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The Invisibles: Religious and Political Values Among Different Social Classes

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Chapter 8

The Invisibles: Religious and Political Values Among Different Social Classes

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Abstract Poverty and social exclusion can be defined as an accumulation of impediments: lack of work and income, bad housing, low education, maltreatment, disempowerment, loss of dignity. Types of poverty are indeed diverse, with the poor including both those who have inherited poverty and those who are newly poor in the age of globalisation. The first group is probably less visible than the second, more claiming. The poor present specificities of values. At the religious level, they are rather more believing – particularly in relation to paradise, and they practise their religion more. The discrepancies between social groups are greater when it comes to political matters. The invisibles are more individualistic and less individualised. They are less politicised but nevertheless more dissatisfied with those in power, and they mobilise less strongly in public action (voting and political protest). They do not easily trust others or institutions. They are less attached to democratic values, and they demonstrate greater xenophobia and nationalism. They therefore share many features of populism. These specificities of political values essentially correspond to perennial trends in poor classes. Differences in religious and political values between countries and geographical areas are also very large. But in each part of Europe, we observe value differences between social groups.

Keywords Poverty · Social exclusion · Religion · Politics · Values

With the development of industry, the social question emerged in the nineteenth century among many thinkers who were concerned about the situation of workers, especially children. In France, Victor Hugo's (1862) novel *Les misérables* was an eloquent testimony both to the misery of the time and to the emotion it aroused in the population, an emotion that transcended borders, since this work was very quickly translated into several languages. In England at the same time, Charles Dickens (1861) achieved similar success by recounting the lives of workers and the poor in, for example, *Great expectations*.

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31 8.1 Sociology of Social Classes, the Poor, 32 and Underprivileged

33 The nascent sociology also looked at the fate of workers. This was notable in the
34 work of the French conservative Frédéric Le Play, a social reformer who militated
35 for the moral education of workers. The attention paid to the workers, an emergent
36 social category, is also found in socialism and particularly in the work of Karl Marx.
37 Marx insisted on the existence of two fundamental classes in conflict, the bourgeoisie
38 and the proletariat, with the former exploiting the latter. But in his historical and
39 political works, he identified a large number of classes or parts of classes according
40 to the position of social actors in events. If the proletariat could become aware of its
41 exploitation and the spearhead of the revolution, it would remain a fringe of the
42 marginalised, the *lumpenproletariat* or rabble proletariat, often unemployed, with
43 no class consciousness or political activity and proving to be completely apathetic.
44 Their image was not good: Marx and Engels judged them as unstable, lazy, and
45 uneducated. Potentially violent, they were sometimes used as strike-breakers in the
46 pay of the most conservative capitalist reaction. The working class continued to be
47 a subject of study for the nascent sociology, as shown, for example, by the work of
48 Maurice Halbwachs (1912, 1933), a disciple of Durkheim. He developed a very
49 objectivist approach, studying the transformations of the budgets of this social
50 group in several countries (Germany, the United States, France): food expenses
51 decreased while clothing and housing expenses increased, bringing the working
52 class lifestyle closer to that of the employees. At the same time, the German sociologist
53 Georg Simmel (1908) developed a relational analysis of poverty. The poor were
54 not defined by a very low objective income level and very poor living conditions,
55 but by the way in which they were considered by society. Society defined the poor
56 as isolated, lacking in integration, and potentially dangerous, and they therefore had
57 to be provided with help so that social order could be maintained.

58 In the US in the 1920s, the Chicago School developed empirical sociological
59 studies based on a participatory observation methodology, particularly adapted to
60 penetrate a social milieu of marginalised people. Anderson (1932), who was himself
61 a hobo for a long time, exposed the lives of day labourers who moved from one
62 temporary job to another on construction sites or in the fields, highly mobile geographically
63 – moving illegally on freight trains – and generally young and single. Their world was
64 characterised by resourcefulness and implicit moral rules regulating the social relations
65 of their isolated community. This type of approach, close to romantic narratives, had an
66 undeniable posterity. It was, for example, the approach of Lewis (1959) in Mexico, who
67 explained that poverty in his country was not fundamentally different from that in other
68 countries of the world. Photography was also used to document the situation of the poor
69 in the US in the 1930s (Walther 2016).

