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**POLITIQUES ET SOCIALES**

The spirituality of 'atheists' student in the secondary school of Athena  
royal of René Magritte of Lessines

by Erica Rita Derjacques

Promotor: Prof. Olivier Servais

Reporter: Prof. Caroline.sappia

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## **La déclaration de déontologie**

Je déclare sur l'honneur que ce mémoire a été écrit de ma plume, sans avoir sollicité d'aide extérieure illicite, qu'il n'est pas la reprise d'un travail présenté dans une autre institution pour évaluation, et qu'il n'a jamais été publié, en tout ou en partie. Toutes les informations (idées, phrases, graphes, cartes, tableaux, ...) empruntées ou faisant référence à des sources primaires ou secondaires sont référencées adéquatement selon la méthode universitaire en vigueur.

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## **Acknowledgement**

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## Summary

This thesis analyses the spirituality 'atheist' adolescent in two public schools in Belgium using the book Astin, Alexander W., Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm. *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010 and the journal of Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). *Assessing students' spiritual and religious qualities*. The study measures the five Spiritual Qualities: Spiritual Quest; Equanimity; Ethic of Caring; Charitable Involvement; and Ecumenical Worldview and Five Religious Qualities: Religious Commitment; Religious Engagement; Religious/Social Conservatism; Religious Skepticism; and Religious Struggle.

Keywords: spirituality, religion, adolescent, qualities, charity.

## 1.0. General Introduction

As I originated from a traditional Catholic Country, the Seychelles, and living on the Belgian terrain, therefore the temptation to compare the religiousness and spirituality of the two countries can be great. In the Seychelles, most of my students were Catholic Church goers and very fervent but today there is only a handful of my students saying, that they are Christian or spiritual in Belgium. Most of them said that they are atheist and don't have any relation and/or belief in God or its existence. Working for the past four years with those students, I have chosen to deepen my analysis on this terrain by writing an essay in socio-anthropology- to see clearer about the students' religious or non-religious, and inquire about their spirituality and/or their atheist.

This essay is entitled, the spirituality of 'atheists' student in the secondary school of Athénée royal of René Magritte of Lessines'. In this work, I would focus on an 'inventory' of the spiritual and religious comportment of the group of the secondary students adhering to the Catholic philosophical course. Those students proclaimed themselves as 'atheist', but they followed scrupulously this philosophical course. In this essay, I don't have the intention to see if the students believe in any specific religion. I just want to understand through questionnaires, if there are any spiritual or religious trace in their expression and comportment. This essay would not be influenced by the ongoing debate on the compulsory philosophical, religious course, and the fact that the citizenship course should be replaced by the latter.

Firstly, a general introduction of the religiousness and non-religiousness of the adolescent will be drawn.

Secondly the problematic issue of those adolescent spirituality or non-spirituality will be displayed.

Thirdly, there will be a thorough look at the literature review on, what is the spirituality and atheist of the adolescent. In this literature reviews' section, the concept and the terminology of adolescent will be defined. Then the term atheist will be defined and the various stereotypes on this theme will be explained. In the overview of the atheist thematic, there will be debates, for instance, if the Societies without God are moral and civilised, why people reject religion. The historical background and development of the role of religion in the society will be drawn, follow with an explanation of the decline of religion and the question if God is dead will be raised. In the literature review, we will also address the scarcity of sociological interest in young person's religion. Pertinent factors for the adolescent spirituality will also be discussed for instance, their belief, prayer and the question about life after death.

Fourthly, the hypotheses and its justification will be presented. Then method of research and an overview of the results will be done. In this chapter, I will detail the reason a questionnaire and quantitative method was adopted.

Fifthly, the advancement of knowledge on the adolescent spirituality and atheism through the questionnaire results will be presented. In this chapter, the results will be addressed- the views of the adolescent about the sacred text, a close look of the catholic and respondent an overview of the Spiritual and religious factors results, the belief in life after death if there is any confirmation. Additionally, *a Comparison of the questionnaire results and the hypothesis will be done.*

Finally, a conclusion will be drawn. As it is not so evident on how to measure and analyse students' spirituality, religiousness and degree of atheism, I have used the book Astin, Alexander W., Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm. *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives.* John Wiley & Sons, 2010 and the journal of Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). *Assessing students' spiritual and religious qualities* and also. This interesting research will reduce the errors that I can make when selecting and describing spiritual factors in the study. So, to debut the study, the authors' definition of spirituality is very important. They defined it in very broad terms and they named it spiritual development, for them it is,

... How students make meaning of their education and their lives, how they develop a sense of purpose, the value and belief dilemmas they experience, as well as the role religion, the sacred and the mystical in their life.<sup>1</sup>

My essay will focus on the five spiritual qualities the authors elaborated: 'Spiritual Quest, equanimity, ethic of Caring and ecumenical worldview. And it will also have an inventory on five religious qualities: religious commitment; religious engagement; religious/social conservatism; religious skepticism; and religious Struggle.' It will also consider the book *The Quest for Meaning and Wholeness: Spiritual and Religious Connections....*<sup>2</sup> for further consideration of the adolescent spirituality and the exactitude of my study.

## **2.0. The problematic subject of the spirituality of 'atheist' students**

The students of 'Athénée Royal' René Magritte of Lessines and Athénée Royal of Ath are the respondents in my study. The group study consists of boys and girls aged between 14 and 21.

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<sup>1</sup> Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). Assessing students' spiritual and religious qualities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(1), 39-61.

<sup>2</sup> Lindholm, J. A. (2013). *The quest for meaning and wholeness: Spiritual and religious connections in the lives of college faculty.* John Wiley & Sons.

They are from the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> General humanities and technological studies of the secondary schools.

They are also in the 4<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> professional and technical humanities.

They followed the philosophy course of the Catholic religion.<sup>3</sup> This weekly course of 100 minutes is based on the acquiring of competence<sup>4</sup> (five terminal and eleven disciplinary competences) using the following themes, ‘*construire le Bonheur, Affronter le mal, habiter le corps, convertir la violence, vivre et mourir, vivre en relation, pratiquer la justice, traverser la souffrance, développer le rapport au monde et fonder la spiritualité de l’humain.*’<sup>5</sup> The students respected this course as the other subjects taught in the school- mathematics, social sciences, languages, science etc...

At the beginning of each academic year the parent subscribes their student to one philosophy course. It can be moral, a ‘neutral study’, or any other religious affiliated course. Most of the students claim that they are atheist, especially when the philosophy addressed religious articles or questions. They said that they don’t believe in God or gods, and they don’t need God. However, they are not haters of the church, neither the religions. The respondents of the group study came mainly from religious families. They are still being influenced by the goodwill of their religious grandparents’ who still recite rosary and light candles for them. Subsequently their families believe that a philosophical course of the Catholic religion can be an interesting component in their upbringing. For most of the students’ the Catholic religion remains an interesting body to study with pertinent historical and theological documents.

