BULCSU BOGNÁR
Pázmány Péter Catholic University

Leader Cults and Secularized Faiths:
Religiosity, the Choice of Values and Political Preferences in Hungary

Abstract: This paper explores the extent to which religiosity entails special choices of values, the differences between the values of religious and non-religious people and whether there are significant dissimilarities in the ways they relate to politics in Hungary. The results derived from our representative sample have shown the dual nature of the value orientations of people who consider themselves religious. The attitude of religious people is characterized by a duality of leader cult and secularised belief. Predominantly religious people hold secularized values, but their personal life worlds reflect an inherited traditionalism concerning their viewpoint on their political leader. Consequently, they have a positive attitude towards governmental measures which result in restrictions on constitutional and parliamentary government, as well as on the Western system of democratic institutions, while at the same time they are drifting away from their Christian values.

Keywords: values, religion, secularization, traditionalism, leader cult, secularized faiths

Religion and the Choice of Value

The social changes witnessed in Europe in recent years are often interpreted from the perspective of people's attitudes to values. The choices of values made by social actors have increased in importance in public discourse, as a factor that may determine the situation in Europe will look like in the future. One new element of this debate is more frequent reference to the Christian tradition as the foundation of European values, and using this as a basis for interpreting the present and outlining future visions. Religious tradition remains the source of values reflecting the essence of European civilization. For many—and also, increasingly, regardless of the social and political theory platform (see Habermas 2002; Habermas, Ratzinger 2006)—this tradition is a benchmark by which value orientations can be identified and studied. The parallel between the Christian tradition and European values, a much-discussed topic in public discourse, in addition to studies and debates of political theory, has made religion an important issue even for those whose orientation is increasingly or entirely non-religious in today's secularized society (Davie 2006).

Research on these issues may yield interesting results, particularly in a country where a heavily politicized public discourse is dominated to a very large extent by the relationship between Europe and the Christian tradition. Particularly since the beginning of the migrant crisis, Hungary has been the country in Central and Eastern Europe in which Christianity appears in public discourse as the inevitable and predominant source of European values

and as the basis for the very future of Europe. The social context in which I am examining the relationship between religiosity, the choice of values and political preferences is one in which government policy focuses, in a secularized European environment, on Christian values, religiosity, as well as religious upbringing and education, with particular emphasis on promoting and supporting the historical Christian Churches.

European and Hungarian Research Tradition

European research projects discussing the relationship between religion and values have clearly identified and described a series of changes that have, over recent decades, restructured the relationships between religiosity and the choice of values. Earlier research still found a strong correlation between holding a religious worldview and making choice of values consistent with it (which in turn correlated closely with political preferences) (Lenski 1963; Rokeach 1969a, 1969b; Levy 1986; Schwartz, Huismans 1995). However, more recent research projects have shown a gradual erosion of the strong correlation between religion and the choice of values. Studies of European societies have revealed that the religious worldview which used to reflect tradition and conventional values, now correlates less strongly with any specific set of values (Scheepers, Gijsberts, Hello 2002; Scheepers, Grotenhuis, Silk 2002; Botvar 2005; Sieben, Halman 2014), and where it does, the differences between the value orientations of religious and non-religious people have clearly been diminishing (Finke, Adamczyk 2008).

Changes in religion and values have been driven by a wide variety of circumstances. The fact that the number of people who self-identify as religious has—for the most part—been slowly decreasing in Europe (Davie 2002; Voas 2009), has contributed to this process, even if this is not necessarily one of the most important factors. Although a religious worldview is still definitely present, it has lost some of its earlier dominance, if only as a consequence of the decrease in the number of religious people. At the same time, the number of religious people—in the sense of following the teachings of the various Churches—has plummeted, while the majority of religious people are individuals without ties to particular denominations ("believing without belonging") (Davie 1994). Consequently, religious communities representing stricter principles of ethics (Stark, Bainbridge 1996) also play a diminishing role. These changes inevitably affect the value orientations of people who regard themselves as religious, and these values are therefore becoming less and less clearly distinct from those of non-religious people.

The appearance of new forms of spiritualism (Lyon 2000; Davie 2005; Heelas, Woodhead 2005; Houtman, Aupers 2007; McGuire 2008; Storm 2009, Storm 2016; Cortois, Aupers, Houtman 2018) reflects a privatization of religion, strengthening the relativisation of the importance of values associated with traditional religiosity. Changes in the content of beliefs, and in believers' organizational ties, are leading to a restructuring of the transcendent as well. The most characteristic feature of religiosity in Europe today is the fact that religious sense-making is increasingly confined to the private lives of believers (Luckmann 2003), while public discourse and public affairs are dominated by the secularized viewpoint, shared by the majority of society (Taylor 2007).

Apart from certain particular local characteristics, the processes observed in Hungary are more or less in line with these European trends. On the other hand, conditions in Hungary are shaped by a variety of circumstances which are characteristic of the Central and Eastern European region. One of these special local characteristics is that the general European phenomenon of secularization was amplified by four decades of real socialism in this region (Halman, Arts 2010). This is reflected, in particular, in the small number of religious people who follow the teachings of particular Churches and denominations, and a higher proportion of those who may be regarded as religious in their own way (Tomka 2006). Church-affiliated religiosity became stronger after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and reflected a religious revival of a kind rarely before witnessed in Europe (Tomka, Zulehner 1999; Froese 2001, Tomka 2006).