70 In the context of the ‘Glorious Thirties’, the problems of precariousness tended
71 to be somewhat forgotten. Some sociologists insisted on the evolution towards
72 gentrification of the working class (Goldthorpe et al. 1969). With the increase in
73 standard of living and school education, the working class would move closer to the

middle classes. But it would partly retain the values and culture linked to its origins. 74
 Similarly, for Richard Hoggart (1957) there was an original culture of poverty – 75
 specific cultural forms that identified this population. Popular culture was not a 76
 substitute for the culture of the dominant classes; it was not simply the result of 77
 conditioning – a receptacle of mass culture – but had its own dynamics. 78

Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) analyses were quite different. The working classes 79
 were dominated by values without real originality, as values were infused by the 80
 dominant class. They certainly had a 'popular taste', but were also described as 81
 vulgar and barbaric. This position could be seen in culinary tastes, an attraction for 82
 what was nourishing and cheap – bread, starchy foods, and pot au feu – but also red 83
 meat. Taste was also linked to representations of the body, which had to be fleshy, 84
 full of strength, and virile! This applied on the political level too. The working 85
 classes had no real political culture and therefore could only be dominated; they 86
 excluded themselves from the political field. Bourdieu was interested in the work- 87
 ing classes, but not really in the poor and excluded, except in *La misère du monde* 88
 (Bourdieu 1993). His theories were structuralist and therefore did not change much, 89
 since the same structures lasted over time. In contrast, those of Alain Touraine et al. 90
 (1987) during the same period were much more dynamic. He insisted on the internal 91
 differences within the working class. May 1968 was not carried by the traditional 92
 working class but by engineers, technicians, and highly qualified, educated workers 93
 who demanded a different society and were the agents in an anti-technocratic 94
 revolution. 95

In recent decades, the sociology of poverty has often been associated with action 96
 research in charitable organisations. Among them, we can take the example of ATD 97
 Fourth World,¹ which stands out for its sociological analysis:² extreme poverty and 98
 social exclusion are defined as an accumulation of impediments: lack of decent 99
 work, insufficient and insecure income, material and social deprivation, social and 100
 institutional maltreatment, unrecognised contributions, suffering in body, mind and 101
 heart, and disempowerment (ATD Fourth World 2019). The movement refuses sim- 102
 ple assistance and wants to involve excluded populations in actions to help them 103
 regain their dignity. Working with institutions, ATD Fourth World defends access to 104
 the rights of individuals and their families in terms of housing, health, schooling, 105
 professional training, culture, and citizen participation, etc. It also wants to change 106
 the way society views the excluded. Jean Labbens (1978) has studied poverty in the 107
 slums of different countries. He underlines the lack of will of the populations con- 108
 cerned, who have experienced failure since childhood and have become fatalistic 109
 about their future. 110

With the slowdown of the economy from the 1980s onwards, the sociological 111
 analyses of social classes once again insist on the development of precarious and 112
 insecure categories of population. In the public debate, there is even frequent 113

¹The movement was founded in 1957 by Father Joseph Wresinski after he had lived through the misery of a French shantytown. Today the organisation is present in about 30 countries.

²The movement worked extensively with the sociologist Jean Labbens.

