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RESEARCH

Being Buddhist in Western Europe: Cognitive Needs, Prosocial Character, and Values

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Empirical evidence from a variety of monotheistic religious denominations allows for some solid conclusions regarding personality characteristics (prosociality), cognitive structure (need for closure), and importance of values (Schwartz's model) associated with religiousness. In this study, 105 Belgian Buddhists were administered the Need for Closure Scale, the Schwartz Value Survey, NEO-PI-R items measuring facets of agreeableness, and measures of investment in Buddhism. Similarly to other religions, participants with high investment in Buddhism tended to attribute low importance to hedonism, power, and achievement, and to value tradition, conformity, and benevolence, as well as to report high agreeableness. However, contrary to other studies, these participants were not high in need for closure and security, they did not depreciate self-direction and stimulation, and they valued universalism. The discussion integrates the findings into three main theoretical issues of the psychology of religious and spiritual personality: need for personal and social order, in-group limited or extended prosociality, and need for self-mastery.

Most empirical research in psychology of religious personality has been based on Christian participants; only few studies exist based on Muslims, Jews, or adherents to Eastern religions. There is indeed an important need for testing generalizability of findings or considering cross-religious and cross-cultural differences.

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Empirical studies carried out with Buddhist participants are very rare. They are often focused on Buddhist meditation and practice in general, and mainly on their psychophysiological parameters or their implications for well-being, mental health, and personal development (see studies cited in Wulff, 1997, and Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2000; see also Thananart, Tori, & Emavardhana, 2000; Tori, 1999). In addition, we can mention a study on moral reasoning among Tibetan monks (Heubner & Garrod, 1993) and a study on worry and intrinsic–extrinsic religious orientations in Buddhists (Tapanya, Nicki, & Jarusawad, 1997).

Increase of interest in Buddhism, conversions to it, and investment in Buddhist beliefs, ideas, and practices are a contemporary reality that concerns a meaningful part of the population in western countries, including secularized European ones (e.g., Obadia, 1999). No published study to our knowledge has investigated whether western Buddhists are characterized by specific personality characteristics, cognitive structures, and values that, on the basis of mostly Christian samples, are established in psychological research as "typical" of religiousness and/or spirituality.

The aim of this study was thus to investigate whether investment of western Europeans in Buddhism is related to certain individual differences that seem to be typical of religiousness: (a) prosocial personality, (b) specific value profiles, (c) and specific cognitive structures—mainly the need for closure. Studying each of these constructs among Buddhists in a western rather than an eastern country, and thereby controlling for a number of cultural differences between East and West, allows us to focus only on cross-religious similarities and differences: we compare Buddhists with mainly Christian participants from earlier studies, all sharing the same cultural environment.

The study of Buddhists in the West becomes a particularly intriguing case in relation to current efforts to distinguish between classic religiosity and modern spirituality, especially as they relate to specific individual differences (e.g., Marler & Hadaway, 2002; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Is interest in Buddhism today an expression of "classically religious" psychological realities (e.g., the relation to authority, order, conservation, and filiation, the institutional dimension, or restrictive morality)? Or is it closer to modern spirituality, which seems to imply a moving away from classic religiosity toward autonomy, individuation, and overcoming of ingroup barriers (Saroglou, 2003, for review)? Moreover, does investment in Buddhism, similarly to religion, reflect high prosocial concerns or does it accentuate, as some skeptics about modern spirituality may think, an individualistic, self-centered attitude? Finally, do Buddhists resemble Christians, Muslims, and Jews, who tend to depreciate hedonism, excitement, and release of self-control (Saroglou, Delpierre, & Dernelle, 2004; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995), or do they value enjoyment and pleasure, as the image of the "laughing Buddha"—in contrast with the medieval condemnation of laughter—could suggest (Hyers, 1989)? In the following sections we present

in detail the research questions of this study by integrating them into the body of previous evidence in psychology of religion.