I explored the relationship between religiosity and values in multiple dimensions. In measuring religiosity I outlined the forms and frequency of practicing religion, the strength of religious belief, the so-called articles of faith or tenets, the God-image and people's attitudes to the Church and its representatives, besides my respondents' ties with denominations. The analysis of these dimensions was examined in another study of the same database (Bognár, Kmetty 2020). There we researched the relationship between state-sanctioned and non-sanctioned violations of norms and religion. The findings of the research showed hardly any difference in terms of the views taken of norm violations among the respondent groups of non-religious and religious people. In other words, a religious world-view had only a minor impact on people's relation to violations of norms in Hungary. Religious people showed no difference in terms of the various dimensions of religiousness concerning state-sanctioned norm violations and norm violations that are not sanctioned by the state.

Affiliation with a church, denomination or religious community, similarly to the frequency of participation in church ceremonies or prayer, did not affect responses. No significant differences were found among groups considering themselves to be religious to varying degrees either. No different behavior was apparent in regard to various dogmas (belief in heaven, hell, life after death, reincarnation, the spirit of ancestors, spirit separate from body etc.) either. We concluded that none of the various dimensions most frequently studied in the context of the sociology of religion, such as belonging to a denomination, participation in religious practice or the content of lived belief, had any influence whatsoever on how the various actors viewed state-sanctioned norm violations and norm violations that are not sanctioned by the state. The only exception is found in terms of people's relation to homosexuals: this form of sexual orientation is somewhat more strongly rejected by religious people than by non-religious ones (Bognár, Kmetty 2020).

These measurement results justify that in my current study from the same database I analyze the impact of religion on social norms only on the basis of people's religious self-classification. In this paper the various actors' value orientations were examined on the basis of their relation to different social values. This involved an assessment of the acceptance of basic social values. I wished to find out where believers and non-believers would place themselves on a scale ranging from autonomy to respecting authority. In this context, tolerance was measured on the basis of respondents' relation to various forms of 'otherness' (e.g. different skin color, homosexuality, Roma people). In assessing values, the views regarding of work and workplace were measured in terms of the acceptance

of various values. Personal lifeworld values were examined on the basis of respondents' attitudes to divorce and parents, while political views were assessed on the basis of how they categorized themselves. Respondents' views on a strong leader or leaders unrestrained by the parliament or free elections were also examined. This was aimed at testing the degree to which the respondents find illiberal democracy, consciously embraced and promoted by the government, acceptable (see Zakaria 1997).

Research Hypotheses

My hypothesis is that secularized public discourse is conditioning a cultural pattern which causes the influence of religious values to diminish in these fields. Therefore, on the basis of this, I expect no significant difference between religious people and non-religious people in terms of their views on values relating to work and workplace (Hypothesis 1).

Although its role in work and administration is diminishing as a consequence of its privatization, religion maintains and may even increase its importance in the personal sphere (see McGuire 2008, 2016). In view of the above I assume that the different value structures held by religious people can be observed primarily by looking at issues more directly related to their personal life worlds. Accordingly, I assume that people who self-identify as religious expect more obedient behavior in children's relationship with their parents, and hold stricter views on divorce than do non-religious people (Hypothesis 2). At the same time, I also expect that the stronger traditionalism of the faithful, which has been established by multiple studies (Rokeach 1969a, 1969b; Levy 1986; Schwartz, Huismans 1995; Scheepers, Grotenhuis, Silk 2002; Norris, Inglehart 2004) leads to more definite rejection of otherness where they live (Hypothesis 3). More intense disapproval might be expected primarily of homosexuality as it is viewed negatively particularly in the Jewish-Christian tradition (Hypothesis 4), especially among those identifying themselves as religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective Churches (Hypothesis 4/b).

Studies of the specific values of religious people (Schwartz, Huismans 1995; Inglehart, Baker 2000; Norris, Inglehart 2004) have always treated attitudes to autonomy and obedience as a matter of particular interest, because they can also shed light on people's attitudes to traditionalism and political ideas. In this regard, therefore, I examine where religious and non-religious people position themselves on a scale with autonomy and respect for authority at either end. I assume that although secularized public discourse is gradually and increasingly rejecting the religious interpretation of the world, the positive attitude of religious—specifically, Christian—teachings to obedience still orients the faithful in the same way it used to. I expect therefore, that the religious persons among our respondents will prefer obedience to autonomy (Hypothesis 5).

This assumption is based on the effects of multiple factors. Trends of secularisation in the evolution of European and Hungarian societies (Hagenaars, Halman, Moors 2003; Norris, Inglehart 2004; Inglehart, Welzel 2005) are only one of the factors influencing the different value structures held by religious and non-religious people. The omnipresent propaganda of the Hungarian government, which has been in power since 2010, and which defines itself as a proponent of an illiberal, Christian democracy, also influences the value

judgements of people. Accordingly, I expect that religious people will side with the political right and reject the centrism (slightly right or left of center political orientations) that characterizes proponents of a conventional Western democracy.

To examine the issues at hand we organized a questionnaire-based data collection, involving 1000 respondents, in November 2017. NRC, the company with the largest online respondent panel in Hungary, was commissioned to have the questions in the questionnaire answered by the required number of respondents. The data collection method was of the quota sampling type, with the restriction that only indicative figures were available concerning breakdown by qualification level. It has been concluded from research projects of this type carried out in various countries that people of lower qualifications are under-represented in online samples. In view of the above considerations, data collection was designed to make sure that the resulting data would be representative of the adult, population with access to the internet in Hungary.

Religiosity and Values Relating to Work and Workplace

The analysis concerning work and workplace found no difference between religious and non-religious people regarding the majority of relevant values. It is not surprising, in view of earlier studies showing religious people's preference for post-material values (Schwartz, Huismans 1995), that high income is not the primary consideration for such people when they decide where they wish to work. The fact that none of the groups of religious people differ from non-religious people in terms of their attitudes to high income, however, is not so self-evident in view of earlier studies. Religious people also relate to promotion potentials in the same way non-religious people do. The same correspondence has also been found in regard to the other work-related values. Religious people hold views which do not differ from those of non-religious people regarding room for individual initiative, responsibility at work or job security.

