominations, i.e. Catholics, Protestants, and Greek Orthodox, but also samples of Jews (three samples from Israel) and Muslims (one sample from Turkey and a second one from Belgium). The similarity between Catholics, Muslims, and Jews with regard to the order of associations between religiosity and values (see Figure 3) was statistically tested and confirmed.

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A more subtle question could be to examine whether there are cross-religious differences in the size of the associations themselves. For instance, one could hypothesize — always as a function of the degree of religiosity — that Self-Direction is perceived less negatively in Protestants than in Catholics or the Orthodox, or that traditionalism is stronger in a Muslim or Jewish *milieu* compared to countries with a Christian background in “secularized” Europe. However, in our meta-analysis, this type of analysis was statistically impossible to carry out. First, the non-Christian participants were highly underrepresented. Second, studying the impact of religion or denomination on the links between religiosity and values without controlling for the role of other factors, i.e. socio-cultural or socio-economic differences between countries or samples, could lead to a confounding of the effects. For instance, in Protestant countries, would a hypothetically lower discomfort of religiosity with autonomy in comparison with Catholic countries be due to strictly denominational differences (e.g., theological, anthropological differences) or to differences on the socio-economic and cultural level? Would a hypothetically higher traditionalism of religiosity in Muslim countries comparatively to Christian ones really be an effect of respective theological differences or would it be due to differences in social, economic, and cultural structures?

One way of studying the effect of religion or denomination without confounding it with the effect of other variables is to focus on studies that have included samples from different denominational groups coming from the same country. Interestingly, when comparing Protestants and Catholics living in Germany, there is no difference in the links between their religiousness and the importance they attribute to values (Schwartz & Huisman, 1995). Similar results tend to characterize

Protestants and Catholics living in Switzerland (Devos et al., 2002). Moreover, when comparing native Belgians and second generation immigrant Muslims living in Belgium, both groups receiving the same education at the same school, it turned out that beyond a difference in the mean importance attributed to Tradition (the second group scoring higher), there were no significant differences in the links that religiosity maintains with the system of values (Saroglou & Galand, 2004). (Notice however that the size of the two samples was small and that some differences came out when focusing on values predicted by spirituality).

Within another research tradition, i.e. The European Values Survey, Bréchon (2003) has found that despite some differences (on the individual and/or the national level) between Catholics and Protestants in individual and collective ethical values that concern family and sexuality, civic attitudes, economics, participation in political life and political orientation, xenophobia and attitudes toward nationalism, Protestants and Catholics are more similar to each other than different when compared to their non-religious peers. In addition, the same survey indicated that, similarly to studies from the Schwartz's perspective, the differences between Catholics and Protestants tend to disappear when focusing on groups living in the same country, for instance in Germany or the Netherlands (for similar conclusions by other researchers, see Halman & Riis, 2003). This last finding reminds us of the possible role of economic and socio-cultural factors as well as factors linked to the historical context of each country. (It has been classically documented, for instance, that Protestant countries tend to be more economically developed than Catholic countries).

Notice also that, within a country, the minority vs. majority status of a specific religious denominational group may have an impact on values. For instance, Procter and Hornsby-Smith (2003) found that Catholics living in countries with a Protestant tradition tend to accentuate a restrictive sexual morality or the importance of collectivistic values; the authors interpret these findings as confirming the hypothesis of a "cultural defense". On the basis of a much larger data set from many countries, Guiso et al. (2003) concluded that when Catholics and Protestants are a minority group living within, respectively, a predominantly Protestant or Catholic country, they do not show the same intolerance that characterizes them when they are a majority group in a given country.

#### *Socio-economic impact or cross-religious differences?*

The meta-analysis of 21 studies (Saroglou et al., 2004), whose main findings were presented above, also demonstrated that the socio-economic level of countries has an impact on the size of the religiosity-values associations. Indeed, the more a country is socio-economically developed, the less religiosity reflects conservation-continuity values (Tradition, Conformity, Security) and discomfort with openness to change (Self-Direction), and the more it seems to become intrinsic since its associations with Benevolence and Universalism tends to increase. Similar results were obtained (see Figure 4) when we contrasted two sets of countries, all of them with a Christian background, i.e. Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain) and Western European countries (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands). This comparison allows us to introduce an additional factor in our interpretation: the fact that the first set of countries is characterized by a uni- or mono-religious culture, whereas in the second set of countries there is a tradition of bi-confessionalism (Germany, the Netherlands) or co-existence of two opposite ideologies with established subcultures and social networks (Catholics and atheists "free-thinkers" in Belgium).

