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Religion and Ways of Belief and Existence of Two Generations of People: A Qualitative Investigation into the Braga District of Portugal

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Abstract: The present work aims to investigate the religious beliefs and ways of believing of two generations of people born in the decades of 1940–1950 and 1965–1975 in the Portuguese region of Braga. We assume that people from both generations share common experiences and values that connect them—experiences they have built in relation to specific life situations and through the bonds they have established with other generations. To carry out this research, we have used a qualitative methodology based on the techniques of Life Stories and Focus Groups. The results of our research show that the ways of believing and relating to the world of religion are quite common among people of the same generation, and substantially different between people of both generations. However, this difference does not necessarily manifest itself in a rupture or opposition between the members of these generations, but above all in the reworking of what they have received and experienced in the light of new experiences and new values.

Keywords: religion; generations; religious experiences; life stories; Focus Group; Portugal

1. Introduction

The purpose of this text is to describe and analyze the religious beliefs and ways of believing of two generations of people born in the decades of 1940–1950 and 1965–1975 in the Portuguese region of Braga. In this text, the two fundamental realities that articulate it, those linked to religion and generations, are put into relation throughout a temporal process in which these realities were transformed. Before presenting the results of this research, we will pay attention to the two key concepts that structure it: the religious and the generational.

1.1. Religion, Secularization, and New Expressions of Religiosity

From the point of view of religion, it can be said that since the last decades of the last century, particularly since the 1970s, there has been a change in perspective in studies on religion in the European context. Until then, interpretations linked to the secularization model were the dominant ones (Berger 1977; 2016, p. 46; Casanova 2012). These interpretations included the tradition of the sociology of religion linked to classical authors such as Durkheim and Weber, for whom the process of modernization of Western societies had led to the erosion of the universe of religion, either through the rationalization of the

different spheres of life, or the replacement of religious beliefs by others linked to the order of legitimization of modern societies (Davie 2011; Joas 2023).

However, as we said, since the 1970s, the paradigm of secularization has been increasingly called into question (Berger 2016; Casanova 2012), and the relationship that were established between modernization and secularization has been openly criticized, especially since the 1990s (Davie 2011, p. 85). From this moment on, indeed, the discussion of what was taken for granted began, namely, the path that European modernity had followed towards secularization, represented the model of this process (Berger 2016, p. 47). A process characterized by the emergence of different social spheres secularized and clearly separated from the religious sphere by the progressive and irreversible erosion of religious beliefs and practises, and by the displacement of religion to the private sphere (Casanova 2012, p. 23). Three phenomena which, taken together, would accompany the process of secularization of societies.

In recent years, the theory of secularization has been subjected to a profound examination that has shown that secularization processes are combined with new expressions of religiosity (Brown 2019; Cipriani 2017; De Graaf 2013; Iannaccone 1992; Höllinger and Muckenhuber 2019; Hungerman 2011; Stolz 2009, 2020; Stolz and Tanner 2017; Stolz et al. 2016, 2020; Storm 2017). For some authors, this means a decline of religion, which is not only seen in Europe but also in the United States (Inglehart 2021; Kasselstrand et al. 2023; Brauer 2018; Voas and Chaves 2016; Hout and Fischer 2014). However, it all depends on what is meant by religion, as this decline may be interpreted in one way or another. Moreover, secularization processes are sometimes combined with new forms of religiosity linked to the ethic of authenticity and democratic pluralism (Taylor 1994; 2015, vol. II).

From the very beginning, the secularization thesis presented several problems. One of them was precisely the attempt to convert the path towards secularization that European societies had followed into the model for all modern secularizing processes, which forced the North American case to be shown as an exception to the model, when it was, however, one of the most modernized societies (Davie 2011, pp. 85–86). The question that arose on both sides of the Atlantic was, therefore, who was the exception, Europe or the United States; an exception that in the case of Europe was even more striking, since the decline of religion had not only not been observed in the United States, but also in almost the entire rest of the world (Casanova 2012, 27 ff.).

However, what challenged the theory of secularization above all was that both in Europe, the most secularized part of the world, and in North America, new beliefs and forms of religiosity began to proliferate from the 1970s onwards (Bell 1977; Casanova 2012, 241 ff.), and that less institutionalized practises and modes of belief were also beginning to emerge within traditional religions (Davie 2015, 2024; Hervieu-Léger 2005).

All this was expressed in a pluralistic situation, which affected not only the religious sphere, but also other orders of existence (Berger 2016). In this context, religion became a less institutionalized experience and not taken for granted, as it was increasingly heterogeneous, individualistic, reflective, and optional (Berger 2016; Davie 2015, 2024). Which means that it was no longer part of an assumed destiny but was linked above all to a process of personal search that each person undertakes in their own way (Bell 1977, 151 ff.; Taylor 2015, vol. II, 304 ff.), without relying on a community of memory to which each generation entrusts the meaning of its existence (Hervieu-Léger 2005).

Nevertheless, all of this also generated increasingly more doubts, as each individual had to find and come to terms with their own certainties and insecurities, without the presence of a more or less solid tradition to rely on (Berger 2016, 125 ff.).

In short, rather than a decline in religious beliefs in modern societies, as was predicted by the secularization thesis, in recent decades, we have witnessed the proliferation of

different beliefs, in the context of a pluralistic, individualistic, optional, and reflexive situation, in which these beliefs are no longer taken for granted, but are understood as part of a voluntary and free decision that each individual must face in their own way.

In the current moment of modernity, there are, therefore, different expressions of belief that have their origin in the different aspects of modern culture, such as rationalism, expressivism, and individualism, which translate into a certain relativism, considering that each person has the right to choose their own path following their personal convictions, as respectable as those of others. Now, while at first, until the second half of the twentieth century, all these manifestations of modern consciousness were exclusive to the various social and cultural elites, from that moment on they also spread to other social groups (Taylor 2015, vol. II, 277 ff.).

All of this has led to the important question of what can be understood by religious beliefs. From this perspective, it was pointed out that beliefs cannot be understood solely from the content of the belief, but also through the way in which these beliefs are put into action through a certain practice (Hervieu-Léger 2005, 122 ff.). This is how they are also transmitted in different social contexts, not only through words, but also through gestures and behaviours, which end up shaping a certain way of being and of existing in the world, and also of judging the world, a particular habitus (Bourdieu 2006, 2007). These beliefs, thus formed, are what individuals continually update throughout their personal life journeys, in relation to their own experiences, in specific situations. The question about religious beliefs must therefore be focused not only on *what is believed*, that is, on the content of the belief, but also on *how it is believed*, since the latter modifies the meaning of the former (Berger 2016, pp. 69–70).

Seen from this perspective, the universe of religion has established a bridge between the sphere of transcendence and immanence, as Max Weber showed (Weber 1998, 527 ff.). This fact has characterized the so-called axial revolution, which began approximately 500 years before the Christian era with the emergence of Greek philosophy and the great universal religions (Bellah 2017, 337 ff.; Joas 2023, 300 ff.), and which was analyzed by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers (Jaspers 1965). All this created a tension between both spheres, which the different religions articulated in their own way (Weber 1998, 527 ff.).

However, this tension has been changing throughout modernity by virtue of the transformations experienced by the spheres of transcendence and immanence, since not only have new immanent frameworks emerged that were elevated to transcendent principles, but the relationship with the universe of transcendence was also modified, due to changes in the content of belief and in the way of believing; beliefs that are contemplated from the possibility of disbelief (Taylor 2015, vol. II, 93 ff. and 381 ff.).