The fact that the religious world-view has all but disappeared is clearly indicated by the lack of any difference between the views of religious people and those of non-religious people, even in relation to values (job security, creativity at work) which are conventionally considered closely associated with religious world-views. Clearly, religious people have not only discarded their traditional, specific value orientation reflecting religious teachings when it comes to various aspects of work, but have also eagerly adopted the labour market's secular values.

A slight difference was identified between religious and non-religious people in only one of the values relating to work and workplace: their responses showed a marginal difference between their views on work which is useful to society.[1] (The respondents were asked to mark how important they regarded the above value to be, on a scale of 1 "not important at all" to 4 "very important.")

The data in Table 1 indicate that religious people consider work that is useful to society to be slightly more important. However, the difference in this regard between religious and non-religious people is very small. This is a clear indication of the adaptation of

---

[1] The relationship between the variables is significant (p = 0.006).

Table 1

Views held of work that is useful for society

The following is a list of considerations involved in forming an opinion on work or the workplace: How important is it to you that work should be useful for society?

	Number of elements	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Mini-mum	Maxi-mum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	141	3.13	0.916	0.077	2.98	3.28	1	4
I am not religious	241	3.30	0.800	0.052	3.19	3.40	1	4
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	56	3.11	0.798	0.107	2.89	3.32	1	4
I am religious in my own way	438	3.39	0.758	0.036	3.32	3.46	1	4
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	61	3.32	0.928	0.119	3.08	3.56	1	4
Total	936	3.30	0.813	0.027	3.25	3.36	1	4

religious people to the secular labour market even in regard to this value of particular importance according to Christian teachings. The marginal differences are rendered even more "relative" by the fact that they are identified not so much between the religious and the non-religious, as between religious people and a handful of respondents professing to be atheists.

Hypothesis 1, according to which is secular public discourse determines social actors' relation to work and workplace to such an extent that this systemic segment of society is no longer influenced by the religious world explanation, is thus confirmed by the above results.

Religion and Social Values

People's attitudes to freedom and respect for authority are less overwhelmingly affected by the above trend of convergence. Although the differences identified in this field are also significantly smaller than might generally be expected, religious people's traditional values that may be associated with Christianity are reflected in their viewpoints on authority at least in certain respects. Its effects, however, must not be over-emphasized, because the attitude to authority is characterized primarily by a gradual dilution of the specific values of religious people in a society that is becoming increasingly secular in its value orientations as well. This is reflected by the fact that no significant difference can be found between religious and non-religious respondents as regards autonomy, one of the most important of today's individualist values. The difference between the two groups is also very slight when it comes to their views on tolerance, frugality and generosity.

The markedly different values of religious people appear in their attitude to religious belief. Not surprisingly, religious people found this to be a lot more important than did the

Table 2

Views taken of religious belief

How important do you think it would be for young generations to acquire religious belief, in a society that you would consider the ideal one?

	Number of elements	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	138	1.36	0.706	0.060	1.24	1.47	1	4
I am not religious	231	1.66	0.740	0.049	1.56	1.75	1	4
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	49	2.21	0.826	0.118	1.97	2.45	1	4
I am religious in my own way	422	2.61	0.831	0.040	2.53	2.69	1	4
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	62	3.39	0.837	0.106	3.17	3.60	1	4
Total	902	2.21	0.991	0.033	2.14	2.27	1	4

rest of our respondents. [2] (The respondents were asked to mark how important they regard the above value to be, on a scale of 1 "not important at all" to 4 "very important.")

In line with conclusions to be found in earlier studies on the subject of the sociology of religion (Tomka 2006, 2010; Földvári 2009; Rosta 2009, 2010a; Rosta, Földvári 2014; Polak, Rosta 2016) religious belief is emphasized primarily by a smaller group of those identifying themselves as religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective Churches or religious communities. However—by comparing the relation of religious respondents to the rest of the values in question—this commitment is found to be significantly weaker. It appears from this comparison that both groups of religious respondents consider all the values identified in the list of questions (autonomy, tolerance, frugality, generosity and obedience) as more important than religious belief. [3] In other words, the values of religious people reflect the kind of secularized religiousness where the values of the secularized society are considered as more important than the respondents own religious values. Non-religious modern rationality is reflected by their values when they rank autonomy ahead of religious belief or obedience.

The only value markedly reflecting the specific value preferences of religious people in the above list of questions was in relation to obedience. [4]

Corroborating the findings of previous studies of values in Hungary (Füstös, Szakolczai 1999; Keller 2010), the table demonstrates the positive views people in general have of

---

[2] The relationship between the variables is significant (p = 0.001).

[3] Respondents who are religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective churches or religious communities identified unselfishness and autonomy as the most important values (with average scores of 3.67 and 3.57, respectively), placing obedience and religious belief last in their lists (with 3.41 and 3.39 average scores, respectively).

[4] The relationship between the variables is significant (p = 0.001).

Table 3

Views taken of obedience

How important do you think it would be for young generations to acquire obedience as a behavior trait, in a society that you would consider the ideal one?