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How can we understand these results? The impact of socio-economic development on the size of the religiosity-values associations is unlikely to be direct. A first possible interpretation consists in the assumption that such a development is followed by great cultural changes that can lead, in the end, to transformations in faith, religious experience, and religious institutions, in a way that conforms with these cultural changes. Thus, in so-called developed societies, minimization of the importance of conservative values, promotion of individual autonomy, and openness or tolerance of differences (see the value of Universalism), as well as a relaxation of traditional anti-hedonistic norms (for a review, see Boudon, 2002), could lead religious individuals and groups to a re-adjustment of their values such that they will no lag behind societal changes.

A second possible interpretation can be based on the fact that socio-economic development is generally synonymous with secularization. It could thus simply be that a decrease in indicators of religiosity is followed by a weakening (both in real life and statistics) of the underlying psychological realities, in this case, the decrease of the associations between religiosity and values (either positive or negative associations). However, even if this hypothesis were legitimate (one could in fact object that religion becomes more intrinsic, less extrinsic, and thus that the underlying psychological realities should appear in a clearer way), it does not seem to explain all the above-mentioned findings. Contrary to many associations that decrease as a function of socio-economic development, the importance of Benevolence associated with religiousness seems to increase.

Can we envisage that the socio-economic differences, both on an individual and country level, are so determinative for the religiosity-values relations that the theological and anthropological differences between religions or between religious denominations (at least as transmitted within specific cultures) have no effect? Researchers who have analyzed data from the 1990 European Values Survey seem to come to this conclusion (Halman & Riis, 2003). However, Inglehart and Baker (2000) have analyzed data from 60 countries representing 75% of the global population and came to two main conclusions. First, socio-economic development of a country leads to a move from traditional to secular and rational values, and to a move from values emphasizing survival to “post-materialist” values emphasizing self-expression, such as values accentuating participation, confidence, tolerance, subjective well-being, and concern for the quality of life. Second, beyond the effect of socio-economic level, when comparing sets of countries that are historically and culturally distinct, it turns out that differences in values are still observable depending on whether a country has been historically Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, communist, Islamic, or Confucian. For instance, after controlling for the impact of socio-economic differences, the Protestant cultural heritage is still associated with a high appreciation of post-materialist self-expression values whereas the Orthodox or communist heritage has a negative impact on these values. Another analysis of the data of the same world study (Guiso et al., 2003) showed that, when we control for socio-economic differences, a number of associations between religion and values are similar between Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and Hindus (low tolerance, conservative attitudes towards women, trust of the government, legitimation of poverty by attributing the responsibility to the poor people). However, for other values, some differences exist: for instance, Catholics and Protestants have a positive attitude towards the value of private property, whereas Muslims and Hindus have a negative attitude towards economic competition. We note however that the analyses of Inglehart and Baker (2000) and Guiso et al. (2003) were carried out on countries from the five continents where variability is probably much greater than within Europe. This could explain the lack of similar findings within the European data..



### *Modern spirituality*

A few recent studies using a measure of modern spirituality, not necessarily linked to religious traditions and institutions, suggest both convergences and divergences with (classic) religiosity in the importance attributed to values (see Saroglou, 2003a, for a review). Beyond some minor discrepancies between studies, a fairly clear pattern emerges. First, modern spirituality shares with religion (a) the concern for, respect of, and self-limitation in front of the other (positive correlations with Benevolence and negative ones with Power and Achievement), and (b) the lack of valuing hedonistic values (Hedonism and Stimulation). Notice however that the negative association with the hedonistic values seems less strong and systematic in spirituality than in classic religiosity. It is not to be excluded that spirituality does not necessarily imply (or not to the same degree) the continuity of the religious discomfort with sexuality and enjoyment (“*jouissance*”), but it may continue to reflect a critical attitude towards materialism in general.