These transformations that have occurred in the universe of religion can be observed in more detail when they are analyzed through generations, as proposed in the text now presented. The generational perspective offers both a diachronic and synchronic view of the phenomenon, and also allows it to be studied up close, observing the meaning that the subjects investigated give to their respective experiences in this area.

1.2. The Generational Perspective

From a generational perspective, we propose that the people investigated, born in the decades 1940–1950 and 1965–1975, present a series of common characteristics by virtue of the period in which they were born and lived. In the case of people born in the period 1940–1950, these common characteristics are linked to were born and raised in rural communities marked by a traditional agricultural economy, severe material hardships, and a strong religious presence in daily life. In the case of the 1965–1975 generation, these common characteristics are related to the fact that it was a bridge generation between the

previous and subsequent generations. The people of this generation were born and grew up in the period in which Portugal experienced the most important political changes, with the transition from dictatorship to democracy, as well as social and economic changes. So much so that the members of this generation consider themselves to be the children of April, in reference to the Portuguese Carnation Revolution, which marked the transition from dictatorship to democracy.

However, the fact of sharing the same birth period does not necessarily give rise to more or less similar ways of being and seeing the world. In other words, the objective situation that subjects have in the world, in this case marked by their date of birth, does not necessarily produce a series of similar experiences and attitudes with respect to the world. Something that can also be said of any other social phenomenon, as had already been shown by the classical theorists of generations, and, in particular, Karl Mannheim (Zeitlin 1997, 336 ff.). In the opinion of this last author, those who propose to analyze generations must in fact demonstrate, just as those who propose to study social classes, the relationship that exists between class position and class ties, because, although the first can create the circumstances that can favour the emergence of the latter, these circumstances cannot be considered as its cause (Mannheim 1993, pp. 207–8). In this way, Karl Mannheim distanced himself from both the positivist explanations, which were fundamentally attached to objective reality, and the romantic ones, which focused above all on the most spiritual and subjective aspects. In this way, Mannheim showed that in order to understand the phenomenon of the generations it was necessary to account for these two dimensions, the most objective and the most subjective (Mannheim 1993, 336 ff.).

This fact has, however, been little problematized by Marxist theories of classes, and also from perspectives such as Bourdieu's, which make classes the main explanatory variable (Bourdieu 2006, 2007; Bourdieu and Passeron 2001), questioning other possible explanations such as those based on generations (Bourdieu 1993, 2008), as some of his critics have pointed out (Alexander 2000).

The research presented below aims to show that people born in the decades 1940–1950 and 1965–1975 in the Portuguese region of Braga have religious beliefs and ways of believing linked to their generational belonging. And this belonging should not be understood structurally, that is, in relation to certain objective situations that would act as causes and would be defined by being born at the same time and place, but rather based on the actions that individuals undertake in these situations, through which they shape their own experiences and perceptions of the world each time they confront these situations. This perspective is in line with the theory of action proposed by authors such as Han Joas (Joas 2013, pp. 214–15; 2023, p. 431). In the words Joas's, "our perception of the world appears structured by our capacity for action (. . .). Our experience when perceiving reality is not a subjective dressing of reality, but reality par excellence (. . .). Intentions, motives, values, no longer appear as components of an inner world that can only influence the outside world through one's own act of decision. Perception and knowledge are conceived rather as phases of acting through which it is conducted and redirected in situational contexts" (Joas 2013, p. 215).

All this reality is also conditioned by the relationship established by the subjects of the different generations. Because no one begins to live from scratch, but from the inherited inheritance. With each generation there is, therefore, an encounter between what was transmitted by the previous generation and what was experienced and lived by those who receive said transmissions in their respective social contexts. All of which gives rise to the emergence of new social and cultural phenomena, opening up new horizons for the future (Arendt 2003; Mannheim 1993, pp. 212–13).

In what follows, we will show the methodology we have used in this research, and the results we have reached, which we will discuss later.

2. Materials and Methods

This research was carried out using a qualitative methodology based on the techniques of Focus Group (FG) and Life Stories (LS). The reason for this choice is related to our research objective, which was to know the meaning that the subjects gave to their respective life experiences in certain situational contexts. Something that would not be possible to obtain using quantitative methods and techniques, since these only allow the interpretation of the experiences of the subjects from their insertion in certain structural contexts, so that each experience is relevant in relation to said structures (Collins 2009, p. 349). However, what is thus left unexplained is how subjects experience their lives under these structural conditions, attributing a certain meaning to these experiences.

We have used the qualitative techniques of *LS* and *FG* for the following reason. In the case of *LS*, people from both generations accumulate a broad life experience that can only be understood when it is narrated. Through these narratives, they project the meaning of these experiences from the present to the past, interpreting who they are based on what they have become. We have complemented this technique with that of the *FG* because the dialogue that is established between the people in the group can give rise to discourses that may not appear in the *LS*. Therefore, 14 *LS* were carried out, 8 for the first generation and 6 for the second, and 2 *FG*, 1 for each generation. The interviewees were selected in the Portuguese area of Braga through personal contacts. They did not know each other. The higher number of Life Stories in the first generation compared to the second can be attributed to the fact that the second generation reached a level of saturation more quickly, as the most relevant aspects common to said generational lifeworld, related to the objectives of our research, were identified sooner.

Both *LS* and *FG* were structured based on *gender* and *social class*, according to class studies carried out regarding these two generational periods (Cabral 1998; Ramos 2014). Gender is important because women have been the most important agents of socialization, also in the religious sphere (Ramos 2014; Costa et al. 2000). Many of the women of this generation have had to combine their work life and domestic life due to the absence of men during the colonial wars (Ramos 2014; Costa et al. 2000). Social class was structured for each generation, taking into account the *class of origin* and the *class of destination* (Cabral 1998; Ramos 2014). We have opted for a "convenience sample", which allowed us to choose the interviewees according to the objectives of our study.

Generation 1940–1950, *class of origin*, lower and lower-middle, and of *destination*, lower-middle and middle. We have conducted eight *LS*, four with women and four with men, and one FG with three men and three women. All the people of this generation that we interviewed were retired. *FG*: Class of origin: all of low and lower-middle class origin; class of destination: four lower-middle class and two middle class. One male employee of a textile company, secondary school; one *man, Technical Engineer, secondary school teacher; one man, small businessman, primary school; one woman, textile factory employee, primary school; one woman, primary school teacher, higher education; one woman, shop worker, primary school.* We have conducted eight Life Stories, all of them with men and women from lower and lower-middle class of origin. Destination class: middle class men, two lower-middle class men. *Occupation and education*: one *woman, primary school teacher, higher education; one woman, driving school administrator, primary school, one woman, school janitor, primary school; one woman, housewife, primary school; one man, Technical Engineer, secondary school teacher, higher education; one man, primary school teacher, higher education; one man, small businessman, primary school; one man, typographer, primary school.*

Generation 1965–1975, *class of origin*, low, lower-middle, and middle, and of *destination*, lower-middle and middle. The social class was established considering the level of education and the type of work. The *FG* was composed of two males and two females. Males, lower-middle class origin, middle class destination. Women, lower-middle class of origin; class of destination, one lower-middle class, one middle class. *One man, bank employee, secondary school; one man, employee of a car factory, engineer, higher education; one woman, psychologist at a university institute of education, higher education; one woman, cooperative worker, primary school*.