	Number of elements	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	136	2.82	0.925	0.079	2.67	2.98	1	4
I am not religious	238	2.97	0.790	0.051	2.87	3.07	1	4
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	51	2.80	0.687	0.096	2.60	2.99	1	4
I am religious in my own way	439	3.15	0.729	0.035	3.08	3.22	1	4
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	62	3.41	0.749	0.095	3.22	3.60	1	4
Total	926	3.06	0.791	0.026	3.00	3.11	1	4

obedience, in contrast to religious belief. Where religious people differ from others in their values is that they hold obedience to be more important than do non-religious people. Obedience is valued higher in particular by people who are religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective Churches or religious communities. Besides religious belief this appears to be the only value on the above scale of values in regard to which the values of historical tradition and religious tradition more strongly affect the views of religious people, particularly the views of the minority of those religious people who belong to Churches or religious communities.

This however, does not override the dominant impact of secular public discourse on people's values. This is clearly indicated by the fact that although religious people value obedience more than do non-religious people, yet in comparison with the other values at issue they do not consider this and the value of religious belief to be just as important as are the other values. Accordingly, the data show a transformation process in which the values of religious tradition still influence people's judgement regarding obedience, but it is less important even for those professing to be religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective Churches or religious communities, than are individual values expressing today's rationality.[5] On the whole, the traditionalism of the values of religious people is, for the most part, being gradually eroded.

In my research *hypotheses I* expected traditional religious values to be apparent primarily in respondents' personal lifeworlds, families and communities. My basic assumption was that this is where secularized public discourse is least capable of counteracting the effects of religion, since family tradition is more effective at ensuring that traditional

---

[5] Frugality and autonomy are ranked first by all respondents (with 3.66 and 3.65 points, respectively), while religious belief was ranked last (with an average score of 2.23).

values are passed down from generation to generation. This tradition is perhaps best re-flected by people's relationship with their parents, which was tested with the help of two statements. The statement 'One must (always) love and respect one's parents uncondition-ally, regardless of their characteristics and flaws' represented traditional filial obedience, while the statement 'One's parents have to earn one's love and respect by their behavior' expressed a more modern, individualist viewpoint.[6] (Respondents agreeing with the first of the two aforementioned statements were to mark 3, those agreeing with the latter chose mark 2 and those disagreeing with either of them indicated 1, as an answer.)

Table 4

Judgement of relation to parents

	Number of elements	Average	Standard devia-tion	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Mini-mum	Maxi-mum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	140	2.04	0.817	0.069	1.90	2.18	1	3
I am not religious	232	2.37	0.790	0.052	2.26	2.47	1	3
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	56	2.19	0.778	0.104	1.98	2.40	1	3
I am religious in my own way	434	2.57	0.649	0.031	2.51	2.63	1	3
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	59	2.81	0.515	0.067	2.67	2.94	1	3
Total	921	2.43	0.745	0.025	2.38	2.48	1	3

The figures in the table are a clear representation of the attitude of religious people and non-religious people to parental authority. Religious people typically display traditional filial obedience, where respect for parents is an unconditional obligation for children. Non-religious people on the other hand, represent modern individualism involving individual consideration regarding one's attitude to one's parents as well, where the individual's judgement is based on meritocratic principles: parents are required to earn their children's respect. Similarly to the respondents' views on obedience, the two extremes are represented by atheists and those professing to be religious according to the teachings of their respective Churches or religious communities: the first group identified with individual consideration, while the latter emphasized unconditional obedience as the key element of one's relationship with one's parents.

Our other question relating to personal lifeworld also revealed differences between the attitudes of religious and non-religious people. The particular values of religious people were apparent in relation to divorce which affects the family and personal sphere. Its assessment is illustrated by Figure 5, showing the results of our questions probing

_____

[6] The relationship between the variables is significant (p = 0.001).

respondents' relation to divorce.[7] (Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 'never, under no circumstances' to 11 'it is always acceptable', the extent to which they think it is acceptable to divorce one's spouse.)

Table 5

Views taken of divorce

Do you think divorcing from one's husband or wife and breaking up a marriage is acceptable? Please mark the statement on the scale which is closest to what you think on the matter. You may state your opinion more precisely by positioning it between any two statements.

	Number of elements	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	146	8.78	2.716	0.225	8.34	9.23	1	11
I am not religious	229	8.44	2.728	0.180	8.08	8.80	1	11
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	56	7.63	2.692	0.359	6.91	8.35	1	11
I am religious in my own way	446	7.84	2.915	0.138	7.57	8.11	1	11
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	57	6.14	3.203	0.424	5.29	6.99	1	11
Total	933	8.02	2.905	0.095	7.83	8.21	1	11

It is clear from the above figures that religious people are less approving of divorce than non-religious people. Among respondents respecting values linked to the Christian tradition, and particularly those identifying themselves as religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective churches or religious communities, expressed their reservations concerning divorce. (The difference in this regard is a lot smaller in the group of respondents who are religious in their own ways (making up the majority of the category of religious people) and it equals the degree of the difference measured among those saying they are not certain of whether they are religious or not.) The fact, however, that the approval rating of divorce by people who are religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective Churches, the majority of whom are Catholics, is higher than the median, also indicates that religious tradition is being eroded and that secular public discourse—even in regard to this particular value, with its strong links to tradition—is making the fundamentals of traditional values increasingly relative.

At any rate, the traditional values reflected by people's relationship with parents and attitude to divorce shed light on the special structure of the personal lifeworld. The judgements and value propositions of the personal lifeworld regarding otherness, however, are indicative of the disappearance of religious traditionalism. Views on people belonging to other races, the Roma minority and homosexuals involve an element that should—on

---

[7] The relationship between the variables is significant (p = 0.001).

the basis of the stronger traditionalism and the "premodern moral order" (Taylor 2003: 94) of the religious value orientation—result in a stronger rejection among the religious than among the non-religious who represent secularized modernity. The results of this research, however, show no significant difference between religious and non-religious respondents in their views on both people of other races and Roma people. The only difference between the two large social groups was found in terms of their views on homosexuals, but even there the correlation was of low significance.[8] (Respondents were asked to answer, using a scale of 1 to 3, whether they would accept an individual of the above groups as their neighbor, with 1 showing that they would without objections and 3 indicating that they would not.)