Second, modern spirituality differs from classic religiosity through (a) the lack of a high importance attributed to conservation values (Tradition, Conformity) and even the low importance attributed to Security, and (b) the widening of the benevolent attitude to universality and to the world considered as a whole (Universalism). With regard to these values, modern spirituality appears to be taking part in the changes that the socio-economic and socio-cultural development provoke in values traditionally supported by religion.

### *The case of Buddhism in the West*

The case of Buddhism, at least as it is experienced and practiced in the West by people often educated in Christian environments, is exemplary of this move from classic religiosity to modern spirituality because it is located at the halfway point between the two. In a recent study of one hundred Belgians converted to or invested in Buddhism (Saroglou & Dupuis, 2006) it was found that, similarly to studies on modern spirituality and in contrast with the ones on classic religiosity, practice of or investment in Buddhism are not negatively related to Achievement, Universalism, and Stimulation, and are not positively related to Tradition and Conformity; in addition, the link with Security becomes negative. Nevertheless, it remains that, similarly to classic religiosity, pro-Buddhist attitudes-practices are followed by low valorization of Hedonism and Power and by high valorization of Benevolence. Interestingly, in this study, another dimension measured, i.e. interest in the emotional-relational-esthetic aspect of Buddhism, although predictive of openness to Universalism and Stimulation, was found to resemble the traditional religious quest by a valorization of the three conservation values.

## **Discussion**

### *Universality, globalization, and religious specificity*

A first conclusion is the fascinating universality of the pattern of values that seem to be privileged or neglected as a function of religiousness across a large variety of countries and many different religious denominations. Contrary to an excessively culture-oriented approach in psychology of religion, which assumes the only way of understanding a religious phenomenon consists in the discovery of all the historical and cultural factors that can explain this phenomenon as unique, an approach that is rather nomothetic also brings out the psychological or psychosocial constants (“universals”) that explain a religious phenomenon across a variety of contexts. Since the question of the direction of causality between religion and values remains open (see the Introduction), these “constants” can be understood either as contributing to the psychological explanation of religiousness on the basis of individual differences in personality dispositions (see Saroglou, in press), or as

indicating a possibly universal impact of religion on psychological dimensions of life, for instance, in terms of associated goals and motivational values. Nevertheless, the studies reviewed here only represent the three great monotheistic traditions (and countries with a Christian tradition were over-represented), and nothing can exclude *a priori* certain divergences when one moves to the context of Eastern religions.

The pattern of the results provided empirical evidence that can be considered as contesting the sociological theory that assumes post-modernism and globalization will lead to an accentuation of religious differences between different religious groups (see Halman & Pettersson, 2003). These results are rather in favor of an opposite sociological theory asserting that globalization will lead to the leveling of religious particularities and to the emergence of a global religious culture (see also Halman & Pettersson, 2003), or at least — notice that longitudinal data are missing — they are in favor of the existence of psychological “universals” in religion and different religious expressions (see also Saroglou, 2003b). The studies reviewed here demonstrate that, in a systematic way across various countries and contexts, religious people are similar with regard to the values they consider important in their life beyond any minor particularities, whose reasons for existing remain complex and multiple (economic development, history and geography, social and cultural development, theological and anthropological differences).

At the same time, with regard to another theoretical argument, that within modern society we increasingly witness the emergence today of a general cultural convergence within which the ethical specificity of religion tends to fade, the studies reviewed here suggest that religious people are still characterized by their specificity in comparison with their non-believer or atheist peers. This is particularly interesting when taking into consideration the fact that these studies were carried out during the last decade and that most of the participants were young adults. Notice also that the specificity of religiousness with regard to value priorities-importance may be strong, since in Schwartz’s questionnaire values are not measured by specific behaviors but by abstract concepts-values expressed by substantives and adjectives, the latter favoring high convergence among participants.

#### *Values as orienting attitudes and behaviors*

This pattern of the religion-values links does not reflect purely ideal goals devoid of any practical implication for people’s lives. This is not only because values in Schwartz’s model are theoretically supposed to be motivational goals orienting action; neither it is because the pattern of the associations does not seem to be an artifact of social desirability. The main argument is that the religious disposition towards specific values seems to be translated into specific relevant attitudes and behaviors.