In my essay the selection of the literatures was made after discerning on what object is being studied. So for this essay, the object studied is the spirituality and/or non-spirituality of the adolescent. So to be efficient in this research, this concept of the *presumed atheist* of the adolescent is expanded to a larger concept which are spirituality, religiousness, belief, values, religion and irreligion; a concept that will detail in the literature review) It is pertinent to broaden this sphere of study where spirituality is concerned due to the volatility of the adolescent.

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<sup>3</sup> This compulsory philosophical course of the Catholic religion can be understood through this article *Toward Integrative Religious Education in Belgium and Flanders* in *British Journal for Religious Education*<sup>3</sup>, -Belgium has a peculiar system that organises the state-church relations (Torfs 2005). Belgium officially recognises and subsidises six religions (Catholic, Protestant-Evangelical, Anglican, and Orthodox, Jewish and Islamic) as well as the non-religious humanist community (organised laity). (...).

<sup>4</sup> Derroitte, H. (2010). Cours de religion catholique et pluralité religieuse. *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 41(1), 57-85.

<sup>5</sup> Programme de religion catholique, enseignement secondaire, humanité générales et technologiques, humanités professionnelles et technique, Licap, Bruxelles, 2006.



### **3.0. The Literature review on the spirituality and religiousness of ‘atheist’ adolescent**

#### ***3.1. Understanding the concept of adolescence***

For the sociologist Melissa R. Herman, the sociology of adolescence focuses on biological, social, economic, and psychological development of youth during the period between childhood and adulthood. During this period, typical youth undergo puberty, consolidate cognitive reasoning abilities, and attain majority status and social privileges. Most youths complete their education, undergo cultural rites of passage, develop more economic and emotional independence from parents, and develop the capacity for intimacy with peers.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Alexa. C. Curtis<sup>7</sup> said that, “... adolescence is a complex, multi- system transitional process involving progression from the immaturity and social dependency of childhood into adult life with the goal and expectation of fulfilled developmental potential, personal agency, and social accountability...”.

Hum Davies<sup>8</sup> attenuated the biological definition, through a sociological perspective on youth. For him, “... Youth is not just a biological category; it’s also a societal invention. This may sound like social-babble but as we have changed from an agricultural to post-industrial society our definition of youth has evolved. Young people used to be parental property; nurtured by domestic folk practices, then forced into work and afforded no legal rights. Youth today is a public institution; objectified by the state, preserved in law, commodified by business and studied and monitored by rational, scientific expertise.”<sup>9</sup>

#### ***3.2. The terminology ‘adolescent’***

The term adolescence derives from the Latin *adolescere*, ‘to grow up.’ The Random House Dictionary defines adolescence as ‘the process or condition of growing up; the growing age of human beings; the period, which extends from childhood to manhood or womanhood; ordinarily considered as extending from fourteen to twenty-five in males, and from twelve to twenty-one in females.’<sup>10</sup> In the twenty-first century, multiple models of adolescence bring into question whether or not the historical concept has as much uniformity as some experts implied it had in the twentieth century. Certainly, almost all adolescents, regardless of race, class, or nationality, undergo similar biological

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<sup>6</sup> Sociology of Adolescent, Melissa R. Herman-DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199756384-0002 consulted 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

<sup>7</sup> <http://scholar.utc.edu/jafh/vol7/iss2/2> consulted 6<sup>th</sup> May 2017 consulted 30 December 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Hum Davies -PhD student at the Southampton University.

<sup>9</sup> <http://socialtheoryapplied.com/author/huwdavies/> consulted 30<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/children/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/adolescence-and-youth> consulted 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

changes, though characteristics such as the age of menarche have shifted over time. But the social and psychological parameters appear to have become increasingly complex and diverse.<sup>11</sup> Though the most common images of adolescents set them in the youth-oriented consumer culture of clothes, music, and movies, the variable dark side of growing up has captured increasing attention. Poverty, sexual abuse, substance abuse, learning disabilities, depression, eating disorders, and violence have come to characterize youthful experiences as much as the qualities of fun and freedom-seeking that media and marketers have depicted.

Popular theory still accepts that almost all adolescents confront similar challenges of stress and anxiety, but the processes involved in growing up display complexities that confound attempts to characterize it.<sup>12</sup> So, how do those adolescents think? What are their priorities?

### ***3.3. Adolescents probed the meaning of life***

In a scientific World Journal<sup>13</sup> Daniel T. L. Shek said that adolescents...commonly ask questions about life-What is the meaning of life? Why do we exist? What should we accomplish in life? These questions commonly fall within the larger scope of “meaning of life” or “purpose in life”, which addresses three interrelated issues which are the meaning of life (e.g., what life signifies, personal reasons, and importance of existence), meaningfulness of life, (e.g., whether life is worth living or purposeful), and purpose in life (e.g., life goals, life purpose, things to be accomplished, ideals to be attained).<sup>14</sup> Zuckerman deepened the knowledge further on the adolescent by debuting on the term atheist.

### ***3.4. Overview and Understanding of the term of atheist<sup>15</sup>***

The fact that the group of the students for the study declared themselves as ‘atheist’, this concept needs to be understood. Zuckerman defines an atheist as “someone who doesn’t believe in God and/or finds the very concept of God meaningless or incoherent (Baggini 2003). Whilst an agnostic for him is rather, ‘someone who is unsure or undecided about the existence of God, or who believes that there are certain matters – such as the existence of a God – that are beyond the scope of human knowledge and comprehension (Eller 2005). Other terms commonly associated with atheist/agnostic include “freethinker” “humanist,” and “skeptic” (Pasquale2009).” For the sociologist, “A secular person is someone who is non-religious, irreligious, or generally uninterested in, indifferent

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/children/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/adolescence-and-youth>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/children/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/adolescence-and-youth>

<sup>13</sup> FHKPS, B. (2012). Spirituality as a positive youth development construct: A conceptual review. *Journal of Alternative Medicine Research*, 4(4), 349.

<sup>14</sup> Baum, S., & Lazarski, J. (2000). Wong, PTP, & Fry, PS (1998).(Eds.). The human quest for meaning. *Journal of Adult Development*, 7(3), 187-188.

<sup>15</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

to, or oblivious to religious beliefs, activities, and organizations (Kosmin 2007).”<sup>16</sup>

The author clarified that, “someone can be secular and yet not be an atheist, such as an individual who never attends religious services or activities, doesn’t describe herself as religious, and yet still believes in something she would refer to as God (Shibley 2004). Or a person can be religious while also being an atheist; there are many religious traditions – particularly in the East – that don’t contain a specific belief in God (Eller 2007; Martin 2007), and for many other people, belief in God is largely absent from their idiosyncratic religious identities (McGuire 2008; Casebolt and Niekro 2005).”

As I have made it clear earlier, there are various ambiguities where the concept religious and spiritual is concerned. Zuckerman added that, “... there are people who eschew the designation “religious” in favor of “spiritual” (Fuller 2001; Stark et al. 2005)’. But what we can notice obviously is that there are, finally, millions of people are “culturally religious,” identifying with a religious tradition, but without believing in the theological content thereof (Demerath 2000; Zuckerman 2008)”.