We also conducted six Life Stories. Class of origin: one man upper-middle class; two men and three women lower-middle class. Class destination: one upper-middle class male and two middle class men; two lower-middle class women and one middle class woman. *Occupation and education*: *one man, business consultant and advisor, higher education; one man, nurse, higher education; one man, textile factory worker, primary school; one woman, secondary school teacher, higher education; one woman, maintenance assistant, secondary school; one woman nurse, higher education*.

Fieldwork was carried out in Braga between October 2021 and March 2022. In order to carry out the research, the consent of the interviewees was requested, explaining to them the purpose of the research and its anonymous nature. In Portugal, it is not necessary to request ethical consent from any institution.

The interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded by the two authors of the paper. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed according to the codes linked to the analytical framework of the research.

We have chosen the area of Braga to carry out this research because it presents a series of common economic, social, and cultural characteristics, which allowed us to analyze the generational changes that occurred throughout the generations under investigation. The historical changes that took place there in the lifetime of the interviewees involved a shift from a traditional peasant society to a modern, industrial one, and from an authoritarian to a democratic political system. These changes were more profound in the north of Portugal, where the region of Braga is located.

3. Results

Portugal has been one of the countries in Europe with the highest levels of religiosity. However, in recent decades, there has been a decline in this religiosity, both in terms of religious practises, which have declined, and in terms of beliefs, which have become more individualistic and pluralistic (Duque 2007, 2014, 2022; Coutinho 2020). The two generations on which this research focuses are a clear example of these transformations, as we will show below.

3.1. The Religiosity of People of the 1940–1950 Generation

3.1.1. The Generational Frame

People born in the 1940s and 1950s in the Portuguese region of Braga grew up in their childhood and early youth within traditional farming communities. Later, already in their second youth, they experienced processes of social mobility linked to the economic modernization that Portugal experienced, especially from the 1970s onwards (Cabral 1998). A mobility favoured by mostly humble social origins (Ramos 2014; Costa et al. 2000). A large proportion of these people lack academic qualifications, as 70% have only completed the first cycle of basic education (Ramos 2014).

Members of this generation experienced, in their adult years, the important political and social changes that occurred in Portugal as a result of the Carnation Revolution of April 1974, which marked the transition from dictatorship to democracy. In this situation,

they had to face new experiences, which posed important challenges for them, as well as the relationship with members of the next generation, who had lived all or almost all their lives in democracy.

3.1.2. Belief and Belonging

Most people of this generation spent their childhood and early youth in traditional farming communities, a characteristic also shared by the people we interviewed. This fact has marked from the beginning their forms of religiosity, closely linked to the parish communities in which they grew up, and in which religion was present in the various scenarios of community life. "From a religious point of view", says one of these people, "we did what everyone else did, we went to mass, we made our first communion, our profession of faith, our confirmation, everything within the rules" (LS: *woman, two children, retired school janitor, with primary education. Lower class social origin*). In this type of religiosity, belief could not be understood without practice and practice without belief (Taylor 2015, vol. II, 231 ff.). "Being Catholic or not being Catholic meant nothing to me", comments one of these people, "What it meant to me were the doctrines that were practised at that time. At my mother's house, it was praying the rosary (...). At night, when we were going to bed, my mother would have us pray the rosary ... it was something that she instilled in us (...). Before, it was not like today, there was a church that I went to, because my mother forced us to" (LS: *retired small businessman. Four children, primary education. Lower class social background*). "There was religious practice in my house", another person says. "My mother went to Mass a lot. Every month she went to the *Sacred family* because she went around the parish from house to house; she stayed 24 h in each house, where each neighbour would host her, then pass her on to another neighbour, and so on", and adds, "we are Catholics, so it is important to attend mass frequently, I think it is good for our minds and makes us meditate" (LS: *woman with two children. Primary education, retired secretary and typist from a driving school. Social origin lower class*).

In these forms of parish community religiosity, alongside the most sacred and serious rituals, other expressions of the most joyful and festive religiosity appear, characteristic of pre-industrial societies, in which religion integrates both dimensions of life (Taylor 2015, vol. II, 235 ff.). This is how some of the people we interviewed remember it. "From childhood", one of them tells, "my parents, especially my mother, took us to pray the rosary on Sunday afternoons ... My mother always took us to church to participate in the celebrations, not only in mass, there was also the Christmas novena at that time. I thought it was fun because it was at night and there were many people participating in the celebration. I remember one year when a group of people from the village organized a small orchestra with a violin, violas and so on; they sang and played. Religion is not a dry thing, it also has a lot of feeling, I think. That participation of people with the accompaniment of music at a party. At Christmas, that also encouraged people to be present and participate" (LS: *male, three daughters, retired primary school teacher. Lower class social background*). "In my youth", says another person, "we young people would gather on Sundays to go and pray the rosary at church, and when it was over we would all gather there in the church atrium and have a party. We would make a circle, sing, jump, dance" (LS: *woman, two children, retired school janitor, with primary education. Lower class social origin*).

In this type of religiosity, belief and practice were, as shown, closely linked to parish community life, both in its most sacred and serious ritual manifestations and in its more festive and joyful ones. Religious beliefs could not be separated from the ways of believing of these people. Religion was not, therefore, a mere question of individual faith, but also a way of living and understanding life in all its aspects. It acted as a powerful means of social integration, since those who did not participate in any of these expressions of

normatively established religiosity were moving away from the traditions of community life, and therefore also risked losing the respect of the members of their community (Taylor 2015, vol. II, pp. 260–61).

Religion thus referred to a true community of memory, in which the members of said community were recognized each time they participated in the different expressions of this religiosity. In this way, it gave continuity to the world, reinforcing the sense of values that governed that community (Hervieu-Léger 2005, 217 ff.). From this point of view, religion was as alienating as it was an antidote to anomy; on the one hand, it made individuals feel part of an order that transcended them and that they did not question, and, on the other, it provided them with the confidence and security that things continued to be as they were, and that was how they had to continue being (Berger 1977, 42 ff.).

To be part of this community order and thus be worthy of some kind of recognition, it was necessary to comply with a series of values that had a clear religious meaning. These values, to which our informants refer again and again, are those of *honesty* and *integrity*, *respect*, *solidarity*, *justice*, *responsibility*, and *work*. All of them were linked to the fulfilment of a series of duties. This whole set of values, associated with different duties, reinforced the meaning of religious beliefs, which at the same time acted as the foundation of said values. From this perspective, religion permeated individual and collective life, giving it a certain meaning. There is no option for disbelief (Taylor 2014, vol. I) because not believing means renouncing the whole meaning of existence that these beliefs have given rise to, thereby also cutting oneself off from community life. Not believing means, in short, being outside the world.

3.1.3. Religion and Values

Let us see, then, how the people we interviewed express the meaning of these values. "My education was catholic", says one of them. "My mother was more of a mass-goer, but I only went on weekends, although I helped with the parish, without being constantly involved in the church. They gave me the idea of God, of the commandments, of duties, of respect for people" (LS: *man with two daughters, Technical Engineer; retired secondary school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class, small agricultural owners with some day labourers in their charge*). "The values that I have transmitted to my children, associated with religious practice, are there", another person comments, "the values of honesty, of respect, that no one is more than anyone else, although recognizing one's own merit" (LS: *woman with two children, retired primary school teacher; social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural landowners*). "That's what I have", another person tells us, "I'm proud of that, of having been hard-working, serious, honest and of helping others" (LS: *woman with six children. Primary education not completed. Worked in suitcase factory. Widow. Social origin, lower class*). "My daughters", comments another of the people interviewed, "retain many of the values that we passed on to them, especially because they are honest people, they are ashamed, those things that are not judged now" (FG: *man with two daughters, Technical Engineer; retired secondary school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class, small agricultural owners with some day labourers in their charge*). "It was passed on to me in my family", says another person, "the sense of honesty" (LS: *woman with two children, retired primary school teacher; social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural landowners*). "My mother told me", comments another of our informants, "to pay attention, to be respectful in order to be respected (...). And I also passed on that to my children (...). I walk down the street, I am respected, I stop with people and people stop with me. Why, for a dignified behaviour" (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*). "If my father knew that we had disrespected someone", says another of our informants, "we were in a very bad position" (LS: *retired primary school teacher, three daughters. Social origin, lower*

class). "Before society", another person says, "we have the obligation to defend a name, to respect and to be respected". And for that, he tells us, we had to "go to funerals, visit the sick" (LS: *man with two daughters, Technical Engineer; retired secondary school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural owners with some day labourers in their charge*). And another person says, "in my house, unfortunately, we had almost nothing . . . there were values, respect" (LS: *retired small businessman. Four children. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*).