For instance, the attachment to *conservation-continuity* values and a low interest in *openness to change* values is reflected in a certain conservatism of religious people regarding political attitudes and attitudes towards institutions guaranteeing order, authority, and continuity, such as the Church, the nation or the family. (There are, however, no differences between believers and atheists in Europe regarding attitudes towards participatory democratic institutions; Bréchon, 2003). Notice also the resistance to sociocultural changes relative to the conception of the place (and, in our view, autonomy vs. subordination) of the individual within the social group (see for example the issues of euthanasia, divorce, abortion, homosexuality), resistance that is now well-documented (Bréchon, 2003; Campiche, 1997; Lambert, 2002).

In addition, the systematic character of the negative association between religiosity and *Self-Direction* opens the thorny question of whether the reference to a corpus of texts, a tradition, or an

institutionalized community possessing a legitimate authority, reference supposed to constitute a source for inspiration and creativity, can be held responsible for the low valuing of autonomy in the lives of believers. Another hypothesis of an opposite but perhaps complementary causal direction (which can be found for instance in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*) is also legitimate: people with high personal dispositions towards dependence on and submission to authority need to refer to religious traditions and authorities as necessary sources legitimizing their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (see the definition of religious orthodoxy by Deconchy, 1980). The Freudian perspective goes even further. In *The Future of an Illusion*, a work that clearly posits the supremacy of reason and science over all forms of infantile dependence, including religion, Freud (1927) argues that it is by lack of autonomy that people continue to believe because they are lacking the necessary strength to abandon religion, possibly because the interdictions are strong and the historical weight of the associated tradition heavy (see Freud's parallelism between paternal and ancestral figures). Besides, according to Freud, it is these kinds of people who usually renounce religion when they feel they are allowed to do so.

As a function of religiousness, the limited attachment to values underlying *Self-transcendence* (Benevolence but not Universalism) and the low attachment to values reflecting *Self-enhancement* (Power, Achievement) put an emphasis on the valorization of prosociality in interpersonal relationships. There is a concern for preserving and improving the welfare of the people with whom religious people are in contact (Benevolence), for avoiding expressing dominance over people and resources (Power), and for remaining in one's proper place and not taking advantage of others (Achievement). Consequently, it is not surprising that religious people prove to be morally rigorous with regard to civic issues. Compared to non-believers, they have a higher tendency to evaluate as immoral behaviors such as fraud, cheating, lying in order to get personal benefits, or simply declaring that the goal of life is to take the best for oneself (Bréchon, 2003; Campiche, 1997; Lambert, 2002). They also show a higher tendency to report solicitude towards vulnerable targets such as the ill and the disabled, the old-aged, the unemployed, and immigrants (Lambert, 2002). They are also known to devote more time and effort to volunteer work (Spilka et al., 2003) and to be ready to help, at least under some conditions (Batson et al., 1993).

However, this prosociality seems limited here to the context of rather close interpersonal relations and is not extended to a universal ethical perspective. Overall, the association between religiosity and *Universalism* is inexistent and even becomes clearly negative when focusing, for instance, on Mediterranean countries with a mono-religious tradition. This limitation, or even this conflict between openness to close ones and closing oneself off to the world as a whole, has been interpreted (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995) as resulting from a problem inherent to religious groups and to the religious identities that characterize their members. These groups do not escape from well-known mechanisms in social psychology typical of the distinction between ingroups (to which favoritism is usually applied) and outgroups (to which discrimination is usually applied). As presented by Batson (1983), although religion promotes the extension of natural altruism from the limits of natural kinship to the broader frontiers of a cultural kinship (for instance, a large community of believers), at the same time it possesses mechanisms that accentuate the barriers with what is located beyond the extended cultural kinship. It is thus not surprising that in Europe (taken as a global entity without distinguishing between countries), when moving in a continuum from atheists to practicing believers, an increase is observed in xenophobia, measured for instance in terms of national preferences in job attribution or refusal of some types of neighbors such as alcoholics, drug-addicts, homosexuals, immigrants, and gypsies (Bréchon, 2003; Lambert, 2002). Finally, as the value of Universalism includes environmental attitudes, it is interesting to report that, at least according to one

study in the USA, religiosity does not seem to correspond to pro-environmental attitudes and that religious fundamentalism is rather negatively related to these attitudes (Tarakeshwar et al., 2002).