The author affirmed that, “There are somewhere between 500 million and 750 million non-believers in God worldwide (Zuckerman 2007). If we were to go beyond the narrow confines of non-belief in God and include religiously unaffiliated or non-religious people, these numbers would be significantly greater.” He continued by explaining that, “Although atheists and irreligious people certainly exist in every country, we definitely find a much lower concentrations of atheism and secularity in poorer, less developed nations than in the richer industrialized democracies (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Bruce 2003).”<sup>17</sup>

In the article, *The Atheist Experience: A Sociological Approach to Atheist*<sup>18</sup> by Greksa she stipulated that “atheists begin the process of forming their identity during adolescence as a result of numerous background factors and through an ongoing negotiation of a society that they perceive as unaccepting on some level. College plays a role in providing a supportive context in which atheists can affirm and crystallize their identities as a result of processes set in motion before college”.

She argued that irreligion is most commonly cited as the absence of religious belief or the indifference to religion. For her, “it can also imply negative attitudes toward religion or a rejection of religion (Cline 2015). Campbell explains that although terms such as “irreligion,” “secularism,” and “atheism” are sometimes conflated, there are nuances, and irreligion does not necessarily have to include a feeling of hostility toward religion (1972:22)”. For her, Campbell observes, there exists

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<sup>16</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

<sup>17</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

<sup>18</sup> [http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr\\_theses](http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr_theses) consulted 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

many “religiously sympathizing unbelievers” inside and outside churches and religious institutions who are raised in a religious culture, but who cannot make themselves believe (Campbell 1972:22). This is important to note because not all non-believers feel the same way toward religion, even though they are often cast as uniformly hostile and rejecting of religion in all of its forms, she noted. Among atheists, there exists a more complicated and nuanced spectrum of beliefs than a simple dichotomy between religious and irreligious (1972:25).<sup>19</sup>

She believes that Ultimately, Campbell urges scholars to take into account the beliefs, actions, attitudes, and experiences of nonbelievers when studying irreligion in the same way these aspects of behaviour are taken into account when studying religion and religious believers (1972:23).<sup>20</sup>

She questioned, “What does it really mean to be an atheist? Even the atheist community is somewhat split on this issue. Bainbridge observes: “In a monotheistic society, an atheist may be someone who simply does not subscribe to a belief in God while in a polytheistic society, an atheist may be one who does not believe in enough gods” (2009:320)”. Bainbridge also contrasts an implicit atheist with a lower-case “a” from an explicit Atheist with a capital “A.” The implicit atheist is one who simply does not subscribe to a belief in God, while the explicit Atheist consciously rejects a belief in God and actively proclaims this (none) belief (2009:320).” As we start addressing the issue of non-believers, we have an outline on the various views and stereotypes about them.”

### ***3.5. Social Science Counter Negative Stereotypes and Assumptions of non-believers and non-religious people<sup>21</sup>***

Zuckerman goes further into this question by focusing on the social scientific research of identities, values and behaviors for non-believers and non-religious. He explained that, “according to Psalm 14 of the Bible, people who don’t believe in God are filthy, corrupt fools, entirely incapable of doing any good. Although those sentiments were written over 2,000 years ago, non-believers are still stigmatized to this day, with recent studies showing that a negative view of atheists is quite pervasive... (Harper 2007; D’Andrea and Sprenger 2007; Koproske 2006; Downey 2004; Heiner 1992).” Zuckerman suggested that, “it isn’t just within the Bible or public opinion polls that one finds a negative appraisal of secular people. Philosopher John D. Caputo (2001, 2–3) has written that people who don’t love God, aren’t “worth a tinker’s damn,” and that anyone who isn’t drastically religious is nothing more than “selfish and pusillanimous curmudgeon... a loveless lout.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> [http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr\\_theses](http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr_theses)

<sup>20</sup> [http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr\\_theses](http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr_theses)

<sup>21</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

<sup>22</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

Zuckerman asserted that, “Psychologist Justin Barrett (2004) has described atheism as “unnatural” (p. 108) and an “oddity” (p. 118), while sociologist Rodney Stark (2008) has publicly stated that irreligious people “are prickly... they’re just angry” (Duin 2008). For sociologist Zuckerman, “there is like widespread dislike, disapproval of, and general negativity towards atheists warranted, or is it a case of unsubstantiated prejudice?”<sup>23</sup>

He continued, “maybe secular, non-believing men and women aren’t so unsavoury, wicked, or despicable after all.’ For him, ‘there are some positive attributes correlated with secularity, such as lower levels of prejudice and ethnocentrism, or greater support for gender equality,’ He thinks that, “...societies with higher percentages of secular people are actually more healthy, humane, and happy than those with higher percentages of religious people.”<sup>24</sup> But, the question remains, who are atheist? Do they have values?

### 3.5.1. *Atheists having no values*<sup>25</sup>

Zuckerman assumed that, “someone who doesn’t believe in God doesn’t believe in anything, or that a person who has no religion must have no values.” He argued that, “These assumptions are simply untrue. People can reject religion and still maintain strong beliefs. Being godless does not mean being without values.” “Numerous studies reveal that atheists and secular people most certainly maintain strong values, beliefs, and opinions”, he confirmed.

He even argued that, “that atheists and secular people actually possess a stronger or more ethical sense of social justice than their religious peers. When it comes to protecting the environment, women’s rights, and gay rights, the non-religious again distinguish themselves as being atheist.”<sup>26</sup>

As you have noticed the literature review debuted with a well-known Biblical quote stating that atheists are simply no good. Zuckerman questioned, “Do the findings of contemporary social science support this Biblical assertion? The clear answer is no. Atheism and secularity have many positive correlates, such as higher levels of education and verbal ability, lower levels of prejudice, ethnocentrism, racism, and homophobia, greater support for women’s equality, child-rearing that promotes independent thinking and an absence of corporal punishment, etc. And at the societal level,

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<sup>23</sup> [http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr\\_theses](http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr_theses)

<sup>24</sup> Zuckerman Phil (2009). Atheism, secularity and well-being: how the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass* 3/6 949-971.

<sup>25</sup> Zuckerman Phil (2009). Atheism, secularity and well-being: how the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass* 3/6 949-971.

<sup>26</sup> Zuckerman Phil (2009). Atheism, secularity and well-being: how the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass* 3/6 949-971.

with the important exception of suicide, states and nations with a higher proportion of secular people fare markedly better than those with a higher proportion of religious people.” Zuckerman concluded that, “This essay has presented what social scientists currently know about atheists and secular people in relation to personal and societal well-being”.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.5.2. *Societies without God are moral and civilized*<sup>28</sup>

Phil Zuckerman ascertained that, “it is indeed possible for countries to be moral and civilized without belief in god or the supernatural. The Scandinavian countries were very secular and unbelieving, but enjoyed prosperity, democracy and a fine quality of life. This finding is a good argument against religion being coded into human genes.” Zuckerman thinks that, “religion is not a basic human need.”<sup>29</sup>

“Yet a common explanation for religious belief is that it eases people’s fear of death. Zuckerman’s observation suggests that it might be possible to look at death and anxiety in a different way. The fear of death might come from casting it as a judgment day with the potential of very severe punishment. He has some ideas why Scandinavian societies are secular.” For him, “the state religions are supported by tax dollars; they are monopolies that do not have to compete. Sweden and Denmark are social democracies that reflect the values of their citizens, another factor believed to undermine religion’s hold.”<sup>30</sup>

“A secure condition of life with little need for psychological comfort is another possible explanation for Scandinavian indifference toward religion. Highly educated citizens are the norm for Sweden and Denmark and both countries are also highly egalitarian. Education and social equality have been cited as factors favouring secularism.” Zuckerman presents supporting data that makes the probability of societies being capable of progress, lawfulness and equality without god very high. Many atheists will have their convictions confirmed about how well societies can function without the props of god and immortality.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.5.3. *Why People Reject Religion*

“Faith no more puts a human face on the statistics”- Professor Zuckerman believes that

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<sup>27</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

<sup>28</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Why are Danes and Swedes so irreligious. *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*, 22(1), 55-69.