114 reference to the ‘new poor’ and more recently to the ‘losers of globalization’ (Kriesi
 115 et al. 2006). Globalisation is giving rise to a new structural divide between its win-
 116 ners and losers, and it recomposes the political space of different countries. These
 117 new poor are often ‘downgraded’, thrown into precarious, part-time, or dead-end
 118 jobs, sometimes in poverty, by the transformations of the economy, the loss of jobs,
 119 and the deskilling of workers. Exclusion and extreme poverty seem to be on the
 120 increase today. Many people are losing their sense of social integration, with its
 121 stable employment, numerous social relations, and security in life. They are in the
 122 process of becoming precarious, with fragile and partial employment, often without
 123 insurance and decent incomes, and they have strong fears concerning their future
 124 situation (Duncan and Paugam 2002; Gallie and Paugam 2002; Promberger et al.
 125 2018) or that of their children (Guio et al. 2020). The marginal social categories are
 126 therefore very diverse, consisting of the traditional poor with an inherited poverty –
 127 the fruit of decades of living in misery and accumulating impediments – and the
 128 new poor, precipitated into this situation on a regular basis as a result of economic
 129 transformation. The former are little talked about: they are invisible and do not have
 130 the necessary resources (notably education) assert their place in society. This lack
 131 of resources leads to a feeling of inferiority, social isolation, low politicisation, poor
 132 understanding of the world, and high levels of abstention from elections (Braconnier
 133 and Mayer 2015).³ The latter are more likely to protest, as the yellow vest move-
 134 ment in France in 2018 and 2019 clearly highlighted (Guerra et al. 2019). If we refer
 135 to Hirschman’s (1970) categories, the inherited poor are on the *exit* side in terms of
 136 political culture, whereas the categories in the process of becoming precarious are
 137 more on the *voice* side. Neither of the two would be strong supporters of *loyalty* to
 138 institutions.

139 8.2 The Values of the Disadvantaged: Assumptions 140 and Methodology

141 All that we have just recalled concerning the poor and the excluded, both in the lit-
 142 erature and in sociological analyses over the last two centuries, shows quite clearly
 143 that social conditions have an important effect on people’s values. And this has
 144 already been demonstrated for a long time, notably by Inglehart (1977, 2018). He
 145 develops a theory of the evolution of a country’s values in relation to the security felt
 146 by the population. With the entry into an era of plenty, people’s main goals in life
 147 change, with more and more Westerners wanting above all a better quality of life,
 148 opportunities for self-expression, and more participation in democratic decisions.
 149 With economic recessions, backlashes occur, generating a return to materialist

³The study is based on more than 100 interviews conducted in social centres prior to the French presidential elections of 2012 and a quantitative survey of 2000 people to gain a better understanding of how disadvantaged groups vote.

concerns and populism (Ignazi 1992; Norris and Inglehart 2019), characterised by authoritarianism and anti-systemic and anti-elite attitudes. Obviously, these attitudes affect the most disadvantaged populations in particular, while the winning categories of globalisation still carry post-materialist values and a desire for individual autonomy (Welzel 2013; Gonthier and Bréchon 2017).

The objective of this chapter is therefore to analyse the values of the disadvantaged categories of the European population, particularly in terms of their religiosity and political values. Given that surveys on the values of Europeans have not been constructed with this aim in mind, it is first of all necessary to discuss the most suitable European Values Study (EVS) variable for this research – without forgetting that the precarious are probably undervalued in all surveys because people in these categories have little appetite for responding to sophisticated quantitative survey questionnaires. However, it can be hypothesised that the results of these surveys allow us to understand the values of the precarious by comparing them to those of the privileged circles. The invisible people outside the survey would be even more typical of the value system identified among the precarious people present in the survey.

Several socio-economic classifications are available in the EVS data file: the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08), the Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (SIOPS), the European Socio-Economic Classification (ESEC), the EGP class schema (from the name of their creators Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero), and the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) (Züll 2016). These scales are strongly related to each other, with Cramer's V ranging from 0.50 to 0.70, indicating an extremely strong relationship.⁴ We have chosen to use the ISEI classification (Ganzeboom et al. 1992; Ganzeboom 2010) because it is the most comprehensive and synthetic measure of the individual's social situation, taking into account as it does not only occupation but also family income⁵ and education levels, controlled by age. Moreover, it has the great advantage of being a continuous scale.⁶ We recoded this scale of social positions into four groups of roughly identical size, to isolate the most disadvantaged quartile, which

⁴Recall that Cramer's V measures the intensity of a relationship between two variables and that it varies between 0 and 1, that is, between the total absence of a relationship and a complete relationship of implication. Around 0.10, the relationship is generally significant but of very low intensity.