Finally, the tendency to attribute low importance to hedonistic values (Hedonism, Stimulation) seems to be clear and systematic across all studies. This way of perceiving these values is predictive of relevant attitudes and behaviors, in other words, conservative and restrictive ones concerning sexuality (Bréchon, 2003; Procter & Hornsby-Smith, 2003; Rowatt & Schmitt, 2003), excitement seeking (Saroglou & Fiasse, 2003), risk-taking (Miller & Hoffmann, 1995), openness to new and complex experiences (Saroglou, 2002b; Saroglou, in press), as well as behaviors that imply loss of self-control or a frivolous, playful consideration of things such as alcohol and drug use (Koenig et al., 2001), spontaneous humor creation (Saroglou, 2002c; Saroglou & Jaspard, 2001), impulsive shopping or gambling (Pichon & Saroglou, 2003; see also Saroglou & Fiasse, 2003). Besides a mistrust of novelty (that could be a consequence of the religious attitude towards the “conservation-continuity vs. change” axis values), what seems here to be essential is the ethical attitude, and its consequences in case of excessive behavior, that values self-mastery as a spiritual ideal (enjoyment, desire, humor, passions and strong emotions in general escape from this ideal) and is colored by an emphasis on the finality, and thus seriousness, of existence (see also, Saroglou, 2002a). In addition, the low propensity towards the hedonistic values within a religious perspective may result from an ethical attitude that consists in questioning materialism. Notice that besides a disdain for materialism, another attitude may be hidden, i.e. sensitivity to disgust and to anything that recalls human animality and death (for the links between disgust, animality, and religion, see Rozin et al., 1999a, 1999b; Saroglou & Anciaux, 2003).

Taken together, the results of the meta-analysis of the studies on religiosity and values suggest that the size of the negative association with hedonistic values is almost twice as great as the one with the prosocial values (Benevolence), without even taking into account the absence of a positive association with Universalism. Such a finding is even more striking given that the studies reviewed here were carried out recently (during the last 10-15 years); that most of the samples were constituted by young adult participants; and that theological discourse today tends to value the role in spiritual life played by realities such as body and bodily expressions, affectivity and sexuality, pleasure and enjoyment (even humor) and to correct the so-called misperception of the Church by the media, which emphasize an excessive focus of the Church on questions of sexual ethics rather than on issues of social ethics. It seems as if a Freudian explanation of religion that attributes great importance to the repressive dimension of religion with regard to sexuality and natural animality (Freud, 1927) still has a strong, at least partial, explanatory power with regard to religion as a psychological reality. The classic theoretical perspective emphasizing the role of religion in promoting altruism and prosocial attitudes and behaviors, on the other hand, seems to have less explanatory power.

#### *Understanding changes*

The studies reviewed here suggest both some invariance and some changes in the religion-values relations. As a function of socio-economic development, and probably of its correlate, secularization, religion tends to imply to a lesser degree values of order and conservation, dependence and lack of autonomy, as well as discomfort with hedonistic values. Religiosity may even be becoming more intrinsic, judging from an increase of the religiosity-Benevolence association. We can even expect that, in a secularized world where religion is not a substantial part of social norms people have to conform to or transmit, an intrinsically motivated faith becomes an increasingly dominant reality compared to an extrinsically motivated religion that is likely to lose its reasons for existing.

These changes, however, remain modest and do not yet lead to a reversal of some tendencies, for instance, towards a positive link between religiosity and Self-Direction or Universalism. A reversal of tendencies seems rather to be characteristic of modern spirituality, a reality independent of traditional and institutional religion. From some points of view, modern spirituality appears to correspond to the Allport's (1950) ideal of an intrinsic, mature faith: people who find spirituality important in their life tend to value autonomy and to be open to universalistic values; not only do they not tend to value order and tradition but they move on the opposite side of the spectrum, by neglecting quest for social and personal security. Elsewhere, we have examined the implications that modern spirituality could have for the classic psychological theories of religion (Saroglou, 2003a).