One of the areas in which all these values made sense, with a religious meaning as well, was that of work, which was thus understood as an activity whose meaning went far beyond its particular material conditions, and its consideration as a simple means of living. Without ceasing to be that, because no one, except for that small group of people who occupied privileged social positions, could consider a life outside of work (Ramos 2018). On the one hand, work was a destiny, "it was", as one of the people interviewed says, "our daily bread, it was what we intended" (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*). There was no other option. "I did it", another person comments, "because I had to do it, I didn't think . . . it was really hard for me to get up at 5 in the morning, sometimes at 4:30 to go in at 6. When Sunday night came, it was a source of anxiety, because at that time, people worked from Monday to Saturday, every day, 8 h . . . It had to be done. There was no other solution. You had to go and nothing else. With or without cost, it had to be done. There was no other way" (LS: *woman with primary education. Two children. Retired school janitor. Social origin, lower class*). Work was therefore a social destiny, also for women, in a society, such as the Portuguese one in the 1960s, in which men were often absent due to colonial wars (Ramos 2014, 2018). But this fate was accepted, as previously mentioned, for many more reasons beyond those arising from material needs alone, though those needs were still present. Who can, in fact, bear the burden of daily work if they see no other meaning in this activity than that of their own misfortune? You have to work, yes, but in work, this double condition is present, with a deeply religious meaning. On the one hand, in fact, there is the guilt of a sin that all human beings have inherited, and which can only be redeemed through work. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat", says Saint Paul in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians (II, Thessalonians 3:10). "It was that culture", one of our informants tells us, "that we have to work, that we must work. In this world we have to work. Those who don't work don't eat. It was this idea. We have to work. It was this" (LS: *woman, two children, retired school janitor, primary education. Social origin, lower class*). But, on the other hand, those who work in this way also achieve a greater virtue, and one of these virtues is that of being useful to society. Something that some of the people interviewed say they have acquired by participating in organizations such as *Acción católica*. "In the Acción católica", comments one of these people, "I began to develop, to gain knowledge of various things, and to understand that, in fact, we human beings have value, and that work is an important thing for the development of society (. . .). Today I understand that our work must be seen as an aid to social development. All jobs have to be seen from this point of view. I try to pass this on to my children; when they complain about their job, I tell them, try to think about how you contribute to the development of society, it may not be the best job, but it is the one you can help with" (LS: *woman with primary education. Two children. Retired school janitor. Social origin, lower class*). This sense of work linked to social utility also appears in the story of another of the people interviewed: "I was taught to appreciate the value of my work, which allowed me to clothe children who were poor, and I worked so hard throughout my life that I could clothe an entire nation" (FG: *woman, retired textile industry worker, with primary education. Social origin, lower class*). Work is therefore virtuous if it is carried out in relation to one of the main values that constitute the foundation of community life, including those of *honesty, integrity,*

and *solidarity*, which were acquired from a very early age in the family. "My father told us", another person comments, "that any job was worthy if it was performed honestly" (LS: *woman with two children, retired primary school teacher; social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural landowners*). "The most important thing my parents taught me", another person says, making a firm gesture with her hand, "The most important thing my parents taught me was to be hard-working, serious, honest, and to work and not just watch . . . and to help others . . . that was what I taught my children, and it was what I did in my work" (LS: *woman with six children. Primary education not completed. Worked in suitcase factory. Widow. Social origin, lower class*).

Those who fulfil the duties associated with the values mentioned above are considered worthy people, who are ashamed. "I thank God. I walk the streets, I am respected, I stop with people and people stop with me", one of the people interviewed recounts (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*). In this way, one can consider oneself as worthy as others, if one complies with the values, expressed in different duties, sanctioned by the community. "We are all equal when we fulfil our duties and obligations", another person tells us (FG: *woman with primary education. Two children. Retired school janitor. Social origin, lower class*). Now, this idea of equality is compatible with the acceptance of a certain natural hierarchical order, inherent to community life. As one of the people interviewed says, "everyone should have their point of respect. It's nice, but be careful", he warns, "people are not all the same, they have to know who they are talking to" (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*). This sense of respect has little to do, therefore, with the awareness of a universal human dignity in which all people would participate equally, but with the existence of a community normative order, also sanctioned by religion, which precedes and transcends the subjects themselves, and which they must respect in order to be considered equally worthy as others (Taylor 2015, vol. II, pp. 260–61).

In this context, people do not perceive themselves, therefore, as the main agents of the world in which they live, but as beings who must adapt to the order of a world that precedes them, with its respective values, full of religious meaning. These values act, therefore, as realms of transcendence that connect subjects to a higher, stable time, that of tradition sanctioned by religion (Taylor 2015, vol. II, pp. 255–56). As one of the people interviewed says, "we lived looking towards the past as if it were something continuous, that was repeated . . . The present was like the past and the future, more or less everything like that" (LS: *man with two daughters, Technical Engineer; retired secondary school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural owners with some day labourers in their charge*).

Only in this way, by referring the meaning of existence to a horizon of significance, linked to the aforementioned values, which transcends the subjects themselves, can they find greater meaning in their own lives; they can know who they are, because they also know how they have become what they are. In other words, they are reasonably sure of their identity, by referring it to a certain narrative linked to the aforementioned values that give meaning to their respective biographies (Taylor 1996, 42 ff.). "This is what I have", comments one of our informants, "I'm proud of that", of having been hardworking, "serious, honest and helpful to others" (LS: *woman with six children. Primary education not completed. Worked in suitcase factory. Widow. Social origin, lower class*). "I walk through the streets", says another person, "I am respected, I stop with people and people stop with me. Why, for a dignified behaviour, which is what I have received" (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*).

However, when this horizon of meaning that guides part of the meaning of the existence of these people, projecting them beyond themselves, is missing, they feel somewhat helpless. "I lived always thinking of others", another of the people interviewed tells us,

"and that's why now it's hard for me to live thinking only about myself" (LS: *woman with two children, retired primary school teacher; social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural landowners*). The religiosity of these people makes them see that there is someone beyond themselves, and above themselves, to whom they can turn in case of need. They need to know that they are dependent in order to trust in themselves; dependent on a religious and moral order whose authority they must respect. The faith they manifest is the expression of all this. "Religion binds us together", comments one of these people, "Without a doubt, it binds each one of us. I myself have faith in myself, why? The following happens, faith has to have someone, I have to have someone who is superior, who I feel is superior" (LS: *retired small businessman. Four children; primary education. Social origin, lower class*).