Table 6

Measuring social distance / homosexuals

Different groups of people are listed here. Would you accept a homosexual, a lesbian, a bisexual or a transsexual person as your neighbor?

	Number of elements	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	142	1.44	0.705	0.059	1.32	1.56	1	3
I am not religious	225	1.54	0.680	0.045	1.45	1.62	1	3
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	51	1.70	0.856	0.120	1.46	1.94	1	3
I am religious in my own way	419	1.63	0.704	0.034	1.56	1.70	1	3
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	60	1.65	0.747	0.096	1.46	1.84	1	3
Total	896	1.58	0.713	0.024	1.53	1.63	1	3

The data in the table indicate that religious people are less permissive as regards the acceptance of homosexuals. The difference between their views and others is, however, rather small. Even those religious in accordance with the teachings of their Churches, have no significantly different views from those of our non-religious respondents, despite the fact that homosexuality is less tolerable for those following the Jewish-Christian tradition (what with the strict prohibition by Moses's laws). This applies particularly to those who are religious in the traditional sense of the term. Religious people's views of individuals of other races or those of the Roma nationality are identical to those of non-religious people; and the fact that the difference between their views concerning homosexuals is so small indicates that traditionalism linked with religion is, for the most part, diminishing in the Hungarian society. The difference between the values of the two large groups appears to be more conspicuous only as regards their relation to obedience.

---

[8] The relationship between the variables is significant (p = 0.042).

Religiosity and Political Preferences

The last major question examined in my study concerns the relationship between religious belief and political positions. More direct connections between religiosity, the choices of values and political preferences have been studied by many and in a variety of ways. Earlier European and Hungarian studies likewise found a close correlation between religiosity, traditionalism and a preference for conservative, right-of-center political parties (Rokeach 1969a, 1969b; Levy 1986; Tomka 2007: 118–135; Rosta 2009, 2010b). However, certain trends over recent decades have reflected a gradual erosion of the close correlations between religion and value choice, and it may be expected that this process has also weakened the connection between religion and political preferences. This is illustrated by Table 7, which shows the results of our queries of our respondents' political affiliations. (Respondents were asked to position their own political preferences on a scale of 1 to 10, where 0 and 10 marked the preference of the political left and right, respectively, with 5 being the mean.)

Table 7

Rating of own political preference

Where would you place your own political preference on a scale ranging from political left to right?

	Number of elements	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	113	4.63	3.055	0.288	4.06	5.20	0	10
I am not religious	185	5.34	2.420	0.178	4.99	5.69	0	10
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	36	5.49	2.635	0.438	4.60	6.38	0	10
I am religious in my own way	337	5.62	2.765	0.151	5.33	5.92	0	10
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	43	5.82	3.060	0.465	4.88	6.75	0	10
Total	715	5.40	2.757	0.103	5.20	5.60	0	10

The waning connection between religiosity and political preference is reflected by the weak correlation between the variables.[9] The data in the table indicate a correlation between religiosity and political preference, in that people who regard themselves as religious tend to be somewhat more strongly attracted to the political right than are non-religious people. People professing to be religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective Churches or religious communities are expected to gravitate most markedly to the political right, while atheists are assumed to incline to the left. A closer look at the figures in the table, however, finds that the religious and non-religious alike place themselves in the center, rather than to the left or right of the political spectrum.

---

[9] The relationship between the variables is significant (p = 0.042).

From these findings it follows that being religious in general, including the minority group of those being religious as taught by Churches or religious communities to which the respondents belong, entails no definite conservative, right-of-center political stance in Hungary. It results only in a minute difference in political preferences.[10] Accordingly, the data show that the religious worldview which used to underlie the conservative Christian-democratic political ideology, and the religious individuals who have, for hundreds of years, been reliably voting for the political parties established and operating on the basis of this political platform, are gradually losing their conservative political orientation.

Although the value orientation of religious people was, for the most part, found to more and more clearly reflect the rational individualist viewpoint on modernity (as indicated by the fact that they appreciate these values more than their own religious belief), their attitude to obedience is markedly different from that of non-religious people. Their views of society's authoritarian political governance is, presumably, affected by the preference for the value that is inherent in their personal lifeworld (including, in particular, their relation with their parents). This is examined with the help of Table 8, which explores the respondents' opinion towards the following statement: Good governance requires a strong leader who is not hindered by the parliament and free elections.[11] (Respondents were asked to position their opinions on a scale of 1, meaning 'I fully agree' to 4 denoting 'I don't agree at all'.)

Table 8

Relation to an authoritarian leader

What is your opinion on the following statement? 'Good governance requires a strong leader who is not hindered by the parliament and free elections.'

	Number of elements	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Mini-mum	Maxi-mum
					Lower limit	Upper limit		
I am not religious, my views are definitely different	128	2.11	1.156	0.102	1.91	2.31	1	4
I am not religious	222	2.69	1.113	0.075	2.54	2.83	1	4
I cannot say whether I am religious or not	53	2.56	1.098	0.151	2.25	2.86	1	4
I am religious in my own way	410	2.83	1.101	0.054	2.72	2.94	1	4
I am religious in line with the teachings of my church / religious community	55	3.08	1.064	0.143	2.79	3.36	1	4
Total	870	2.69	1.138	0.039	2.61	2.76	1	4

The data show that being religious has a material impact on one's views on authoritarian leadership. The acceptance of a leader who is not hindered by the parliament and free

---

[10] The weak correlation between political preference and religious belief is also reflected by the Cramer V value of 0.165.