### *Limitations*

One limitation of the studies reviewed here is that most samples consisted of students. Generability thus of the results can not be guaranteed, although there is no reason to suspect important differences in the religion-values associations between different ages or cohorts; indeed, some of the studies included here provide results in favor of generability. Another limitation of the studies is the fact that they provide results on the global 10 types of values level and not on the lower, more detailed level of the 50-55 single values that constitute the 10 types. Despite some (but still not very high) reliability between the single values that compose each global type, it remains theoretically questionable whether the associations between religiosity and the different single values within a type of value would always follow the same direction. We point out three examples that may be intriguing. The value of Achievement is composed by items reflecting success, but also by items referring to the ways one adopts, i.e. intelligence, influence, and ambition, in order to reach it. The value Benevolence is a mixture of items clearly indicating a quality in interpersonal relations (helpful, forgiving), but also items linked to rigorousness in maintaining engagements (honest, loyal). Finally, Universalism combines environmental values with values of universalistic social ethics; indeed, a factor analysis of data from our own studies in Belgium confirms the distinctiveness of these two facets within the global value of Universalism.

Interestingly, a finer analysis on the single values level of our data in Belgium indicates that the positive association of religiosity with Tradition is mainly due (in addition to the item "devout") to the item "respect for tradition," but less or not at all to the item "humble". The same positive link of religiosity with Conformity is mainly due to the values of "self-discipline" and "honoring parents and elders," and less or not at all to the values of "politeness" or "obedience". Among old participants, the link of religiosity with "healthy" and "clean" (two Security items) is negative, but its link with "sense of belonging" (also a Security item) is positive. Similarly, as far as Achievement is concerned, whereas religiosity predicts valorization of "intelligence" in young people, it predicts no valorization of being "influential" and "ambitious" in either young or old participants. Finally, with regard to Universalism, older religious people tend not to value items corresponding to the subfactor "universalistic social ethics" ( $r = -.18$ ) whereas young religious people do ( $r = .11$ ); interestingly in both groups, young and old, spirituality (but not religiosity) predicts openness to environmental values ( $r_s = .22$  and  $.19$ ).

### **Conclusion**

Dozens of recently published studies provide important empirical evidence that allows us to capture the complexity of the ways in which religion seems to relate to a variety of pan-cultural values. Not only does religiosity imply specific attitudes (positive or negative) towards each value, thus providing an argument in favor of the religious specificity of ethics in the modern globalized

world, but it is also related to these values in a way that seems to overcome religious and denominational frontiers, thus providing an argument in favor of some universality (still limited to Western cultures) in the psychological dimensions of religion. Moreover, related attitudes and behaviors of religious people seem to validate the theoretical assumption that values are motivational goals orienting actions. However, beyond stability, some changes can be observed in the religion-values associations either as a function of socio-economic development or of the recent shift from classic religiosity to modern spirituality. The two important needs or ideals that seem to be particularly emphasized within a religious perspective, need for order, both in the internal and the external world, and need for connectedness with others and self-transcendence, seem to constitute essential universals of religious attitudes although social and cultural transformations may lead to changes in the degree, extension, and domains of applicability of these needs and ideals.

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Values	Definitions and corresponding <i>single items</i>
Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources ( <i>authority, social power, wealth, preserving my public image, social recognition</i> )
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards ( <i>ambitious, successful, capable, influential, intelligent</i> )
Hedonism	Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself ( <i>pleasure, enjoying life, self-indulgent</i> )
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life ( <i>daring, a varied life, an exciting life</i> )
Self-Direction	Independent thought and action — choosing, creating, exploring ( <i>creativity, freedom, independent, choosing own goals, curious</i> )
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection of the welfare of all people and for nature ( <i>equality, social justice, a world at peace, wisdom, broad-minded, protecting the environment, unity with nature, a world of beauty</i> )
Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact ( <i>helpful, forgiving, honest, responsible, loyal, true friendship, mature love</i> )
Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide ( <i>respect for tradition, devout, humble, moderate, accepting my portion in life</i> )
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms ( <i>self-discipline, politeness, honoring parents and elders, obedience</i> )
Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self ( <i>family security, national security, social order, clean, reciprocation of favors, sense of belonging, health</i> )

Table 1. Types of values, their definition, and corresponding single values (adapted from Schwartz, 1992).