Finally, we could say that we are interested in psychological characteristics of *religiousness*—intensity of attachment to religious beliefs, ideas, and practices—among Buddhists, as Buddhism shares the main components of religion as defined by Glock (1962): beliefs, ritual, community, emotions, and specific ethic rules. However, we prefer to use the neutral term *investment* in Buddhism—intensity of attachment to Buddhist beliefs, ideas, and practices—in light of the fact that many western Buddhists are unwilling to qualify Buddhism as a religion.

ALTRUISTIC PERSONALITY

One, if not the most stable and systematic characteristic of religious personality across samples, cohorts, countries, and religious denominations is tender-mindedness, altruism, and prosociality in general, or to put it in terms of the Five-Factor Model, high agreeableness (Saroglou, in press). Although the effect is rather weak (Saroglou, in press), not extended to out-groups (e.g., Jackson & Esses, 1997), and likely to originate in quite selfish motives (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993), this effect does exist and is not only a product of self-perception (Saroglou, Pichon, Trompette, Verschueren, & Dernelle, 2005).

Some debate exists about the possible implications of modern expressions of spirituality for altruism, concern for others, and generativity (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Dillon, Wink, & Fay, 2003). It can be argued that some aspects of modern spiritual forms reflect an individualistic personality and are not indicative of highly prosocial concerns and behaviors: self-centered focus; search for individual benefits from religious emotions and experiences; lack of integration between beliefs, emotions, ethics, and actions; and disengagement with regard to any religious institution or community. However, some initial empirical evidence suggests that, although this may be the case for some experiential components of spirituality, overall spirituality measures are usually associated with agreeableness and prosociality (Saroglou, 2003, for a review; see also Dillon et al., 2003).

It is thus interesting to investigate whether, similarly to other religious and spiritual traditions, investment in Buddhism reflects an altruistic and agreeable personality. We expected this to be the case since, similarly to the three monotheistic religions, Buddhism advocates love and universal compassion. It was, however, intriguing to investigate whether such a profile would be similarly characteristic of inner-directed Buddhist practices and emphasis on experiential–emotional dimensions.

VALUES

People who are invested in religion and spirituality usually give specific (high or low) emphasis on many values (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995). A 15-countries series of 21 studies with mostly Christian but also Muslim and Jewish participants (total $N = 8851$) and using Schwartz's (1992) model of values, indicates that, quite consistently across countries and religious denominations, religious people tend to give priority to values that promote conservation of social and individual order (Tradition, Conformity, and to a lesser extent, Security) and allow for a limited self-transcendence (Benevolence, but not Universalism). Conversely, they tend to attribute low importance to values that promote openness to change and autonomy (Stimulation, Self- Direction), including Hedonism, and values that promote self-enhancement (Achievement, Power; Saroglou et al., 2004, for a meta-analysis).

Interestingly, when studies use measures of spirituality or immanent religion, some trends of change can be observed. The associations with conservation and antihedonism values tend to decrease (Tradition, Conformity, and Hedonism) or may disappear (Security and Stimulation); Self-Direction is no longer disregarded; self-transcendence (Benevolence) is extended to Universalism; and nonexpansion of the self at the expense of others (low Power and Achievement) becomes clearer (Burris & Tarpley, 1998; Saroglou & Galand, 2004; see also Saroglou et al., 2004).

Given these findings, it is intriguing to investigate how investment in Buddhism reflects importance attributed to the aforementioned values. This question is particularly interesting, first, with regard to conservation values and autonomy. Do Buddhists resemble believers from monotheistic traditions who are looking for social cohesion and order? Or are they nontraditionalist and value autonomy? The latter could be the case at least for western converts to Buddhism, who have often moved away from socially established and institutionalized religions (e.g., Catholicism). Second, an intriguing question also arises regarding hedonistic values. Do Buddhists, as adopting a spiritual or religious, and hence ascetic (see Baumeister & Exline, 1999) approach to life, attribute low importance to these values? Or do they value excitement, pleasure, and enjoyment in life, as is often believed in the West by people who see in Buddhism an alternative to a repressive Christian morality? Finally, is investment in Buddhism associated with universalistic values, thus escaping the tendency of the three monotheistic traditions to limit their prosocial ethical concerns to in-groups (Saroglou et al., 2004; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995)? Or does it resemble these traditions in so far as its religious–institutional character may imply exclusiveness through conversion and membership, and competitiveness within a globalized world (Liogier, 2004; Obadia, 1999)?