[11] The relationship between the variables is significant ($p = 0.001$).

elections is strongest among people who self-identify as religious. The most positive views on an authoritarian political leader belong to those who identify themselves as religious in accordance with the teachings of their respective Churches or religious communities, while the idea of such a leader is most definitely rejected by atheists. These two groups express their views in the most definite terms: church-affiliated religious people agree more with, while atheist reject more the statement concerned, while the other three groups consider a political leader curbing the parliament's powers, to be more acceptable than not, even if with certain reservations.

The Values of the Premodern Moral Order and those of Secular Public Discourse

The results of this research show how ambivalent the value orientations of people who consider themselves to be religious are. The majority of their social values are, for the most part, no different from those held by non-religious people, but in terms of their attitudes to obedience and authoritarian political leaders, there are marked dissimilarities between the two groups. My understanding is that these characteristics are typical of the values of society, including, in particular, those of religious people. These characteristics depict one stage in a series of ongoing changes in which the values of religious people are gradually becoming more and more typically secular for the most part, while the traditionalism that is inherited and passed down in their own personal life-worlds is reflected in their relation to the political leader.

This approach views the current period of modern society as a secular age (Taylor 2003, 2007) which is characterized by religion and religious practice gradually losing ground, as well as a cultural condition in which it is possible, indeed even advisable, not to be religious. My understanding is that this attitude, dominating public discourse and people's day-to-day communication, triggers social processes which bring about changes in the values of even religious people. This slow change of perspective does not lead to the elimination or marginalization of the religious viewpoint and world-view. The ongoing transformation is reflected primarily by the gradual alignment of the value preferences of religious people with those of the majority of society, while the most people still maintain their belief and religious commitment.

Another reason for this is that the religisu viewpoint, which is being gradually forced out of public discourse, increasingly survives only in religious people's personal lifeworld, as a result of which the importance of transcendent matters diminishes in social communication. This is the process that leads to a situation where the (socially disfavored) value contents of religious people's attitudes to the transcendent become something of a secondary value on the societal scale and, subsequently, in much of the personal sphere as well.

The Religious Values of System and Lifeworld

For the most part, the results of our research conducted in Hungary are indicative of these changes in religiosity and the choice of values. This ongoing transition in Hungary is indicated by the difference between how the views of religious people are in line with

those of non-religious people in the systemic segment and in the lifeworld segment of society. The first societal segment is dominated by modern moral values, as evidenced by empirical results. Indeed, we found no difference between the values held by religious and non-religious people in relation to work and the workplace, which are determined by secular public discourse. As regards work and working, the views of non-religious and religious people were nearly identical.

Lifeworld-related value choices, however, were found to be somewhat different: the power of secular public discourse is expressed by the fact that the majority of our data also reflected a close correspondence between the value choices of religious people and those of non-religious people. The role of traditionalism and the resulting prejudice did not have much effect on most value the choices of values, which is perhaps one of the most important signs of the ongoing transition. The only segment in which traces of the premodern moral order could be found among the various social minorities was in how members of the various groups relate to homosexuals.

Value judgements relating to the family also indicate how the sphere of the lifeworld has more successfully preserved the premodern moral order. In contrast to the sphere of work and workplace, the lifeworld still shows signs of religious people's ties to traditional values. Divorce is somewhat less acceptable for traditionally religious people who are more closely bound by the tenets of their Christian religious faith than it is for non-religious people. On the other hand, in addition to the fact that this difference is relatively small, the mean of the value of religious people's responses, as marked on the applied scale, also shows how the conditions of religion are changing in this regard as well. The disenchanted modern moral order is gradually shaping a disciplined and individualized ego whose moral orientation is increasingly guided by the urge not to violate others' interests and to avoid confrontation with the value judgements of others, including confrontation with divorce as a majority-accepted behavior. The effects of this increasingly all-pervasive viewpoint have come to be reflected in the lifeworld sphere as well.

Secular Political Preferences and Obedience

The world of politics vividly illustrates the specific features of the value system held by religious people. The fact that the system of values observed in the sphere of politics is affected not only by systemic organization of society but by its numerous sub-systems, relates to differentiated functioning and the complexity of structural connections of modern society (Luhmann 1987, 1998). The separated sphere of the lifeworld is a source of impulses which cut across systemic organizations. This is where those value preferences are preserved which are more closely related to the premodern moral order, and which can therefore, in certain respects, override trends of secularization which eliminate differences between the values of religious people and those of non-religious people.

The lifeworld provides room for a cosmology of premodern moral order, which conceptualizes the social order based on super- and subordination rather than coordination, and for which the effective and successful functioning of social order is dependent on obedience towards a chosen leader. Studies in Hungary have clearly revealed that this

view of the premodern moral order is rooted in the personal lifeworld sphere. Obedience in relation to one's parents conditions hierarchic relations and unconditional respect for religious people, which is also reflected, by analogy, in their relation to the social or political leader. This underlies religious people's greater acceptance of an authoritarian leader who restricts the powers of the parliament. The individual's relation to the social order and, consequently, to political leadership, is still being effectively structured by this particular cosmology, no matter how its dominance has diminished in the secular public discourse.