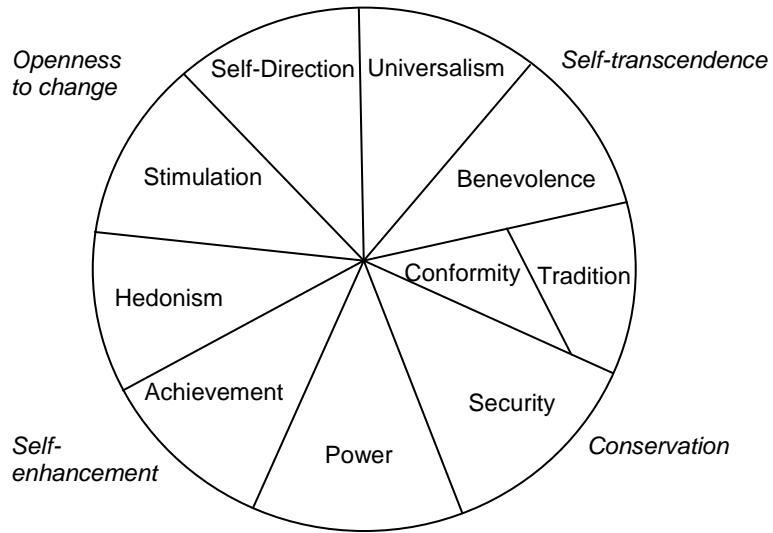


Figure 1. Theoretical model of the relations between values (following Schwartz, 1992).

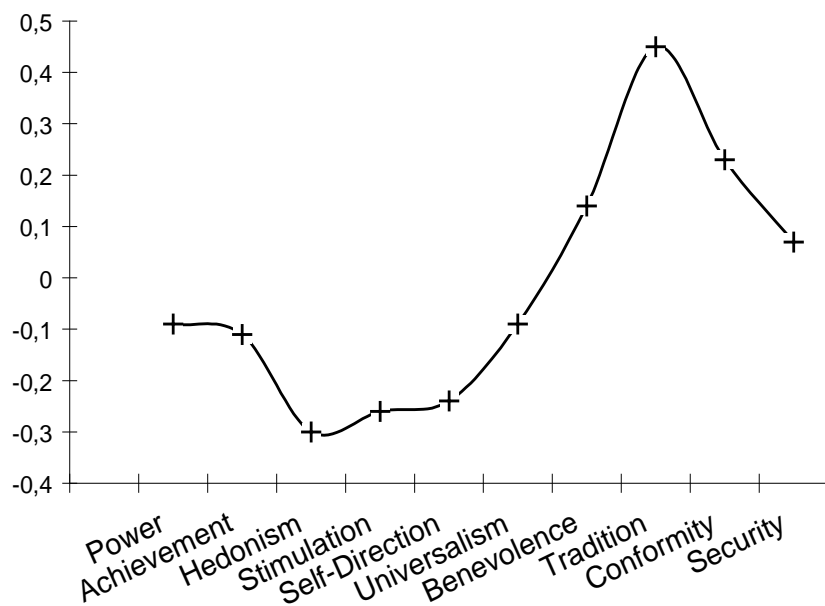


Figure 2. Mean effect sizes of the associations between religiosity and values ( $n = 21$  studies;  $N = 8551$ ). Based on results from Saroglou et al., 2004.