This form of religiosity, which establishes a certain relationship between the spheres of the transcendent and the immanent, articulates the tensions that have arisen throughout the lives of these people, giving them greater security and confidence to confront them. As one of them says, "we feel protected. We go to church and come back more relieved. We talk to God (...). Sometimes I go into a church, sit down and pray a little, and it seems that I come out more relieved. I go to vent to God" (LS: *woman with two children. Primary education, retired secretary and typist at a driving school. Social origin, lower class*). "Careful", warns another person, "with God everything, without God nothing. We prayed the prayers before going to bed. So that the next day He would help us, protect us and accompany us" (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*). What gave her the strength to endure everything that happened to her in life, we asked another of the people interviewed, "I don't know how I even had the strength to continue", she tells us, "but with God and with Our Lady of Fatima everything is done (...). She gave me patience to bear all that suffering, and she was my protector" (LS: *woman with six children. Primary education not completed. Worked in suitcase factory. Widow. Social origin, lower class*). And another person wonders, "why do I have faith? Why do I want to be religious? Because that is how I seek my faith. And then this happens . . . I have all kinds of problems, but I have faith that God is going to help me" (LS: *retired small businessman. Four children, primary education. Social origin, lower class*). "Since I became a widow", another person says, "I have always remembered the idea that God closes a door, but opens a window (...). There is that prayer that says, "Lord, help us to accept what we cannot change and to change what we can, and give us intelligence to know how to discern". I trust a lot in this prayer, which has helped me overcome difficulties . . ." (LS: *woman with primary education. Two children. Retired school janitor. Social origin, lower class*).

This close relationship between the universe of values and that of religion, between belief and religious practice, linked to forms of community religiosity, begins to break down in the next generation, something that the people we interviewed particularly regret. "This youth", one of these people tells us, "it is a little far from the church, because now there are many things, now there is internet. And my children too, good children, good education, but when it comes to going to mass they are a little bit out of the way" (LS: *woman with six children. Primary education not completed. Worked in suitcase factory. Widow. Social origin, lower class*). "When they were younger", another person comments, "my children used to go to church with me, but then they started to stray a little, but they are Catholic. They have a slightly deviant religious practice, why, because, I don't know, to be honest, I don't know . . . but I always advise them, hey, I'm going to mass, I hope to find you there, and sometimes I find them and other times I don't; and then, because they are distracted, I tell them it can't be like that, my friend, in this matter it can't be like that. And then, a little upset, they end up going" (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*). "My daughters", another person tells, "did not follow my religious teachings either, one of them does not go to mass, although she continued going until she

was 20, and the oldest began to form part of the Shalom movement, which another of my daughters later joined. At that time, I didn't even know what that was, and my daughters even laughed at me" (LS: *male, three daughters, retired primary school teacher. Social origin, lower class*). "My children", another person says, "say that they have other chores and that is why they do not go to mass on Sunday" (LS: *woman with two children. Primary education, retired secretary and typist at a driving school. Social origin, lower class*).

However, concern grows when it is feared that by abandoning religious practice, the values associated with it will also be abandoned. It is indeed possible to accept, albeit with regret, that children stop going to church, but what cannot be accepted is that they abandon the values that their parents have transmitted to them, and that give meaning to their existence, because, if this happens, it is as if the world of these people falls apart. "One day I told my oldest son", one of them tells us, "I find it very hard that you have left religious practice, but it would hurt me even more if you left the values that we have passed on to you, respect, integrity, honesty, fulfilling one's duty" (LS: *woman with two children, retired primary school teacher; social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural landowners*). "The advice my parents gave me, I want to pass on to my children", another of the people mentioned above tells us. And what does he tell them, we ask him. "We continue with the same Christian spirit", he answers. "Be careful, with God everything, without God nothing (. . .). Pay attention to what I am telling you. Sometimes they get a little upset. Be careful, I told them, these are serious things, and they stay a little upset, because today what they hear sometimes goes a little off track, because older people do not give good advice these days either" (LS: *male, three children. Retired typographer. Primary education. Social origin, lower class*).

For the children of these people, religion no longer has the same meaning as it had for their parents, and so they gradually abandon religious practice. And although their parents accept this reality with some sadness, what they cannot accept in any way is that their children renounce the main values that they have transmitted to them. However, it is difficult to know how they can maintain what was once part of a whole, the values linked to those beliefs without practice. This is the paradox that is presented, precisely, to one of our informants, "my daughters, he says, have almost all the values I have taught them. However, although they continue with the religious values transmitted, they have more doubts than I do, especially in religious practice" (LS: *man with two daughters, Technical Engineer, retired secondary school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class; small agricultural owners with some day labourers in their charge*). They doubt because they no longer believe in the same way as their parents, as will be seen in the next section.

3.2. Beliefs and Ways of Believing of 1965–1975 Generation

3.2.1. The Bridging Generation

People born in the decade 1965–1975 in the Portuguese region of Braga grew up in a context characterized by the profound political, economic, and social changes that occurred in that country after the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974. The country went, in effect, from dictatorship to democracy in a short period of time, experiencing profound economic and social transformations. Jobs in the industrial and service sectors grew, while those in the agricultural sector decreased. Female employment also increased, although this phenomenon had already begun earlier, in the 1960s, due to the presence of men in the colonial wars (Ramos 2014). As a result of all this, the urban population increased considerably, as did the school population, both at compulsory and post-compulsory levels (Ramos 2018, 2014). As a result of all these processes, a significant portion of people in this generation experienced trajectories of social mobility (Ramos 2014; Estanque and Mendes 1999; Cabral 1998; Barreto 1995). However, if any event particularly marked the people of

this generation, it was undoubtedly the transition from dictatorship to democracy. "We are considered the children of April", says one of the people we interviewed, referring to the Carnation Revolution of April 1974 (LS: *woman, two daughters, high school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop; mother a farmer, both with primary education*).

As a consequence of all the processes described above, Portuguese society moved from a more closed and homogeneous parish community to a more open and plural urban world; from a dictatorship to a democratic political system, which naturalized the values of equality, freedom, pluralism, and tolerance; from a short schooling to a much longer one, which enabled experiences of freedom, diversity, and autonomy, while also promoting a more rationalist and scientific interpretation of reality, especially among those who pursued university studies. And it also meant the emergence of new lifestyles linked to the world of consumption, which also favoured attitudes and values more inclined to freedom, independence, autonomy, and authenticity (Frank 2011; Bauman 2010; Baudrillard 2009; Lipovestky 2007; Chaney 2003; Featherstone 2000).

People of this generation grew up in the midst of all these changes, which meant the transition from a traditional society to a modern one. However, all this did not mean that they completely renounced the inherited tradition; rather, they interpreted it through the values of a modernity in which they saw themselves as the protagonists. It can be considered, therefore, that these people are part of a bridge generation as they have not lost the memory of the traditional world in which they were raised in their early years, later welcoming with great enthusiasm the modernity that began in Portugal after the Carnation Revolution.

This is how these people have experienced the situation they have had to live through, creating certain images of the world, a certain shared imaginary (Carretero Pasín 2006; Taylor 2006, 37 ff.), which is expressed in a particular way of being and relating to the world, and also in the way of relating and interpreting these experiences. This imaginary is the living image of a reality that is composed and recomposed based on how these people experience it in their particular life situations.

The identity that was thus formed has not necessarily led, however, to an awareness of a certain generational belonging, although this awareness sometimes emerges, but rather to a sense that one is part of a world, one of whose expressions are the forms of religiosity. A world that has not completely detached itself from the previous one, wanting to embrace the next one.