<sup>29</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Why are Danes and Swedes so irreligious. *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*, 22(1), 55-69.

<sup>30</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Why are Danes and Swedes so irreligious. *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*, 22(1), 55-69.

<sup>31</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

“Apostates are people who have left religion behind them, some becoming atheists or agnostics, others retaining some form of belief while refusing affiliation with religious organizations or communities”. For him, “many apostates reported that religion stopped “making sense,” as well as difficulties with belief due to misfortune, sex, the malfeasance of others in the religious community, and so on.”<sup>32</sup>

After viewing all the atheism factors that are impacted on the adolescent, an overview of the role of religion in the society remains pertinent for this subject.

### ***3.6 Historical background and development of the role of religion in the society***<sup>33</sup>

We cannot omit the role of religion in the society in the students’ life. So an overview of the sociology of religion by seeing the practices, historical background, developments and universal themes is pertinent. To begin with, it is fascinating to note that false prediction has influenced academics to focus on the functionalist aspect of religion. For instance, Paul Berger saw an ephemeral secular flourishing in the 1960’s and 1970’s foreseeing the decline of religion.

Moreover, the development of sociology was in the 19th Century atheist through Auguste Comte was one of the first theories of social evolutionism. For Comte, the first stage of society, mankind passed through on its way to the “truth”. This stage was marked by people trying to explain natural phenomena by turning to animism, then polytheism, and finally monotheism.<sup>34</sup> Then, people tried to explain phenomena by referring to mysterious abstract forces. The final stage is the Scientific, when a genuine scientific methodology is developed, based on observation and experiment. People attempt to find universal laws to explain all phenomena.

It was Emile Durkheim who finds the universal factor or element of religion for all societies. He concluded that the individual senses a social force greater than his own and gives that awareness a supernatural face. He thought that religion was the glue that gave society's cohesion.<sup>35</sup>

Karl Marx saw, “religious belief as a reflection of humanity in itself and not a god. Marx saw religion as a hindrance to reason, and thought it masked the truth of man’s lot in society. He never suggested prohibiting religion.<sup>36</sup> Marx maintained that religion came in at this point, and functioned as an ideological apparatus of the State. Marx famously defined religion as “the opium of

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<sup>32</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2015). *Faith no more: Why people reject religion*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>33</sup> Christiano, K. J., Swatos Jr, W. H., & Kivisto, P. (2015). *Sociology of religion: Contemporary developments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>34</sup> Christiano, K. J., Swatos Jr, W. H., & Kivisto, P. (2015). *Sociology of religion: Contemporary developments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>35</sup> Christiano, K. J., Swatos Jr, W. H., & Kivisto, P. (2015). *Sociology of religion: Contemporary developments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>36</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> consulted 30th May 2017.

the people.”<sup>37</sup>

Max Weber was an atheist famous for his studies on politics, economics and religion. He thought, instead, that “men needed some way to reconcile their belief in an extraordinarily powerful god with their knowledge of the imperfection and evil of the world. Religion does not only provided answers, but motivation. Salvation meant attaining relief from suffering and bestowed meaning in the world. People became motivated to attain salvation.”<sup>38</sup>

“It is not obvious to investigate secularism and atheist. The study is scarce or they are mainly psychological. The most important reason for the scarcity of research into atheist concerns seems to be the “dominance of a functionalist view of religion as a universal feature of societies. But even though there were encouraging results in secular research, religion did not seem to be withering.”<sup>39</sup>

### 3.6.1. *The decline of religion*<sup>40</sup>

Berger’s considered a rise of secularism- but there is a temporary waning of secular theory is that secularism never took place, although Berger and other scholars had predicted it. Instead, there seemed to be a flourishing of religion. Berger maintains that religion serves as a “sacred canopy,” and Religion is a protective covering that gives meaning to the world, including suffering and death.<sup>41</sup> For him, “Humans fear being plunged into chaos, so they accept the orderly pattern explained and justified by religion. They no longer realize that their belief is a human creation; Berger calls this process reification. He also believed that the rise of science, the spread of the more interior Protestant religion, the loss of the church’s monopoly of worship and truth, and their marketplace competition for members. Berger stated that religion was suffering from a crisis of credibility. Secularization, pluralization and subjectivity would undermine religion and give rise to a secular world.”<sup>42</sup>

### 3.6.2. *God is dead*<sup>43</sup>

Secularism is an inexorable process and that it has been going on at least 150 years in England said Steve Bruce. He believes the decline has been brought about by modernity: individualism, diversity and egalitarianism. He dismisses the trend to New Age, Spiritualism and does not believe it will lead to any sort of religious revival. He shows high “unofficial belief.” He

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<sup>37</sup> Christiano, K. J., Swatos Jr, W. H., & Kivisto, P. (2015). *Sociology of religion: Contemporary developments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>38</sup> Christiano, K. J., Swatos Jr, W. H., & Kivisto, P. (2015). *Sociology of religion: Contemporary developments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>39</sup> Christiano, K. J., Swatos Jr, W. H., & Kivisto, P. (2015). *Sociology of religion: Contemporary developments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>40</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> consulted 30th May 2017.

<sup>41</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> consulted 30th May 2017.

<sup>42</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> consulted 30th May 2017.

<sup>43</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> consulted 30th May 2017.



maintains that the questions are frequently biased and the definitions of belief are twisted or watered down to support a weak theory. He does not believe the Western trend of secularization will lead to atheism, but rather to indifference.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, Karel Dobbelaere believes that “secularism is on the rise, and quotes studies that confirm the concept that many scholars would like to deny-atheists, can be dogmatic, but usually are less authoritarian than fundamentalists. Atheists who were former Christians are sometimes deserted by friends and family when they ‘come out,’ while atheists who have been non-believers for a long while usually report little difficulty.”<sup>45</sup>

### *3.6.3 Scarcity of sociological interest in young people’s religion*

Sociologists of religion overlooked young people because few were to be found in church. The empirical study of young people’s relationship to religion was largely left to educationalists, psychologists and theologians concerned with religious education, faith development and faith transmission. During the 1990s, however, things changed and young people’s engagement (or not) with religion started to claim sociologists’ attention. This is because the traditional expressions of Christianity have declined in most Western countries, religious diversity has become more salient and particularly so for younger people. This raises questions about emerging faith identities, religious engagement in young people’s lives, and the role of religion in education and community relations. Then, the terror attacks in the West linked with religious extremism, there is a concern to understand the radicalisation of religiously minded youth. After that, Western societies have seen a rapid rise in the number of people, again particularly among the young, who fail to identify with any organised religion at all.<sup>46</sup>

## ***3.7. Generational shift away from traditional affiliation<sup>47</sup>***

Western Europe there has been a generational shift away from traditional (i.e. Christian) religious affiliation, belief and practice. Voas makes the point in his analysis of the European Social Survey 2002/3: “The oldest cohort in every country outside Scandinavia is more religious than the overall mean; the youngest cohort in every country outside Greece and Poland (and marginally Italy and Ireland) is less religious than average.