For the cosmology of the premodern moral order, the balance of society is ensured if those being led obey and give sufficient leeway for the decisions taken by the political leader. This attitude stands in stark contrast to the fundamentals of the democratic political system, yet it is no mere coincidence that it is so successful in Eastern and Central European societies. This is the region where the tradition of authoritarian political establishments, which has prevailed for hundreds of years still preserves this interpretation of the premodern moral order. It is particularly effective in Hungary, where the failures of the post-1989 restructuring created deep reservations towards a more horizontally-structured modern moral order, including Western style democracy (Tóth 2010; Keller 2010). The effects of social-historical conditions are reflected by the lower levels of individualization and lower confidence index in Hungarian society, and in the less developed state of civil society in this country.

The restructuring of the system of values is indicated by the fact that this basic principle is not accompanied by support for any political extreme. In their support of a strong leader, religious people position themselves in the center of the political spectrum and wish to impose restrictions on the Western system of democratic institutions with slogans of peace and security, which enjoy the preference of society as a whole (Füstös, Szakolczai 1999). Paradoxically—but from a social-historic perspective understandably—religious people take their stance with the authoritarian leader representing premodern moral order such that they wish simultaneously to integrate themselves into the modern moral order of society by emphasizing peace and security and by distancing themselves from political extremes, as well as, most importantly, by sharing the secular values of society.

As a consequence of the duality of secularized faith and the leader cult observed among religious people, the Christian rhetoric of the government can hardly reach religious followers on the basis of their Christian values. All the more so because even religious people themselves consider these values to be inferior to the secular values of society, and their value preferences are hardly different from those of non-religious members of society. A comparison with earlier research results (Tóth 2010; Keller 2010) reveals that the targeted governmental propaganda and religious value orientation which have been emphatically communicated through public education have left people's value orientation largely unaffected. Instead of the Christian values so vigorously promoted by the government, Hungarian society continues to prefer a materialism based on rational, secular values. And this secular pattern, followed by the majority of society, has such a dominant influence that even the system of Christian-national values promoted by the government has only had certain limited, short term effects, and cannot override it.

The propaganda of the FIDESZ-KDNP party alliance is, however, not entirely without influence on social actors. The illiberal actions of the government's policies, restricting both constitutional and parliamentary control and the Western system of democratic institutions,

resonate well with society. The illiberalism of the political elite may primarily count on the support of religious people, particularly on those who are religious in accordance with the teachings of their Churches or religious communities. This, however, strengthens the hierarchic point of view of the premodern moral order in society without being linked to its Christian values.

References

B o g n á r, B. and K m e t t y, Z. 2020. Believing without moralising. Secularised religiousness in Hungary, *Social Compass 67*(4): 576–598.

B o t v a r, P.K. 2005 The moral thinking of three generations in Scandinavia: What role does the religion play? *Social Compass 52*(2): 185–195.

C o r t o i s, L., A u p e r s, S., and H o u t m a n, D. 2018. The naked truth: mindfulness and the purification of religion, *Journal of Contemporary Religion 33*(2): 303–317.

D a v i e, G. 1994. *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*. Oxford: Blackwell.

D a v i e, G. 2002. *Europe: the Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*. London: Darnton, Longmann & Todd.

D a v i e, G. 2005. From obligation to consumption: a framework for reflection in Northern Europe, *Political Theology 6*(3): 281–301.

D a v i e, G. 2006. Religion in Europe in the 21-st Century: the factors to take into account, *European Journal of Sociology 47*(2): 271–296.

F i n k e, R. and A d a m c z y k, A. 2008. Cross-national moral beliefs: the influence of national religious context, *Sociological Quarterly 49*(4): 617–652.

F ö l d v á r i, M. 2009. Vallásosság és értékek együttjárása a magyar társadalom generációiban, pp. 11–34, in: *Vallásosság és kultúra: A Fiatal Vallás- és Értékszociológusok Körének tanulmánykötete*, edited by F. Gereben. Budapest: Faludi Akadémia.

F r o e s e, P. 2001. Hungary for religion. A supply-side interpretation of the Hungarian religious revival, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 40*(2): 251–268.

F ü s t ö s, L. and S z a k o l c z a i, Á. 1999. Kontinuitás és diszkontinuitás az értékpreferenciákban (1977–1998), *Szociológiai Szemle* 3: 54–72.

H a b e r m a s, J. 2002. *Glauben und Wissen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

H a b e r m a s, J. and R a t z i n g e r, J. 2006. *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. San Francisco: Ignatius.

H a g e n a a r s, J.A., H a l m a n, L., and M o o r s, G. 2003. Exploring Europe's basic values map, in: *The Cultural Diversity of European Unity: Findings, Explanations and Reflections from the European Values Study*, edited by Hagenaars. Leiden: Brill.

H a l m a n, L. and A r t s, W. 2010. (Post)modernization, individualization and individualism: Value changes in Central and Eastern Europe in the first decade after the fall of the iron curtain, in: *Mapping Value Orientations in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by L. Halman and M. Voicu. Leiden: Brill, pp. 11–46.

H e e l a s, P. and W o o d h e a d, L. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality?* Malden/Oxford: Blackwell.

H o u t m a n, D. and A u p e r s, S. 2007. The spiritual turn and the decline of tradition: The spread of post-christian spirituality in 14 eestern countries, 1981–2000, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 46*(3): 305–320.

I n g l e h a r t, R. and B a k e r, W.E. 2000. Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values, *American Sociological Review 65*(1): 19–51.

I n g l e h a r t, R. and W e l z e l, C. 2005. *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

K e l l e r, T. 2010. The position of Hungary on worldwide map of human values, *Review of Sociology of the Hungarian Sociological Association 20*(1): 27–51.

K e l l e r, T. 2010. Megfogyva bár, de törve… Mérsékletesen javuló mutatók, súlyosan növekvő politikai polarizáltság a magyar értékrendszerben, változások 2009 és 2013 között, pp. 375–403, in: *Társadalmi riport 2014,* edited by I. Gy. Tóth and T. Kolosi. Budapest: TÁRKI.