3.2.2. Religious Experiences, Life Trajectories, and Expressions of Belief

On the one hand, in fact, people of this generation were socialized in their early years in traditional communities in which religion was a reality taken for granted, and in which religious transmissions took place in the different spheres of coexistence, through different actions, words, and images. Initially, these transmissions occurred within the family, especially through mothers. "I was raised in the Catholic religion", says one of our informants, "we went to mass with my mother on Sunday, I went to confession, I went to all the Easter ceremonies" (LS: *woman, single without children. Maintenance assistant. Secondary education. Social origin, lower-middle class. Father works in a bar with unfinished primary education; mother, housekeeper with unfinished primary education*). "I feel like a religious person", says another person, "I was told that religion was important, and it always accompanied my life path; I went to catechism, to mass" (LS: *married man with two children. Nurse. Social background, lower-middle class. Father a businessman, mother a domestic worker*). "I was raised in the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church", another person comments, "Therefore, I am a practicing Catholic and a convinced believer. My grandparents, both paternal and

maternal, were practicing, convinced Catholics. My parents too" (LS: *man, married with one daughter. Graduate in International Relations. Business consultant and advisor. Social origin, upper-middle class. Father, secondary school teacher; mother, primary school teacher, was a member of parliament*). "During meals", another person tells, "we thanked God for the food he gave us. That was the religious aspect" (LS: *woman, married with two children. High school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer, both with unfinished primary education*).

This first religious socialization within the family is later prolonged, in the case of several of the people we interviewed, in the school environment, especially when it comes to religious schools. "My brothers and I", comments one of these people, "went to a religious school in Lisbon where we were taught religious principles" (FG: *woman, one daughter, divorced. Cooperative worker, primary education. Social origin, lower class.*). "I studied at a Teresian school, where I had a religious education and practice", comments another person (FG: *woman, two daughters, divorced. Psychologist at a university institute of education. Social origin, lower-middle class*). "The religious school I went to was also a good example for me", another person says (FG: *man, two daughters, retired bank employee, unfinished university studies. Social origin, lower class*).

These first religious experiences, acquired in the early stages of the lives of these people in traditional communities, will be reinterpreted later, by virtue of later experiences, in the situation created by the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974, in a democratic, modern, and urban context. In this situation, religious beliefs will take on a more individualistic, optional, and reflexive character as they become increasingly separated from the religious practises to which they were previously linked. "I was raised in the Catholic religion", says one of the people we spoke to, "we went to mass on Sunday, I went to confession, all the Easter ceremonies, but now I don't go to confession anymore, I don't participate in Easter like that (. . .). Until I was a teenager I went to mass with my mother; later, maybe when I was 16, I stopped going to catechism, then I did the conformation and so on. Afterwards . . . it was different, I went to university, and little by little I stopped going so many times (. . .). It doesn't mean that I don't believe, that I don't have my beliefs, but I don't do certain things, like when I was Little" (LS: *female, single, no children. Social origin, lower-middle class. Maintenance assistant. Unfinished university studies. Father works in a bar with unfinished primary studies; mother does housework with unfinished primary studies*).

This way of understanding religion, in a more personal, spiritual, and reflective sense, is even more evident in people with university studies: "I, when I talk about religion it is religion versus spirituality . . . The one who impacted me most deeply was a priest who was a friend of my father . . . I learned a lot from that man, he gave me so much reading that it made me reflect and think, he made me open horizons, walking through the village, watering the garden, pulling onions while we talked. It was an almost Socratic thing, in movement and not within four walls . . . He told me that to meditate and pray it was not necessary to have a temple, but rather an inner disposition, to be at peace with oneself and to orient oneself towards the divine. Rituals are not absolutely central and essential to what is important, which is the ability to observe ourselves. Silence, the meditative, contemplative dimension, is the most fundamental . . . we can even walk autonomously, even if we are not alone . . . This may be religion, but it may not be exactly that" (FG: *woman, two daughters, divorced. Social origin, lower-middle class. Psychologist at a university institute of education*). This way of understanding religion is also manifested in this other testimony, in which, while showing that a traditional Catholic education was received, it is also stated that one has discovered faith by following one's own path. "I was raised in the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church . . . But I also discovered it for myself. Obviously we realize that we are in the bosom of a family that helps us answer some questions, but our own discovery

of God and religion is also very important" (LS: *man, married with one daughter. Graduate in International Relations. Business consultant and advisor. Social origin, upper-middle class. Father, secondary school teacher; mother, primary school teacher, was a member of parliament*). Another of the people interviewed expressed the same opinion. "In religious terms", comments, "I don't think anyone can do it for us, we have to do it for ourselves . . . I studied theology on my own, I studied the history of religions. I always did all that on my own (. . .). What matters is that the human being is good by nature, being religious or believing in God or something else is the next step, it is a step that each one has to take for himself. From there it is a climb up the stairs" (LS: *man, two daughters, retired bank employee, unfinished university studies. Social origin, lower class*).

3.2.3. Religious Beliefs and Democratic Values

As can be seen, these people perceive their inherited beliefs, which are still very present in their minds, based on the image provided by the value system of democratic modernity, related to pluralism, autonomy, and freedom. This is how they have reworked said beliefs, without breaking with them. We asked one of these people what is left of what their parents transmitted to them in the religious field: "It remained- she tells us- to be open to any opinion, to any orientation. Freedom, not libertinism. The freedom to think, to be, to dress and to exist". And at another point in the conversation, she comments, "An atheist must be respected; someone who has committed suicide must be respected. No one should be condemned. But I am a daughter of April, that is not the case" (LS: *woman, married with two children. High school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer, both with unfinished primary education*).

However, as we said, the faith received is still present. "I listen and respect that they have decided to remove the crucifixes from the school, because it is public and secular, and that is good", the previous person tells us, "But in my chest, inside me, there prevails an unconditional love, an enormous gratitude to God" (LS: *woman, married with two children. High school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer, both with unfinished primary education*). Precisely because she understands her faith in a personal, intimate, and private way, that is, as an individual matter, this person can make her religious faith compatible with the secular democratic values, that she also shares. However, her religious faith remains very important to her, because it has been with her since her earliest years, albeit in a new way. Therefore, although she understands that God is not present in the public sphere, her life was meaningless without his presence.

Nevertheless, this faith is no longer expressed in the same way, but rather through the values of democratic pluralism, in a more open and flexible sense. One believes in something that goes beyond oneself, that transcends the self, that is projected into this transcendence, but it is something that is no longer as defined or homogeneous as it was for people of the previous generation. It is not a faith that is so communally ritualized but is rather understood as a much more personal and direct experience. "I say love to the other, and I am not afraid of words- Love for the other is the love of art in a global way . . . Not as an aesthetic current, of course, but as a human concept. I mean that the human prevails to the detriment of any religion, sexual orientation, political ideology, colour, race, etc. . . ." (LS: *woman, married with two children. Social origin, lower-middle class. High school teacher. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer, both with unfinished primary education*). From this more humanistic and spiritual perspective, another of the people interviewed interprets what her grandmother told her: "She", she tells us, "brought food every day to a family with many needs that lived in the upper part of the village. This notion that we are all for each other, left its mark on me. This spiritual dimension of caring for others" (FG: *woman, two daughters, divorced. Psychologist at a university institute*

of education. Social origin, lower-middle class). What for her grandmother was probably an attitude and behaviour related to parish community life, which was taken for granted, is interpreted by her granddaughter in a more reflective, spiritualist, and humanist language.