In terms of religiosity, young Italians are more like older Swedes than they are like their own grandparents.” Although Christians are declining in number, the populations of other faith groups,

<sup>44</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> consulted 30th May 2017.

<sup>45</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> consulted 30th May 2017.

<sup>46</sup> <http://atheistscholar.org/AtheistPsychologies/AtheistSociology.aspx> 3. Consulted 30<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik*, 11, 80-94.

Muslims in particular, are growing, albeit not to the extent that is sometimes suggested by the mass media. People of ‘other’ faiths still remain in the minority by some margin.

In the World Values Survey (WVS). Non-Christian faiths account for under 10% of religious affiliation in each of the selected countries, whilst at least 40% (and in some cases over 80%) of people still identify themselves as Christian. Each of these aspects of subjective spiritual engagement – intimacy with God, communal belonging and service – feeds into the other. Being with fellow believers can, in the Durkheimian sense, sensitize individuals to spiritual experiences. The working out of belief through service to others is likely to enhance communal belonging and social capital; and affirm the sense that belief matters.<sup>48</sup>

Among mainstream churches it has been the charismatic evangelical congregations which seem to have been most successful at fostering these dimensions of subjective spirituality among the young. Increasingly, however, religiously active young people of different denominations are finding value in the selective use of traditional symbols and liturgical expressions of faith as a means of fostering spirituality. This is perhaps more familiar territory to Roman Catholic than Protestant young people. Significantly, however, young people routinely eschew denominational labels.

Other examples of expressive communalism may be found in the Protestant Taizé community in France which attracts thousands of young people each year to share in its particular form of liturgical worship and pattern of communal life; and the World Youth Day pilgrimages that encourage thousands of young Catholics to travel together and share a Mass with the Pope at the end of the journey. Expressive communalism can be understood in relation to the ‘subjective-turn’ in wider contemporary culture.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.7.1. *Belief*

Whilst religion is peripheral many of these young people still believe (or at least are open to the possibility of belief) that a God of some sort exists or that certain religious or supernatural tenets may be true. Such beliefs tend to be selectively drawn from religious ideas held within the family and the wider cultural memory (which is largely Christian), and are held more as a matter of opinion than conviction. At the same time, other people’s beliefs are usually regarded as being equally valid to one’s own. There is a helpful distinction between belief as a propositional statement (belief that God exists) and belief as a faith statement (believing in God). It tends to be the latter that has consequences for how one lives. Under this rubric we could say that many ... may believe that God exists but they

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<sup>48</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik*, 11, 80-94.

<sup>49</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik*, 11, 80-94.

believe in family and friends.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.7.2. Prayer

Insofar as young people's attitudes are benign rather than hostile towards religion, the door is open to their turning to religion when needed. Thus as well as selectively believing, they also occasionally (even if only very occasionally) engage in religious practices when it suits them (e.g. carols services at Christmas or rites of passage). Although this can be primarily for family or cultural reasons the spiritual dimension is not entirely absent. One type of religious practice that young people occasionally engage in is prayer. As one might expect, prayers are often said at times of difficulty or crisis. They are seen to 'work' if the prayer feels better afterwards. Prayers are additionally used as a way to psychologically process feelings of wrong-doing, guilt or shame; and also sometimes to take stock and acknowledge good things in one's life and offer 'thanks'. The subjective aspect of prayers among teenagers is evident from this. Certainly prayer is not a discipline to be worked at or something to be done when one does not feel like it.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.7.3. Managing and making Sense of Death<sup>52</sup>

Another area where subjective engagement with religious traditions is apparent is in relation to mourning and death. Late modern Western societies tend to have an ambivalent relationship to death. On the one hand it is hidden away in hospitals and hospices and handled by professionals so that it is outside of most young people's experiences.

On the other hand the proliferation and glamorizing of death in video games, television programs and films often takes young people's attention. Youth gang violence and young suicides can also bring death close to home. Young people struggle to make sense of and manage death outside of religious concepts and symbols. It was in thinking about death that English young people were most eclectic in their beliefs drawing on concepts of ghosts, karma and reincarnation as well as heaven. Increasingly people of all ages but especially the young innovate mourning rituals. In doing so, they often draw on traditional religious practices such as the lighting of candles or the creation of shrines albeit emptying them of their original theological meaning. Even so, such rituals usually run alongside, or are held within, more established ways of mourning that involve traditional institutional forms of religion, thereby adding to rather than replacing them entirely.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik*, 11, 80-94.

<sup>51</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik*, 11, 80-94.

<sup>52</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik*, 11, 80-94.

<sup>53</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für*

The *subjectivization* of belief and practice, however, makes the transmission of religious traditions from one generation to the next difficult. Religion is most readily passed on within believing, intentional communities where beliefs and practices are rehearsed and validated by a group. Outside of such communities religious truths and expressions can become relativized and irrelevant. The fact that only a minority of young people in most Western countries go to church does not bode well for the long term future of Christianity. Moreover, there is a wariness on the part of young people and adults alike about the imposition of belief and practice on others.<sup>54</sup>

In Europe, only a minority of young people are therefore keeping religious traditions alive. This resonates a little with Davie's suggestion that in Europe religion is often engaged with 'vicariously'. That is to say, the minority keep religious traditions going, and the majority (implicitly at least) are happy that they do so, for occasionally they take advantage by selectively drawing upon those religious ideas, traditions and services as and when they need or want to.

Whilst the sociological study of religion is growing as a discipline it is clear from the above that there is still much to learn. Cross-national studies are rare but are important for gauging the broad religious trends that accompany cultural changes in modernity and more research of this nature needs to be done. There is much to be gained from further studies into the meaning of religious affiliation, belief and practices in everyday life for young people, even if this is quite minimal.<sup>55</sup>

## **4.0. Hypotheses and justification**

### **4.1. The hypothesis**

The basis of the hypotheses is based on an inventory religiousness and spirituality factors of the student. The first hypothesis is:-

a) All the students following the philosophical lesson of the Catholic lesson are atheist. This first hypothesis is founded on the fact, that during the Catholic philosophical course, some students are demotivated and some students said categorically why they have to talk about God and Jesus in such lesson and they claim to be an atheist.

b) All the students have the spiritual comportment of the Christians. The second hypothesis is based on the fact that though the students are not church goers, they are greatly influenced by Christianity factors in their society, they are culturally affiliated with the Catholic religion. This is because in the course, there are important Christian concepts that are being used by the students to

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*Religionspädagogik, 11, 80-94.*

<sup>54</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik, 11, 80-94.*

<sup>55</sup> Collins-Mayo, S. (2012). Youth and religion. An international perspective. *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik, 11, 80-94.*

express their values or beliefs and they sympathised a lot with the Christian belief.