NEED FOR CLOSURE

One of the cognitive characteristics of religiousness seems to be the need for closure (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997). It has been argued that whereas dogmatism and dualism in thinking may be typical of religious fundamentalism or orthodoxy versus quest or symbolic religious thinking, what intensity of religiosity per se implies is the need for a cognitive structure, be it simple or complex (Saroglou, 2002). Need for closure means the need for an answer—any answer as opposed to confusion and ambiguity—as well as a preference for order and predictability both in the internal and external world (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). In previous studies, it was found that religious university students tend to be high in need for closure and that religious adults tend to be high in preference for order and predictability (Saroglou, 2002; Saroglou, Kempeneers, & Seynhaeve, 2003). Order and predictability seem to characterize students who include Transcendence as part of their beliefs, even when the literal versus symbolic style of religious thinking is controlled for (Duriez, 2003). Interestingly, however, a reanalysis of the aforementioned data with spirituality kept as an independent index from any religiosity item indicated that spirituality is unrelated to need for closure (Saroglou, 2003).

It is thus intriguing to investigate whether contemporary Buddhists in the West fit into this general religiousness pattern of high need for closure or whether they rather resemble modern spiritual people, whose religious or spiritual beliefs and ideas may be diverse and not necessarily integrated into a whole. On the one hand, the religion-like aspects of Buddhism (institution, rituals, persons or texts invested with special authority, self-transcendence practices such as meditation and prayer) may constitute indicators toward the first hypothesis (high need for closure). On the other hand, Buddhism, at least as it is experienced today, has the capacity to embrace rather than exclude different religious and spiritual traditions (Liogier, 2004). Consequently, the possibly flexible Buddhist identity may be different from the integrative religious identity to be found in the three monotheistic traditions. These elements could thus be indicators of the second, opposite hypothesis (no or low need for closure).

METHOD

Procedure

It is not easy to find Buddhists directly in a small country such as Belgium (for a descriptive sociological study of Belgian Buddhists, see De Backer, 2002). We thus contacted and requested the help of the directors of two Buddhist Centers in Belgium, one of whom is also the President of the Buddhist Belgian Union. Both of the Centers belong to the Tibetan *Vajrayâna* tradition of Buddhism (*Kagyupa*

and *Nyingmapa*). After explaining the aims of the study and the importance of cross-religious comparative research to the two directors, they accepted to send our questionnaires to a list of 250 people who were members or interested in the activities of these two Centers. They accompanied this questionnaire with a letter signed in their name encouraging people to take part in the study. People filled in their questionnaires anonymously and sent them back to the researchers. The entire study was conducted in French.

Participants

In total, 105 questionnaires were returned. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 72, with a mean of 48.7 ($SD = 9.2$). Forty-seven men and 58 women took part in the study. Marital status was as follows: single (15.2%), married or living with a partner (51.4%), divorced or separated (30.5%), and widowed (2.9 %). A majority (63%) had a university or college degree (this is similar to the studies that served to us as comparison references). The respondents felt fairly close to Buddhism and many of them were actively engaged in it. One third of them has been interested in Buddhism from 13 to 40 years; another third, from 6 to 12 years; and the last third for less than 6 years. Similar distribution was observed for the number of years they have been practicing Buddhism. In addition, almost all participants ($n = 98$) reported occasional, regular, or very frequent attendance to Buddhist centers. To the question, “Do you consider yourself as a Buddhist today?” (5-point scale), few respondents indicated low (14.5%) or no (12.5%) identification as Buddhists, and a majority of these practiced Buddhism at least occasionally at home; 20% were in the middle (score 3); and 53% reported high identification (scores 4 and 5). Interestingly, most of the respondents had a considerable religious, mostly Catholic, educational background. Out of the 105 respondents, 70 reported having received a Catholic education, another 19 reported other Christian denominations, or Christian education in general, and 15% did not provide information on this question.