L e n s k i, G. 1963. *The Religious Factor*. New York: Doubleday and Company Inc.

L e v y, S. 1986. *The Structure of Social Values*. Jerusalem: Guttman Institutes.

L u c k m a n n, T. 2003. Transformations of religion and morality in modern Europe, *Social Compass 50*(3): 275–285.

L u h m a n n, N. 1987. *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

L u h m a n n, N. 1998. *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft I–II*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

L y o n, D. 2000. *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

M c G u i r e, M. 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practise in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford UniversityPress.

M c G u i r e, M. 2016. Individual sensory experiences, socialized senses, and everyday lived religion in practice, *Social Compass 63*(2): 152–162.

N o r e n z a y a n, A. 2014. Does religion make people moral?, *Behaviour 152*: 365–384.

N o r r i s, P. and I n g l e h a r t, R. 2004. *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

P o l a k, R. and R o s t a, G. 2016. Religion and values in Central and Eastern Europe, pp. 33–74, in: *Focus on Religion in Central and Eastern Europe: A Regional View*, edited by A. Máté-Tóth and G. Rosta. Berlin: De Gruyter Verlag.

R o k e a c h, M. 1969. Value systems and religion, *Review of Religious Research 11*(1): 3–23.

R o k e a c h, M. 1969. Religious values and social compassion, *Review of Religious Research 11*(1): 24–38.

R o s t a, G. 2009. Ifjúság, vallás, kultúra, pp. 35–53, in: *Vallásosság és kultúra. A Fiatal Vallás- és értékszociológusok Körének tanulmánykötete*, edited by F. Gereben, Budapest: Faludi Akadémia.

R o s t a, G. 2010. Youth and religiosity in Hungary, 2000–2008, *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures 19*(1): 54–67.

R o s t a, G. 2010. Vallásosság és politikai attitűdök az európai értékrend vizsgálatában, pp. 427–449, in: *Mit értékelnek a magyarok? Az Európai Értékrend Vizsgálat 2008. évi magyar eredményei,* edited by G. Rosta and M. Tomka, Budapest: Faludi Akadémia.

R o s t a, G. and F ö l d v á r i, M. 2014. Fiatal felnőttek vallásosságának változása az ISSP- és az EVS-vizsgálatok tükrében, pp. 129–149, in: *Közösségteremtők: Tisztelgés a magyar vallásszociológusok nagy nemzedéke előtt,* edited by G. Pusztai and Á. Lukács, Debrecen: Debrecen UP.

S c h e e p e r s, P., G i j s b e r t s, M., and H e l l o, E. 2002. Religiosity and prejudice against ethnic minorities in Europe: Cross-national tests on a controversial relationship, *Review of Religious Research 48*(3): 242–265.

S c h e e p e r s, P., G r o t e n h u i s, M.T., and S i l k, F.v. 2002. Education, religiosity and moral attitudes: Explaining cross-national effect differences, *Sociology of Religion 63*(2): 157–176.

S c h w a r t z, S.H. and H u i s m a n s, S. 1995. Value priorities and religiosity in four western religions, *Social Psychology Quarterly 58*(2): 88–107.

S i e b e n, I. and H a l m a n, L. 2014. Religion and parental values in a secularizied country: Evidence from the Netherlands, *Social Compass 61*(1): 121–140.

S t a r k, R. and B a i n b r i d g e, W.S. 1996. *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

S t o r m, I. 2009. Halfway to heaven: Four types of fuzzy fidelity in Europe, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 48*(4): 702–718.

S t o r m, I. 2016. Morality in context: A multilevel analysis of the relationship between religion and Values in Europe, *Politics and Religion 9*(1): 111–138.

T a y l o r, C. 2003. *Modern Social Imagineries*. Duke UP.

T a y l o r, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.

T o m k a, M. 2006. *Vallás és társadalom Magyarországon: Tanulmányok*. Budapest: Loisir.

T o m k a, M. 2007. *Egyház a társadalomban: Jegyzetek a keresztény társadalmi tanításhoz*. Budapest–Piliscsaba: Losir.

T o m k a, M. 2010. Vallási helyzetkép 2009. A vallásosság elterjedtségének, társadalmi bázisának és az életben betöltött szerepének változásai az utóbbi évtizedekben Magyarországon, pp. 401–425, in: *Mit értékelnek a magyarok? Az Európai Értékrend Vizsgálat 2008. évi magyar eredményei*, edited by G. Rosta and M. Tomka, Budapest: Faludi Akadémia.

T o m k a, M. and Z u l e h n e r, P.M. (eds.). 1999. *Religion in den Reformländern Ost(Mittel)Europas*. Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag.

T ó t h, I.Gy. 2010. A társadalmi kohézió elemei: bizalom, normakövetés, igazságosság és felelősségérzet—lennének…, pp. 254–287, in: *Társadalmi riport 2010*, edited by T. Kolosi and I.Gy. Tóth. Budapest: TÁRKI.

V o a s, D. 2009. The rise and fall of fuzzy fidelity in Europe, *European Sociological Review 25*(2): 155–168.

Z a k a r i a, F.R. 1997. The rise of illiberal democracy, *Foreign Affairs 76*(6): 22–43.

Biographical Note: Bulcsu Bognár Ph.D., is an associate professor with habilitation in sociology. He works at the Institute of Communication and Media Studies at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University Faculty of Social Sciences (Budapest). His research interests include social theory, sociology of religion, and sociology of the media. He has published several articles in journals on the Social Sciences Citation Index.

ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5169-9400

E-mail: bognar.bulcsu@btk.ppke.hu