#### **4.2. Objectives**

The objective of this questionnaire is to inquire and do an inventory to see:-

- a) If there is a relationship between the compartment of students that can be associated as spiritual/religious behaviours.
- b) Inquire about the openness of the students towards spirituality.
- c) Inquire if the students are spiritual and/or religious beings and to what extent.

So basically, the questionnaire aim is to see if the students are 'atheist'

For the study, the students were given a questionnaire of 106 questions based on Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). Assessing students' spiritual and religious qualities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52 (1), 39-61. The questionnaire is divided in two parts the first part of the questionnaire consists of direct questions about Spiritual and religious affiliation of the students'.

This questionnaire analyses the Transcendent dimension, the meaning and purpose in life. It analysed the ability of the students to know themselves better without having to rely on any external authority including any god or God. It takes into account the capacity of the students to sympathise and empathise.<sup>56</sup> This study considers also the extent to which the students are of service to the people around them whether they are in deep gratitude and appreciation for the chance to live this life (...).<sup>57</sup> It is in the second part of the questionnaire that there are subtle questions, so that the respondents can be at ease, open and free. This part of the questionnaire is divided into three broad categories.

1) Spiritual Factors: Spirituality, Spiritual quest, and Equanimity.

2) Religious Factors: Religious commitment, Religious struggle, Religious engagement, religious/social conservatism, and Religious skepticism.

3) Related Qualities: Charitable involvement, Ethic of caring, Ecumenical worldview, and Compassionate self-concept.

The questionnaire considered also the Hill and Hood's (1999) comprehensive analysis of 125 different scales studied by the HERI research. This resulted in the identification of eleven content areas or "domains" to be considered in designing items and scales to measure spirituality and religiousness: spiritual outlook/orientation/worldview, spiritual well-being spiritual/religious

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<sup>56</sup> Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). Assessing students' spiritual and religious qualities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(1), 39-61.

<sup>57</sup> Elkins, D. N., Hedstrom, L. J., Hughes, L. L., Leaf, J. A., & Saunders, C. (1988). Toward a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality: Definition, description, and measurement. *Journal of humanistic Psychology*, 28(4), 5-18.

behaviour/practice, Self-assessments (of spirituality and related traits), Compassionate behaviour, spiritual quest, spiritual/mystical experiences, facilitators/inhibitors of spiritual development, theological/metaphysical beliefs, attitudes toward religion/spirituality, religious affiliation/identity.<sup>58</sup>

### ***4.3. The methodology of the research***

Like stated above, the Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). Assessing students' spiritual and religious qualities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(1), 39-61 questionnaire was chosen and I have translated it in French, harmonised and contextualised it for the students.

The group of study was not chosen at random. As stated above, it was a group of students from the Athénée Royal of René Magritte and Ath. The students were given their questionnaire and they had 50 minutes to answer the questionnaire. Clarification was given on complex questions. No examples were given to prevent from influencing the answers. The chairs in the room had enough space between them to prevent the students from comparing and copying their answers. The questions were answered in complete silence.

Most questionnaire were completed after 35 minutes. The student saw the second part of the questionnaire relatively complex, as the spiritual factors and religious factors questions are quite profound and it required ample time to understand them. The students were so happy with the questionnaire. They saw it as a moment of personnel reflection. They even suggested that those concepts can be used in their philosophical courses.

#### ***4.3.1. The reason for a questionnaire and the quantitative method***

As for *Tfe* a terrain study is not recommended, but I found it ideal to adopt it, as the concept and method used in my literature review was from California for a survey with 3700 college juniors. Thus, a need of contextualising the study with the Belgian context was pertinent for me. Moreover, the context in the literature review had a great religious dominance and it differs a lot from Belgian context. Though my objective was not a comparison of the Belgian and Californian students, this does not stop me glancing on this relationship. It is indeed a great contribution for the knowledge in this sphere. It would be interesting to compare those results in another research. I notice however, that adolescent remains adolescent, there is like a general understanding among them.

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<sup>58</sup> Hill, P. C., Pargament, K. I., Hood, R. W., McCullough Jr, M. E., Swyers, J. P., Larson, D. B., & Zinnbauer, B. J. (2000). Conceptualizing religion and spirituality: Points of commonality, points of departure. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 30(1), 51-77.

#### *4.3.2. Limitation of the research*

A quantitative method was adopted to ensure the relationship of the method used in the literature review, however, I have seen that a qualitative method *recit de vie* would have had better results especially on the religious and spiritual factors questions- for instance about life after death, and charitable involvement and also as spirituality is often equated with traditional religious practice and beliefs. Questions for example often assume either explicitly or implicitly that the respondent embraces a monotheist/Judeo-Christian belief system (Moberg, 2002).

### **5.0. Contribution for the advancement of knowledge on the adolescent spirituality and atheism**

On the questionnaire, the following results were recorded, the first question was about the affiliation of the student to one religion, 91% of the adolescent are affiliated with the Catholic religions, there are 1% Hindu, 4% atheist, and there is the 2 % who do not know or refused to tell something about their affiliation to one's religion.

#### ***5.1. There are 91% student affiliated to the Catholic religion***

What does this affiliation mean to the student? It does not mean that they belong to this religion, it does not mean that they participate in the activities of this religion. Though the affiliation figures are remarkably high, it just means that they have some affinity with this religion. They simply sympathise with them, some of their ideas and some visions of life and activities. This affiliation with the Catholic religion will be deepened and become clearer with the following questions. This idea of affiliation is well illustrated by Campbell in the literature review -where he stated that there are many "religiously sympathizing unbelievers" (...) outside churches and religious institutions. They are 'atheist' 'more complicated and nuanced spectrum of beliefs'.

#### ***5.2. There are 46% of adolescent uncertain about God***

The respondents have an uncertainty in God's existence and the fact that God rewards for goodwill, this is not compensated by a belief in astrology. The respondents' refuted astrology by 41% and 43% believe in life after death. So, the prototype adolescent, can be someone who does not see an obligation to please God through good causes. He/she does not believe in astral influence, but thinks death is not the end of one's life. The thrilling thing about the continuation of life after death is that, it does not necessarily mean a belief in reincarnation. This prototype adolescent does not necessarily see this life after death as reincarnation, as only 24% accept reincarnation.

So the interesting question to raise is where or how do they imagine this life after death? How can we sketch this after death, life without God and without reincarnation? Where does this belief or non-belief lie? How is it outlined? Or to better phrase this expression, how is this non-belief outlined, of what is it composed? These are the questions that remain unanswered though the scrutinizing of the respondents' answers. It would be interesting to deepen this life after death idea. We will see further if this expression of spirituality and religiousness is clearer throughout the subtle question on religious and spiritual factors.