Measures

Need for Closure Scale. This 42-item, 6-point (from *totally disagree* to *totally agree*) Likert-type format scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994; French translation by Caroff, Berjot, Fievet, & Drozda-Senkowska, 2002) measures need for closure as defined by five different facets: preference for order, preference for predictability, decisiveness, discomfort with ambiguity, and closed-mindedness. The five-factor structure has received cross-cultural validation (Mannetti, Pierro, Kruglanski, Taris, & Bezinovic, 2002). For the analyses of our data, to increase reliability, one item of the discomfort with ambiguity facet was not included. In line with evidence suggesting that decisiveness is a dimension distinct from the other four (Mannetti et al., 2002), decisiveness in our data was an independent facet and

was even negatively related to the other facets (mean $r = -.22$), whereas the other four facets were positively but moderately intercorrelated (mean $r = .35$).

Agreeableness. The NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992; French translation by Rolland, Parker, & Stumpf, 1998) items measuring three agreeableness facets (altruism, tender-mindedness, and compliance) were also administered (8 × 3 facets = 24 items). To avoid making the questionnaire too long, we did not include all six facets of this factor (48 items). In line with previous evidence, we selected the facets that seemed most appropriate for religiousness/spirituality (Saroglou, in press).

Values. The Schwartz Value Survey (1992) includes 56 single value items representing a group of 10 (types of) values: Tradition (.63), Conformity (.55), Security (.73), Power (.68), Achievement (.61), Self-Direction (.65), Hedonism (.62), Stimulation (.70), Universalism (.74), and Benevolence (.71). (Numbers in parentheses indicate reliabilities found in these data). Respondents rated the importance of each value item as "a guiding principle in my life" on a 9-point scale ranging from 7 (*of supreme importance*) to –1 (*opposed to my values*). Definitions of the values, corresponding single value items, as well as the way structural relations between the 10 values may be spatially represented can be found in many published papers (e.g., Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). We computed the value Tradition without including the item "devout" (in the French version of the measure: "religious") to avoid possible overlap with religion measures. We retained the value of "being religious" and the value of "spiritual life" (also included in Schwartz's measure) as two distinct indexes of valuing religiousness and spirituality in life.

Investment in Buddhism. A series of 14 questions were provided, all asking for answers on a Likert scale of five or seven points. These items included questions about frequency of practice, both collective (in Buddhist Centers) and individual; self-identification as a Buddhist; interest in Buddhism for emotional–relational and esthetic–ritual reasons, for community reasons, or for meaning and value aspects; finding a way of life ("art de vivre") and a way of working on oneself in Buddhism; and willingness to share Buddhism with others or to transmit it to one's children.

Quest orientation. The revised and balanced Quest scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992) was used. This version appreciably improves the psychometric qualities of previous scales measuring the quest orientation. Participants indicated their agreement with the statements of the scale by rating them from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). To not confuse participants, as it was uncertain

whether they saw Buddhism as a religion or not, in many items we replaced the terms “religion” or “religious” by “religion/spirituality” or “religious/spiritual.”

RESULTS

Buddhist and Religious Orientations

An exploratory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation on the 14 items measuring the degree of investment in Buddhism suggested a five-factor solution (64% of the total variance was explained). However, the theoretical links of three items with their corresponding factor were problematic. A new, similar, analysis on the 11 remaining items provided a clear four-factor structure. Eigenvalues were 3.09, 2.00, 1.35, and 1.03. Only five second loadings were ≥ .30. The total variance explained was 68%. The factors were theoretically well-distinguished and we labeled them as follows: (a) *collective practice*: frequency of attendance to and frequency of practice in Center (loadings: .91, .91); (b) *inner-directed practice*: working on self, personal experience, and way of life (.69 to .87); (c) *emotion-based interest*: community, beauty of ritual, emotional-relational aspect (.60 to .82); and (d) *personal commitment*: practice at home, “accumulation of merits,” self-identification as Buddhist (.56 to .83). For subsequent analyses, we computed four scores of Buddhist orientations by summing the scores of the corresponding items (see Table 1 for reliabilities). Finally, as intercorrelations detailed in Table 2 suggest, the four Buddhist orientations were relatively independent of each other. The highest (but still moderate) correlations were (a) between collective practice and personal commitment and (b) between emotion-based and inner-directed investment.