This humanism, linked to the values of love and solidarity, is an heir to the modern illustrated and romantic imagination, which believes in an assumed universal human goodness that would spontaneously emerge if human beings were freed from all social constraints that bind them (Taylor 2015, vol. II, p. 183).

These beliefs, despite their undefinition, provide the people we have interviewed with a confidence that they might not otherwise have. "I don't know if this is religion, meditation, spirituality", comments one of them, "but this spiritual religious dimension gives me immense tranquillity and peace" (FG: *woman, two daughters, divorced. Psychologist at a university institute of education. Social origin, lower-middle class*). "It gives me certainty", says another person, "that (let's call it spirituality, not religion), that chance does not exist, that there are no coincidences (. . .). There are people who say that when you have a faith, a religion, a belief, a philosophy, it is easier to accept death, for example, it seems that the correct word is death, although I did not manage to say it, but oh well. It is easier to face problems" (LS: *woman, married with two children. High school teacher. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer, both with unfinished primary education*).

However, this confidence is not free from uncertainties because when religious beliefs, which in the previous generation were linked to the community parish world, cease to be something taken for granted, to be conceived in a more individualistic, elective, and reflective way, the certainties that one might have are subjected to a permanent examination not free of contradictions. How to integrate, in effect, the faith in which one wants to anchor oneself, with the search for certainties that question the trust that seemed to have been achieved. "I have always needed to know more", says one of the people interviewed, "and in 1993 I went to Israel to find out a little more about what I had begun to believe in, and I think I left there more confused than I went" (FG: *man, two daughters, retired bank employee, unfinished university studies. Social origin, lower class*). At other times, it is life's own setbacks that shake that confidence, and then one wonders about the meaning of one's beliefs. "Because there are moments of anger, of nonconformity, of direct questioning", another person tells us, "Why are you doing this to me, are you doing this to make me grow as a person, to make me better as a person, or are you doing this to me because you want to test me?" (LS: *woman, married with two children. High school teacher. Lower-middle class. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer, both with unfinished primary education*).

When beliefs are separated from the moral universe, linked to a certain tradition, which reinforced the sense of religiosity of people of the previous generation, it is also increasingly difficult to affirm them and at the same time see them as one option among others, without falling into relativism. How to proclaim, in effect, with the greatest force, "the value of convictions, of our convictions, of what we trust and what we understand to be the most correct, even if sometimes we are criticized for it", and at the same time contemplate these same convictions as one more among others. "I respect", this person comments, "and I have a lot of respect for other people's convictions, but I also want them to respect mine (. . .). Because we cannot live in a plural society if we ourselves are not plural. I cannot say that I am a democrat if I do not respect what others think. And I believe that the best battle there is, is the battle of ideas" (LS: *man, married with one daughter. Graduate in International Relations. Business consultant and advisor. Social origin, upper-middle class. Father, secondary school teacher; mother, primary school teacher, was a member of parliament*).

Now, it is possible, as suggested by *Isaiah Berlin*, "to realize the relative validity of one's convictions and yet defend them without hesitation" (Berlin 1998, p. 243). Is it possible to do so when one is faced with the most important decisions of one's life, such as, for

example, the education of one's children? The person in the above quote, faced with this situation, believes that his 17-year-old daughter will be able to defend the values that he has passed on to her with "the firmness that she has to have in her convictions and in its defense", because she has received them through rational and reflective argumentation, in confrontation with other values. "Sometimes", he says, "I even contrast points of view with her to provoke her a little, and so that she gains the ability to argue. I have that function, and then I make her see the principles to gain solidity in her convictions. I teach her that she should not learn to judge things by appearances. To always have a well-founded value judgment after an analysis of all the facts, and also based on her convictions to know where she is right and where she is wrong". And yet, he also recognizes the difficulty of this task. "Sometimes", he comments, "I am afraid that I am failing my daughter, I am afraid that I am not transmitting what I should transmit, just as my parents and grandparents transmitted it to me . . . The fear sometimes comes from the lack of time to be with her, because I spend some time outside the country . . . And sometimes I am afraid of not transmitting that correctly. I think", he says, "that today we have young people who, unlike in our time, are inundated with information all the time, and I think that sometimes we, as a source of knowledge, and as a channel for transmitting the ancestral knowledge of our ancestors, can often put that transmission at risk due to the excess of information that they constantly receive, and so it is easier for them to become displeased. I even prefer many times that she opposes me, and tells me things, than that she stays silent and says nothing" (LS: *man, married with one daughter. Graduate in International Relations. Business consultant and advisor. Social origin, upper-middle class. Father, secondary school teacher; mother, primary school teacher, was a member of parliament*).

This person thus finds himself trapped, faced with the need to educate his daughter, in a difficult situation. On the one hand, he wants to instil in her the values that come from a certain family tradition, in which he says he firmly believes; but, when facing this experience based on his beliefs, he discovers the difficulty that his work entails; how to proclaim, in effect, the truth of these values, in a rational and persuasive way, when their validity is relative, when the experience of those who receive them has little or nothing to do with the tradition that gave them meaning. In other words, how to defend the importance of this tradition without referring it to some community of memory that supports it. Faced with this situation, what this person fears most is his daughter's silence, a silence that would show that his educational work has failed, because father and daughter do not really have much to say to each other anymore, lacking a common world that links them.

However, to get out of this situation of doubt and uncertainty, there is no other way than that which leads to argumentation and dialogue, through which it is believed that each person will find their own certainties. "On the 12th we went to Fatima", another of the people we spoke to says, "And my youngest daughter told me that maybe that never existed. What matters is that we try to show them our life path by setting an example (. . .). In other words, rather than imposing, I think that nothing should be imposed on children, they should be called to reason, and then set an example, and they accept it or not, and follow their path" (FG: *man, two daughters, retired bank employee, unfinished university studies. Social origin, lower class*). "I totally agree", another person says, "there is no imposed transmission, it is a transmission by example, by dialogue, by sharing, by what happens day by day. Although it is true that I am very aware of the values that have been transmitted to me . . . and that I also transmit to my daughters . . . perhaps there is greater flexibility in the way in which I transmit them to my daughters, they were imposed on me through example, I had no choice, it was that, with no other possibility, but in the interaction that I have with my daughters, although there is a guiding line, they have the possibility to reflect and think, and to express if all that has any meaning for them . . . This value of openness,

of communication, of dialogue within respect, is important" (FG: *woman, two daughters, divorced. Social origin, lower-middle class. Psychologist at a university institute of education*).

Nothing, therefore, must be taken for granted, everything has to be examined in the light of rational, egalitarian, plural, and free discussion, through which one will find one's own answers. "I think I managed", comments another of the people interviewed, speaking about her children, "to get them to be united, even though they are different. To share, each with their differences and their opinions. In fact, they have different political and sporting orientations, it's fantastic" (LS: *woman, married with two children. High school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer*).

So far, we have described the beliefs and ways of believing of people of the 1940–1950 and 1965–1975 generations belonging to the Portuguese region of Braga. In what follows, we will submit the results of our research for discussion.

4. Discussion

The aim of this research was to analyze the religious beliefs and ways of believing of people born in the periods 1940–1950 and 1965–1975 in the Portuguese region of Braga. We started from the assumption, according to previous studies (Duque and Durán 2023), that there could be a certain affinity between people born in these periods, without this necessarily being expressed in a full and conscious desire for generational belonging, but above all in a particular way of being and orienting oneself towards the world. We also considered that the generations studied would allow us to capture, in all their complexity, the changes that occurred in the religious landscape during the process of transition from traditional to modern societies and subsequently to late modernity; changes that, in the case of Portugal, align chronologically with the generations that were the object of our research.