***5.3. There are 41% of adolescent who do not believe in devils and 41% see God as either a cosmic force***

The understanding of the adolescent spiritual expression becomes interesting, when their belief in the devils is refuted and God is seen as a cosmic force. How come that there is rejection of astrology by 41%, but this does not prevent 41% of the student in believing that God is as a cosmic force? Is there a relationship between the refutation of devil and acceptance of God as cosmic force? What is God as a cosmic force for those adolescent? The respondents show that refuting astrology does not necessarily meaning refuting God. Moreover, another 30% think God is a personal being and it interferes with one's life. 29% think that God created the world, but actually he has stopped this process of creation. With these data another prototype adolescent is drawn- he/she sees God as a cosmic force, personnel being, not created for the moment.

***5.4. The adolescent does not read sacred text***

Another interesting information collected is that those adolescents do not read sacred text. For them, though they think that many religions possess the truth. They never pray, but they do see the importance of faith. For the past years he/she has neither became more or less religious. They do not go to church, see that God is far away. They are more religious than spiritual.

Additionally, he/she thinks that God has an image but he thinks that people believe in God because, it is a means of explaining things differently. They think that people do not believe in god, because science has refuted God. For them, the non-believer is greatly influenced by its environment.

***5.5 Close Look of the catholic and atheist respondent***

When we have a Closer at the Catholic affiliated respondent and the atheist Respondent we notice the following: -



No	Questions	Catholic Affiliated (Questionnaire 6)		Atheist affiliated respondent (Questionnaire)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
2	Belief in God		✓		✓
2b	Belief in last judgement		✓		✓
4	Devils		✓	✓ (maybe)	
6	Reincarnation		✓		✓
7	Astrology		✓		✓
4a	God a personnel being			✓	
4c	God a cosmic force	✓			
5b	A lot of religion can true			✓	
5c	There is little truth in religion	✓			
6g	Never pray	✓		✓	
	Never read sacred text	✓		✓	

It is interesting to see the above table, affirming again the idea, we had stipulated earlier- that the catholic affiliated respondent is not at all a church goers, neither a believer. He never practices the religion neither pray nor reading the sacred text. This clarification is important for us to see, if the individual questionnaire reflect the general idea on spiritual compartment collected.

To deeper our knowledge on the prototype adolescent in the group study, it was inevitable to use subtle question on the religious factors. Spirituality factors, spiritual quest, the equanimity, religious commitment, religious Struggle, the religious engagement, the religious/social conservatism, religious scepticism, charitable involvement, ethic of caring, ecumenical worldview, compassionate self-concept to see if there is great correlation with those religious questions.

### ***5.6. Overview of the Spiritual and religious factors results***

It was noted in the religious and spiritual factors answers, that 59% of the adolescent doesn't have an opinion where the integration of spirituality is in their respective life. 60% of them don't even care if their close friends are searching the meaning of life and care about the humanity. 52% disagreed categorically that God punishes the unbelievers. 52% of the respondents' believe in life after death. 57% of them don't have an opinion about the creation of the universe. 57% of them answered that you don't have to be religious to grow spiritually. 59% of those adolescents are neutral

about the religion and science conflict. 59% said, they are honest and generous people.

#### *5.6.1. The respondents believe in life after death more than 50%*

There is a confirmation by the adolescent about the fact that there is life after death, by 50% of them. What kind of life after death, they are stipulated? Or, are they in their imagery that one can possess different super powers thus have many types of life? Can we have an afterlife concept without linking it with a spiritual or religious concept? This is an important path that may be deepened to better understand the adolescent views, for instance with a qualitative method the 'recits vie'. For the respondents, religion is not an important factor where relationship is concerned. This means that, when choosing a person to be a friend/partner, religion is not a factor in their decision making. It is interesting their friendship and relation if freed of this religion monopoly.

#### *5.6.2 Additional results- the adolescents are fulfilled by nature, don't believe that life is sacred, and have no interest in spirituality*

It is quite astonishing to see those additional results, which revealed that more than 55% of the group do not have any interest in spirituality, do not integrate spirituality in their daily life or their job. They refuted that people can attain high spirituality through meditation. They don't believe that life is sacred and don't have any intention in improving their spirituality. More than 50% of them do not have an opinion on the interior harmony, development of a significant philosophical life. 57% of their friends are not people searching for a real meaning of life and they do not have much in humanitarian projects. 50% of the student questioned experience beauty by witnessing the beauty and harmony of nature, and in the nature they feel fulfilled and the awe. They think that wisdom is vital for them. Moreover in their engagement they search the meaning of life. They are in fact people aiming to be more loving, and they are happy with all the good things that have happened in their life.

#### *5.6.3. Those adolescents believe in honesty and generosity*

A good note to complete this questionnaire, is that honesty and generosity are factors that are important for 59% of those adolescent. Those values are important to them. So this can be interesting to note that those good values are not exclusive to Christian, but any person can possess it.

### ***5.7 Comparison of the questionnaire results and the hypothesis***

There were two hypotheses that was stipulated;

- a) All the students following the philosophical lesson of the Catholic lesson are atheist.
- b) All the students following the philosophical lesson of the Catholic religion has spiritual comporment of the 'Christians'.

So it was noted that the group of the students does not have major interest in spirituality and religions. We are tempted to say, that those adolescent are not atheist as in the first question it was noted that only 4% of those adolescent are affiliated with atheist compared to 91% affiliated to the Catholic religion. So to say with total affirmation, the adolescent are atheist is not correct at all. It is right to say those adolescent are great ‘religion and spirituality sympathisers’ as noted in the literature review.

### ***5.8 Articulating the hypotheses, the Literatures review and the respondents’ results***

It is however, flagrant to see based on the second hypothesis that those adolescents have great values for instance honesty and generosity but we cannot have a quick conclusion saying that they are Christians though they possess those compartments derived from Christianity. An interesting question for research, is if we can stock take Christian values in non-Christian or atheist? How can we conceptualise those terms? It is important to note, like demonstrated below, though the adolescent can go to the church maybe for wedding, baptism (in the family) as ‘believers’ sympathisers.’ They clearly illustrated that there is no great relation with god, and for them god is faraway. For them the people belief, is a way of explaining the truth, it is simply a way to explain the world differently. And for them the non-belief of God is mainly because the rejection of science.

Though they claim to be atheist, and the results showed that religion is not their priority, I claim that my first hypothesis is not totally correct. I cannot named those adolescent as confirm atheist, it more nuance than that. For the second hypothesis, it was noted that those adolescent have compartment that can be named Christian, but to better explain my hypotheses, I have chosen to refer to few authors in my literature review.

As you have noticed the adolescent, ‘attempt to find universal laws to explain all phenomena.’<sup>59</sup> For them, ‘religion stopped “making sense,” as well as difficulties with belief due to misfortune, sex, the malfeasance of others in the religious community, and so on’.<sup>60</sup> As they are, ‘highly educated citizens are also highly egalitarian.-Education and social equality have been cited as factors favouring secularism.’