Intercorrelations were computed between the Buddhist orientations and the three religious measures (i.e., value of “being religious,” value of “spirituality,” and quest orientation. Almost all Buddhist orientations were positively related to the value of *spirituality*. This is in favor of the idea that interest in Buddhism today is one form of modern interest in spirituality in general. However, with regard to the value of “*being religious*,” the associations were positive only with personal commitment and emotion-based interest in Buddhism and not with collective practice and inner-directed orientation. It may be that the Catholic connotation of the word “religious” in a country with a strong Catholic background like Belgium leads some people who frequently go to Buddhist Centers to dissociate themselves from everything that sounds Catholic. Similarly, the inner-directed dimension of Buddhism may refer to self-enhancement and growth aspects rather than traditionally religious ones. Nonetheless, the attractiveness of the community aspect and of the beauty of rituals (*emotion-based interest*) as well as an orthodox Buddhist orientation (*personal engagement*) make investment in Buddhism resemble what can be considered a classic religious reality.

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of Need for Closure, Agreeableness, Quest, and Buddhism-Related Measures

Measures	*M*	*SD*	α
Need for closure			
Order (10)	38.41	8.27	0.77
Predictability (8)	27.83	7.16	0.75
Decisiveness (7)	29.75	7.40	0.82
Discomfort w. ambiguity (8)	28.32	6.73	0.62
Closed-mindedness (8)	21.18	5.36	0.53
Agreeableness			
Altruism (8)	32.66	4.30	0.75
Compliance (8)	29.43	5.05	0.66
Tender-mindedness (7)	29.37	3.53	0.59
Buddhist orientations			
Collective practice (2)	2.26	0.79	0.91
Personal commitment (3)	3.43	1.04	0.58
Emotion-based (3)	3.73	1.39	0.65
Inner-directed (3)	5.93	0.97	0.71
Quest orientation (12)	48.25	10.30	0.67

Note. *N* = 105. Number of items per scale are in parentheses.

TABLE 2
Intercorrelations Between Buddhism- and Religion-Related Measures

	Personal Commitment	*Emotion-Based*	*Inner-Directed*	*Religious (Value)*	*Spirituality (Value)*	*Quest*
Investment in Buddhism						
1. Collective practice	.44***	.12	.16	.00	.22*	.11
2. Personal commitment		.23*	.22*	.21*	.25*	–.18
3. Emotion-based			.36***	.33***	.14	–.08
4. Inner-directed				.14	.28**	.24*
Religious (value)					.33**	–.21*
Spirituality (value)						.02

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

Finally, *quest orientation* was overall unrelated to Buddhist orientations, a finding indicating that interest and individual and collective investment in Buddhism are not *necessarily* typical of people who value doubt or are open to change in their spiritual/religious ideas. This emphasizes the “typically” religious character of investment in Buddhism: intensity of religiousness in general is theoretically independent from the level of quest orientation, and the association between these two constructs, as is the case in this study (value of being religious), may even be nega-

TABLE 3
Coefficients of Correlations of Buddhist Orientations With Need for Closure and Agreeableness Facets

	Buddhism Dimensions				*Religion Measures*		
	Collective Practice	*Personal Commitment*	*Emotion-Based*	*Inner-Directed*	*Religious (Value)*	*Spirituality (Value)*	*Quest*
Need for closure[a]	–.25**	–.09	–.09	–.11	.25**	–.14	–.12
Order	–.17*	–.09	–.09	–.08	.18*	.10	–.13
Predictability	–.19*	.00	–.11	–.19*	.14	–.19*	–.07
Decisiveness	–.13	–.10	–.16	–.02	–.17*	.00	.05
Discomfort w. ambiguity	–.18*	–.13	–.08	.01	.20*	–.24**	.01
Closed-mindedness	–.16*	–.05	.04	–.05	.23**	–.11	–.16*
Agreeableness	.17*	.36***	.17*	.16*	.05	.37***	.02
Altruism	.05	.31***	.24**	.30**	.02	.26**	.04
Compliance	.15	.30**	.08	–.03	.00	.29**	–.12
Tender-mindedness	.22*	.21*	.14	.09	.13	.32***	.18*