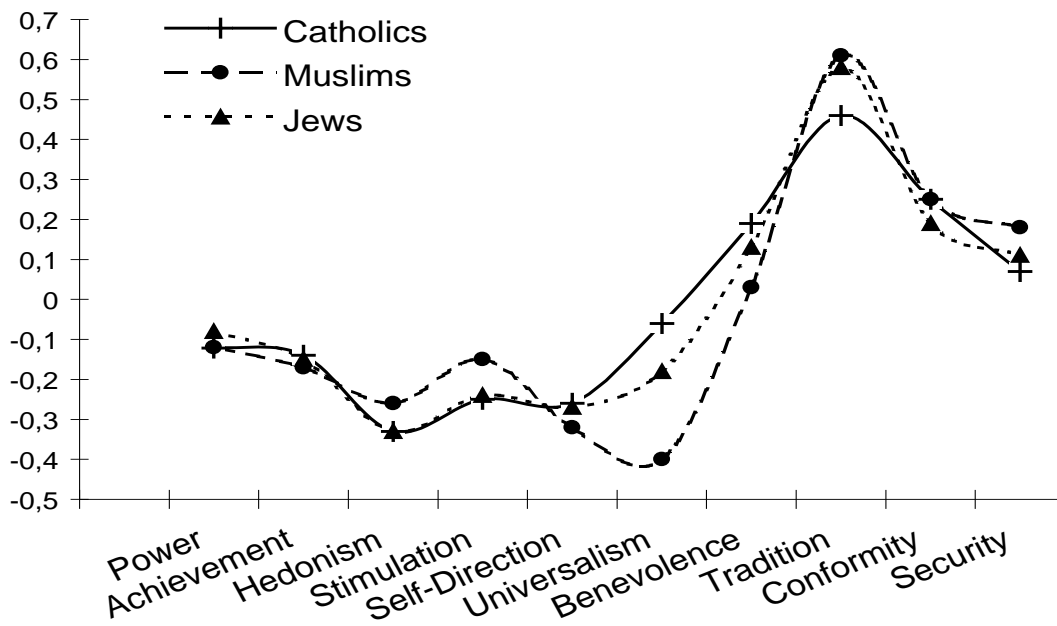


Figure 3. Correlations between religiosity and values, distinctly for Jew ( $n = 3$ ,  $N = 1075$ ), Catholic ( $n = 11$ ,  $N = 5113$ ), and Muslim ( $n = 2$ ,  $N = 255$ ) samples.  
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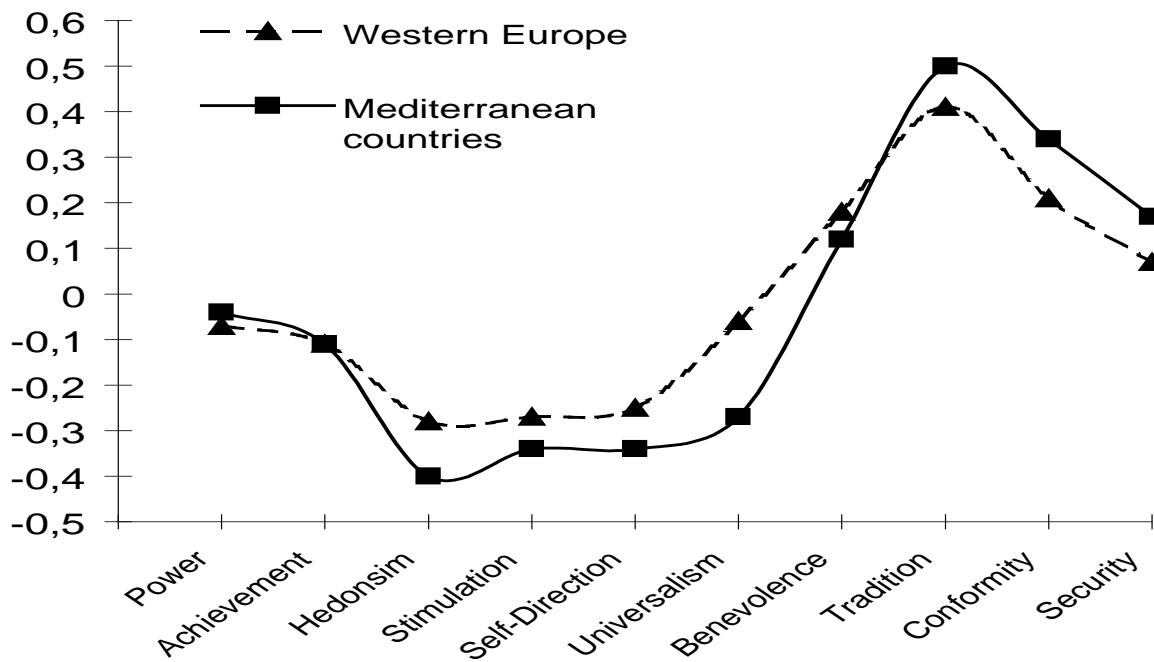


Figure 4. Correlations between religiosity and values, distinctly for Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain;  $N$  total = 1641) and countries of Western Europe (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands;  $N$  total = 3964). Based on results from Saroglou et al., 2004.