Based on these assumptions, we have shown that the religious beliefs and ways of believing of people belonging to the generations that were the object of our study were linked to different types of transmissions and experiences, which were revitalized in certain situational contexts, shaping the respective generational worlds; worlds that were related in a complex way, influencing each other.

People of the *1940–1950 generation* grew up in traditional communities in which religion, linked to tradition, was part of what was taken for granted, with no room for disbelief, which was not considered either as a possibility or as a life option (Taylor 2015, vol. II, 47 ff.). Religion was present in almost all the scenarios of daily life, from the saddest to the happiest. If life was bearable, and at times even joyful, despite its extreme hardship, it was because one lived in relation to this assumed destiny, from which no one could deviate, but which, by surrendering to it, one gained in confidence what one lost in freedom. A strong sense of duty was the expression of all this, with all the sacrifices that this entailed. An awareness that manifested itself in the main scenarios of daily life, from family and work to the parish community.

This presence of religion was made visible through a series of rituals, through which people became aware of the meaning of their experiences, both the most mundane and the most strictly religious. Through this ritual, loaded with symbolism, religious beliefs and practises acquired a certain meaning, connecting the sphere of transcendence and immanence (Douglas 1988, 15 ff.).

Understood in this broad sense, religion was, as Peter Berger has pointed out (Berger 1977, pp. 110–11), both alienating and preserving of anomie. Alienating, because it referred to a reality conceived as something inexorable and taken for granted; protective against anomie, because it granted a certain order and stability to the world, amidst the numerous risks and uncertainties that people of this generation had to endure during their childhood and youth.

In this way, through this vision of the world influenced by religion, people of this generation faced the different tensions they experienced in their daily lives, being able to move forward, often with more misfortune than fortune. This character of religion, as an articulator of the tensions of existence, through which the sphere of transcendence and immanence are put into relation, was highlighted by Max Weber (Weber 1998, 527 ff.), as some of his best interpreters have recently pointed out (Joas 2023, 359 ff.).

This way of being in the world and understanding the world, permeated with a religious sense, characteristic of the people of the 1940–1950 generation, will no longer be the same for the people of the 1965–1975 generation. Indeed, if for the previous generation, religion was part of a reality taken for granted, whose presence was noticed in the different scenarios of life, and through which the different vicissitudes of existence were confronted, with all its contradictions, the following generation, although socialized in its childhood in a family and community parish environment, in which religion was continually present, has had later experiences, in the democratic society after 25 April 1974, which has led it to interpret these first experiences in another way, in relation to the values of democratic pluralism.

This fact has produced some disagreements with people from the previous generation, which will not, however, be the result of rejecting those early life experiences or the values associated with them, but instead these experiences will be interpreted in the light of new ones, as well as new values linked to autonomy, freedom, and pluralism.

In this context, religion is no longer understood as a reality taken for granted, in which belief and practice were fully integrated, giving meaning to a certain world order, but is conceived as one life option among others, which is reached through reflection and deliberation. Faith is thus linked to a personal experience (Beck 2009; James 1999) and is expressed in a spiritualist language, in relation to the values of a universalist, pluralist, and democratic humanism.

This way of understanding faith provides a certain confidence and security, but it also generates many doubts, both in relation to oneself and to the next generation. Indeed, if one's beliefs are understood as the fruit of a personal, rational, and reflective search, which is confronted from the perspective of the values of democratic pluralism, they must always be open to ongoing examination. Now, how can one have confidence in what one claims to believe in when these beliefs are presented as just one among others? Where, then, can one draw the necessary moral strength to affirm them, when the moral substratum that sustains them refers to a personal, minimally ritualized choice? And without rituals, and without the symbols that accompany them, beliefs become personal ethical orientations linked to the values of democratic pluralism and universalist humanism (Douglas 1988, 36 ff.); values that are reached through a process of reflective self-discovery (Taylor 2015, vol. II, pp. 332–33).

The reverse of this ethical attitude is no longer sin, but ignorance, and the way to correct it is not to remind those who have committed a fault of their duty, but to invite them to discover their own path reflectively, in dialogue with those who have already found it. It is not a question of imposing, as there is no obligation to fulfil, but rather of trying to make those who have to make their own journey in life see reason. And first of all, the children, with whom one wants to have—as one of the people interviewed says—"a relationship of transparency" (LS: *woman, married with two children. High school teacher. Social origin, lower-middle class. Father a shoemaker with his own workshop, mother a farmer*).

But when faced with the difficult challenge of educating, doubts also arise. How can we convey to the next generation, through dialogue and deliberation, the importance of the values we trust? And then the question arises as to whether we are really doing what we should.

Religion is thus experienced by the people of the 1965–1975 generation with whom we have spoken as a less alienating and more liberating reality, to the extent that it is conceived as a personal experience of self-discovery. However, precisely for this reason, this experience also brings back more uncertainties. Indeed, if there is nothing firm that transcends the subjects' own experience that serves as a foundation for their beliefs, who can proclaim a greater truth with a certain firmness, feeling obliged by that truth, which is nothing but the fruit of one's own experience?

In this context, the more or less precarious relationship that axial religions had established between the sphere of transcendence and immanence (Jaspers 1965) becomes problematic (Gil-Gimeno and Aguiluz Ibargüen 2023). If the individual, in fact, conceives themself as the main architect and discoverer of everything that transcends them, only by appealing to their own experience will they be able to resolve the tensions that affect their immanent life.

The present research on the changes in the expression of religiosity through the generations investigated shows the complexity of the secularization processes in Western societies, since these processes have not led to a simple disappearance of traditional religion, but rather to the emergence of new expressions of religiosity that are more individuated and reflexive, which are also linked to democratic pluralism. It could be said then that these new forms of religiosity coexist with other more secularist conceptions, as various studies on the processes of secularization have shown (Brown 2019; Cipriani 2017; De Graaf 2013; Iannaccone 1992; Höllinger and Muckenhuber 2019; Hungerman 2011; Stolz 2009, 2020; Stolz and Tanner 2017; Stolz et al. 2016, 2020; Storm 2017).

This research has also shown how these new expressions of religiosity, integrated with other more secularist conceptions linked to democratic pluralism, emerge through the complex relationships established by the members of the different generations, in line with what was pointed out by other research on intergenerational religious transmissions (Monnot and Wernli 2023; Stolz and Senn 2021; Bréchon 2018; Voas and Storm 2012; Crockett and Voas 2006).

We have shown that this generational change cannot be interpreted from the perspective of continuity or opposition, but rather from the reworking of what was received and experienced by the members of each generation based on other experiences and other values in their respective life situations. Thus, it can be said, according to what Robert Bellah affirms regarding the history of religions (Bellah 2017), that in this case too, nothing is lost forever because the religious beliefs and ways of believing of the people of each generation are the result of a complex fusion between the old and the new.

We believe that this research may have contributed to shed some light on the phenomenon of generations in relation to the changes that have occurred in the religious landscape of Western societies in the process of transition from the traditional world to the modern world, and from the latter to late modernity. However, the results of this research remain limited, both geographically and in terms of the number of people interviewed. In future research that is already underway, we will overcome these limitations by expanding both the geographical area and the number of people interviewed in order to better understand the change in religious attitudes and experiences across generations.

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research. The consent we have obtained from the subjects to participate in this research is governed by the ethical code of sociology, as established by the International Sociological Association (ISA) https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/about-isa/code-of-ethics (accessed on 8 November 2024).

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