Note. $N = 105$.
[a] The facet of decisiveness is not included.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

tive. An interesting exception was observed in a positive association between Quest and the inner-directed Buddhist orientation, a finding that emphasizes the specificity of this dimension and could possibly be explained by the individualized and autonomous character of the Quest orientation (Burris, Jackson, Tarpley, & Smith, 1996).

Associations of Buddhism and Religion Measures With Need for Closure, Agreeableness, and Values

As detailed in Table 3, investment in Buddhism was overall unrelated, if not negatively related to *need for closure*. Collective practice was negatively related to all need for closure facets (although not significantly to decisiveness), and inner-directed practice was negatively related to preference for predictability. Similarly, valuing spirituality was negatively associated with preference for predictability and discomfort with ambiguity and Quest orientation was negatively related to closed-mindedness. However, valuing religion was positively related to preference for order, discomfort with ambiguity, and closed-mindedness, but (see also Saroglou, 2002) negatively related to decisiveness.

Overall, as also presented in Table 3, the investment in Buddhism dimensions were positively related to *agreeableness*. This was clear with re-

spect to altruism for all Buddhist dimensions except collective practice. In addition, personal commitment and collective practice were positively associated with tender-mindedness, and the former dimension also predicted high compliance. Interestingly, valuing spirituality was also positively correlated with agreeableness, whereas valuing religion and Quest orientation were both unrelated to this personality factor.

Finally, partial correlations between Buddhism or religion measures and the 10 Schwartz (1992) *values* were carried out, controlling (as recommended by Schwartz, 1992) for mean importance attributed to all values (Table 4). All four Buddhist orientations, or at least three of them, were positively related to self-transcendence values (Benevolence and Universalism) and Conformity, whereas they were negatively related to Hedonism and Power. In addition, personal commitment and emotion-based Buddhist orientations were associated with high importance attributed to Tradition and with low importance attributed to Achievement. Moreover, only emotion-based interest in Buddhism was negatively related to Self-Direction, and collective practice was negatively related to Security.

The associations of Buddhism orientations with Tradition, Conformity, Achievement, and Hedonism parallel the ones of other religious groups (Saroglou et al., 2004, for a meta-analytic review). The negative association with Power and the positive one with Benevolence seem to be even stronger among Buddhists than in other samples. However, investment in Buddhism seems to imply high Universalism and does not reflect low Stimulation and Self-Direction, contrary to what is

TABLE 4
Coefficients of Correlations of Value Importance With Buddhism and Religion Measures[a]

	Investment in Buddhism				*Religion Measures*		
	Collective Practice	*Personal Commitment*	*Emotion-Based*	*Inner-Directed*	*Religious (Value)*	*Spirituality (Value)*	*Quest*
Tradition	.05	.33***	.19*	–.09	.15+	.11	–.07
Conformity	.00	.28**	.15+	.18*	.33***	.24**	–.05
Security	–.23*	–.09	.06	–.01	.09	–.12	–.12
Power	–.18*	–.34***	–.21*	–.27**	.03	–.26**	–.06
Achievement	–.06	–.14+	–.17*	.00	.02	–.24**	–.17*
Hedonism	–.23*	–.37***	–.20*	–.20*	–.13	–.13	.05
Stimulation	.10	–.10	–.03	–.09	.10	–.10	.01
Self-Direction	.13	.02	–.18*	.09	–.28**	.07	.21*
Universalism	.19*	.26**	.15+	.12	–.02	.11	.06
Benevolence	.29**	.20*	.18*	.28**	–.09	.33***	.06

Note. $N = 105$.
[a]Partial correlations controlling for mean values.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. +$p < .10$.

the case with many (for Universalism) or all (for Stimulation and Self-Direction) groups from other religious traditions (see Saroglou et al., 2004).