As Zuckerman explain, and I think those adolescent can be seen in this picture, is that they, ‘will have their convictions confirmed about how well societies can function without the props of god and immortality.’<sup>61</sup> As Zuckerman suggested, that religious belief eases people’s fear of death and

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<sup>59</sup> Christiano, K. J., Swatos Jr, W. H., & Kivisto, P. (2015). *Sociology of religion: Contemporary developments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>60</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2015). *Faith no more: Why people reject religion*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>61</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Atheism, secularity, and well-being: How the findings of social science counter negative stereotypes and assumptions. *Sociology Compass*, 3(6), 949-971.

the fear of death might come from casting it as a judgment day with the potential of very severe punishment, so those adolescent can accredit the life after death for this reason too. Though those adolescent are quite ‘secular and unbelieving, but they enjoyed prosperity, democracy and a fine quality of life. This finding is a good argument against religion being coded into human genes. Zuckerman thinks that religion is not a basic human need.’<sup>62</sup> Those adolescent can be seen as, ‘atheists and secular people actually possess a stronger or more ethical sense of social justice than their religious peers’. Those adolescent reject merely ‘religion and still maintain strong beliefs. Being godless does not mean being without values.’ ‘Numerous studies reveal that atheists and secular people most certainly maintain strong values, beliefs, and opinions, he confirmed. He added, ‘...when we actually compare the values and beliefs of atheists and secular people to those of religious people, the former are markedly less nationalistic, less prejudiced, less anti-Semitic, less racist, less dogmatic, less ethnocentric, less close-minded, and less authoritarian( Greeley and Hout 2006; Sider 2005; Altemeyer 2003, 2009; Jackson and Hunsberger 1999; Wulff1991; Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992, 1997; Beit-Hallahmi 2007; Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997; Batson et al. 1993; Argyle 2000).

Like Greska, I think those adolescent can be ‘implicit atheist who simply does not subscribe to a belief in God’, but they are not ‘explicit Atheist consciously rejects a belief in God and actively proclaims this (non) belief (2009:320).’ I think that those adolescents are basically in the process of ‘irreligion -the absence of religious belief or the indifference to religion. And this can also imply negative attitudes toward religion or a rejection of religion (Cline 2015)’.

Additionally, using Campbell terms, that ‘although there can be “irreligion,” “secularism,” and “atheism” there are nuances, and irreligion does not necessarily have to include a feeling of hostility toward religion (1972:22). I think those adolescent are “religiously sympathizing unbelievers” inside and outside churches and religious institutions who are raised in a religious culture, but who cannot make themselves believe (Campbell 1972:22). This is important to note because not all non-believers feel the same way toward religion, even though they are often cast as uniformly hostile and rejecting of religion in all of its forms, Greska added. Among atheists, there exists a more complicated and nuanced spectrum of beliefs than a simple dichotomy between religious and irreligious (1972:25).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Zuckerman, P. (2009). Why are Danes and Swedes so irreligious. *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*, 22(1), 55-69.

<sup>63</sup> [http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr\\_theses](http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=honr_theses) consulted 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

## Conclusion

This essay has been able to shed some light on the religiousness and the spirituality of the adolescent who are following the course of the Catholic religion, though there are some questions that remain unsolved. For instance, there are things that are not supposed to be interconnected for Christians, but for the adolescent, these are important factors and they mingle together perfectly. An example is that, the adolescent does not believe in God, think God is so far away, he does not have an image, but those adolescents think that many religions can possess the truth, and they believe in life after death. This belief in life after death does not specifically mean a belief in the reincarnation. Moreover, the Adolescent does not go to the Church, do not pray, do not read sacred text and see that the religious faith is of no importance in life.

Religion and spirituality do not interfere with their life decision making of the adolescent. Moreover, they agreed that one can grow spiritually without religion. It is indeed a non-institutional spirituality that is being illustrated by the adolescent. More than that, those adolescents are not interested in a spiritual enhancement. So the question that can be asked for future research, is how can we describe this type spirituality, or this type of religiousness or non-spirituality or non-religiousness?

As stated above, Adolescent is a complex, multi-system transitional process involving progression (...), so this illustrated that adolescents are moving forward into many different facets to new ways of doing things, and maybe a new way of not believing or believing. It can be a sort of syncretism, where they pick important factors for their benefits and rejected others- but this does not mean that they will use the same Christian categorization or spiritual institutions or non-spirituals- but Syncretism is a tricky term.

Daniel T. Shek explained that adolescents commonly ask questions about life: What is the meaning of life? In the answers of the respondents it clearly illustrated as if a new way, believing or non-believing and non-religiousness is being drawn. An example is when I compare with the supposed atheist and the supposed Christian, both of them do not pray, do not read sacred texts, so they are similar in their religiousness or non-religiousness.

Through this study, important views were stipulated by Zuckerman, where the atheist is concerned. Various stereotypes happened to be influencing even the respondents' results- he noted an important feature that was seen among the respondents- that "A secular person is someone who is non-religious, irreligious, or generally uninterested in, indifferent to, or oblivious to religious beliefs, activities, and organizations (Kosmin 2007)." He clarified that, "someone can be secular and yet not be an atheist, such as an individual who never attends religious services or activities, doesn't describe

herself as religious, and yet still believes in something she would refer to as God (Shibley 2004). Or a person can be religious while also being an atheist; there are many religious traditions – particularly in the East – that don't contain a specific belief in God (Eller 2007; Martin 2007), and for many other people, belief in God is largely absent from their idiosyncratic religious identities (McGuire 2008; Casebolt and Niekro 2005).” It was also noted an important feature among the respondents that was stipulated by Campbell, “there exists many “religiously sympathizing unbelievers” inside and outside churches and religious institutions who are raised in a religious culture, but who cannot make themselves believe (Campbell 1972:22), not all non-believers feel the same way toward religion, even though they are often cast as uniformly hostile and rejecting of religion in all of its forms, she noted. Among atheists, there exists a more complicated and nuanced spectrum of beliefs than a simple dichotomy between religious and irreligious (1972:25).

This thesis has been able to shed some lights also where the view of religion posits that Marx- (1965) defines ‘religion as the opium of the people, an exploitative invention, which works like a drug. This drug works to be clouds man’s rationality, thus, thwarting his reasoning ability- this was not found among the respondents. The questions about the religious and spirituality factors used by Lindholm and Astins’ gave additional views on religion among the adolescents, but this beclouding of their rationality was absent.

The majority of the students do not see the sacredness of life, and they researched the meaning of life without any religion and spiritual interference. Therefore, their independence from the god or gods, spiritual or religious institutions are clearly demonstrated. The method and questionnaire of Linholm and the Astins’ had helped to have an idea of the adolescent spirituality, I think such result could be compared using the quality method of “*recits de vie*” it would be just thrilled to be able to go further in the research and this would attenuate also the influence of the American in the literature review used.

The spirituality, or non-spirituality of the adolescent remains an interesting factor to work on. For future research, the following issues can be studied-what does affiliated to one’s religion mean for an adolescent? Why are religion and spirituality not important for life changing decision of the adolescent? What is the adolescent spiritual life in this post-modern? How is it illustrated?

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Annexes

- a) Details of factors measured.
- b) Questionnaire used.