In line with the results of the aforementioned meta-analysis, valuing religion was associated with importance attributed to conservation values (Tradition and Conformity) and with low Self-Direction; it was, however, unrelated to the other values. Valuing spirituality was associated with high Conformity and Benevolence, and low self-enhancement values (Power and Achievement), but was unrelated to the other values. Finally, similarly to the study of Burris and Tarpley (1998), the Quest orientation was associated with high Self-Direction and low Achievement, although it was unrelated to the other values.

DISCUSSION

Taken as a whole, the results confirm the idea that individual investment in Buddhism in the West includes psychological characteristics of both classic religiousness and modern expressions of spirituality. An effort is made here to provide and integrate interpretations of the results regarding values, personality, and cognitive needs to address three major psychological issues of the religious personality.

1. A first major issue is the prosocial tendency that investment in Buddhism reflects. In line with what is already known about the religious personality in general (mainly from Christian samples, but also from Jews and Muslims; Saroglou, in press) people highly invested in Buddhism tended to be high in agreeableness and to value Benevolence in interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Buddhists in our study were found to attribute low importance to self-enhancement values, such as Achievement and especially Power. These two values include an antisocial component. The latter implies dominance over people and resources, and the former allows for extension beyond one's proper place by taking advantage of others.

Going beyond prosocial concerns limited to interpersonal relations, investment in Buddhism was positively correlated with the value of Universalism, a value defined by Schwartz (1992) as "understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection of the welfare of all people and nature" (p. 12). This is an interesting finding because religiosity is usually unrelated, if not negatively related, to Universalism among Christians, Muslims, and Jews—especially in countries with a monoreligious culture, such as Mediterranean ones (Saroglou et al., 2004). It is not to be excluded that Buddhism, more than other religions, puts the accent on tolerance of others, especially people from other religions, and on universal compassion and respect for nature as a whole.

2. A second major issue for psychology of religion is how a religious individual deals with the question of order on a cognitive, personal, but also social level as well as the reality of personal autonomy when inserted into a religious tradition

and institution. A nuanced and complex pattern of results was provided by this study.

On the one hand, as far as need for closure (i.e., need for structure, answers, certainty, and nonambiguity) is concerned, investment in Buddhism did not reflect such cognitive needs, contrary to what is the case with other studies on religious—in fact, Catholic—participants from the same country (Duriez, 2003; Saroglou, 2002; Saroglou et al., 2003). Need for closure was even negatively related to Buddhist collective practice. Similarly, our western Buddhists did not seem to have a problem with the value of Self-Direction, contrary to what is systematically the case with religiosity among Christians, Muslims, and Jews (Saroglou et al., 2004). In addition, collective Buddhist practice was negatively related to the value of Security, and the other Buddhist dimensions were unrelated to this value, whereas the association is usually positive (although weak) in other studies (Saroglou et al., 2004). In all these dimensions, Buddhist orientations resemble modern spirituality more than classic religiousness (Saroglou, 2003).

If religiousness does not imply just any kind of meaning, but rather a meaning with structure, order, and closure (Saroglou, 2002), these results suggest that, at least as far as western Buddhists—most of whom are converts from Catholicism—are concerned, Buddhism may be experienced as less integrative of the different aspects of life than may particularly be the case with a religion such as Catholicism. The latter is characterized, according to both theologians (e.g., Famerée, 1997) and religious studies scholars (e.g., Donegani, 1993), by "integralism" (i.e., subordination of every aspect of life to one's central religious beliefs). In addition, people who abandon the "dominant" religious tradition in their society and transmitted by their family may be people capable of assuming discontinuity with their tradition, breaking down traditional ties, and conventional ways of thinking and acting.

On the other hand, similarly to what is already known in psychology of religion, our Buddhist participants seemed to attribute high importance to two conservation values (Tradition and Conformity). These two results can certainly be understood in terms of classic sociological theories pointing out the role of religion in a given society as promoting social order and preventing "anomie" (e.g., Durkheim, 1912/1976). However, in an effort to integrate these results with those mentioned regarding Security, Self-Direction, and need for closure, we could advance that, rather than the importance of conservatism per se, they reflect Buddhism's emphasis on adaptation to every context, acceptance, and peaceful integration into any given society, as well as the absence of emphasis on active, dynamic, or even rebellious challenging of the social order.

Finally, the absence of a positive relation between investment in Buddhism and the Quest orientation suggests that people who find a certain interest in or become attached to some religious or spiritual ideas and practices and try to behave in accordance with these are not necessarily open to questioning and calling these new

realities into doubt, nor are they necessarily open to changing important aspects of their beliefs. This is probably what distinguishes religious beliefs from everyday beliefs and scientific, including philosophical, theories.

3. A third major dimension of the religious personality, constant across religions and denominations, is the low importance attributed to the two hedonistic values (Hedonism and Stimulation; Saroglou et al., 2004). This constitutes a systematic finding that can be understood as expressing the importance of the ideal of self-mastery, thus implying the control of pleasurable arousal and impulsiveness and the questioning of materialism (Baumeister & Exline, 1999; Saroglou et al., 2004; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995).

Interestingly, in this study, all Buddhist orientations were followed by low importance attributed to Hedonism, but they were unrelated to Stimulation. The first result, in our opinion, emphasizes how Buddhism resembles other great religious traditions in their discomfort, if we follow Schwartz's (1992) definition of Hedonism, with valuing pleasure and sensuous self-gratification. Subsequent research should clarify whether this attitude concerns traditional domains where religion seems to have an inhibitive influence (e.g., sexuality) or whether it expresses opposition, for instance, to self-gratification as implying low prosocial concern for others (the hedonistic values are negatively correlated with agreeableness; Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002).

The lack of association with Stimulation requires us to consider the definition of this value and its distinctiveness or proximity with other values in Schwartz's (1992) model. In fact, if Stimulation shares the need for pleasurable arousal (excitement) with Hedonism, its emphasis is on maintaining an optimal level of activation in general (and not only sensuous activation). In addition, it includes a major component of valuing novelty and challenge in life, what makes this value close to the Self-Direction value by their common emphasis on openness to change and uncertainty. Not surprisingly, from a Big Five perspective, whereas both Hedonism and Stimulation are positively related to extraversion and negatively related to agreeableness, it is only Stimulation that predicts high openness to experience and low Conscientiousness, the value of Hedonism being unrelated to these two factors (Roccas et al., 2002). It may thus be that, in line with interpretations advanced in point 2, investment in Buddhism does not imply discomfort with variety, novelty, disorder, and perhaps excitement, and that low Hedonism is not necessarily translated into conservative attitudes and practices.

Several limitations of this study should be mentioned. This is an exploratory study and findings cannot be generalized to Buddhists in general. Comparisons with people from other Buddhist traditions than the ones of our participants as well as with people raised in countries where Buddhism constitutes an important religious component of the culture are necessary. Moreover, results cannot be generalized to all forms of western Buddhism—most of the participants were raised as

Catholics. As many of them were thus converts, it would be important in a subsequent study to distinguish between first-generation and second-generation western Buddhists—previous evidence from sociological studies of new religious movements suggests several differences between these two generations (Barker & Mayer, 1995). More importantly, the fact that most participants were converted raises the issue of how to interpret the causal directions of the results. Did the new religion have an impact on participants' personality and values? Previous research in psychology of conversion makes us unsure. Conversion does not seem to be followed by a clear change of deep personality structures; it mainly has an impact on other levels of personality such as self-definition and individual goals (Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999). It could then be that many of the individual differences observed here as a function of investment in Buddhism were already present when the participants were Catholics. Going further, one cannot exclude the causal direction from personality (see Saroglou, in press) and values (see Schwartz & Huismans, 1995) to religion: personality differences—combining genetic and environmental influences—predispose some people to be highly interested and invested in religion in general or to move from one religion to another trying to find what corresponds better to their personality and values.

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