⁵In the last EVS wave 2017, income is measured in deciles per country, which makes it in principle independent of the country's level of development. This is not fully verified. When we cross the income variable recoded in three categories with the geographical area, the V of Cramer is 0.09 and 0.16 with the country itself. If income had been recorded in gross terms, the relationship between income level and country of residence would certainly have been much more important.

⁶In the integrated EVS data file, comparability between 2017 and the previous waves are not assured because the measurement of family income was not done in the same way. We will consider the distribution of the 2008 ISEI by quartile, which will make it possible to consider changes over 10 years in the values of the disadvantaged, but not to measure the evolution of precariousness from one wave to the next.

180 can then be compared with the three most advantaged groups.⁷ This threshold is
 181 obviously arbitrary. In reality, there is not one precarious group at the defined
 182 boundaries; rather, the level of precariousness is a continuum. The presentation in
 183 four groups, however, makes it possible to clearly show the differences between the
 184 bottom and top of society.

185 The religious and political dimensions to be taken into account must also be
 186 considered. Concerning religion, are the popular categories and the precarious more
 187 or less religious? According to a commonplace, the precarious should be less reli-
 188 gious since religion displays a strong osmotic relationship with the culture of domi-
 189 nation, against which the exploited working classes struggle. On the contrary, it
 190 could be thought that they would be more religious because they are more subject to
 191 the hazards of life and therefore have a greater need for religious comfort and the
 192 promise of happiness beyond this world. But they could also be more religious
 193 because they are more traditional, adopting new attitudes and values less easily. To
 194 try to separate these theories, several dimensions will be used – a global scale of
 195 religiosity, but also a scale of belief in God, a scale of belief in an extra-worldly
 196 future, a measure of practice (prayer and attendance at services of one's faith) – as
 197 it is possible that the precarious are more religious on one dimension of religiosity
 198 and less on another.

199 In relation to political values, we will test the theory of apathy and populism of
 200 the most popular classes. The political apathy of the working classes has long been
 201 emphasised by many authors (Almond and Verba 1963; Di Palma 1970): the low
 202 level of education of the working classes is said to explain their low political com-
 203 petence and the lack of confidence in their legitimacy to express themselves in the
 204 political field. Precarious populations should be weakly politicised and participate
 205 less than other social categories through voting or protest forms of demand.

206 Populism is a difficult concept to define (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017),
 207 but can be characterised by strong support for a series of connected values: national-
 208 ism, xenophobia and mistrust of immigrants, authority, leader worship, distrust of
 209 elites who do not understand popular expectations. The most precarious would be
 210 expected to show dissatisfaction with power and have little trust in institutions and
 211 more generally in others, who are easily seen as a threat. They are expected to be
 212 more xenophobic than the average population, as they compete with immigrants in
 213 the labour market. They may also be less attached to democracy and prove to be
 214 more authoritarian, in line with the analyses of Stouffer et al. (1949), Adorno et al.
 215 (1950), Eysenck (1954), and especially Lipset (1959).

216 In previous publications, I have distinguished two major value orientations: indi-
 217 vidualisation (that is the tendency to value the autonomy of individuals) and

⁷Two issues – having been unemployed for more than three continuous months or having received social assistance for at least the same length of time in the last 5 years – could have been a measure of precariousness. But the relationship with the ISEI is not very strong ($V = 0.12$). In fact, 8% experienced both situations. In this group, 58% have incomes in the first two deciles but 22% in the top five deciles. The experience of unemployment and social assistance therefore does not affect the lower end of the social scale only.

individualism (that is the pursuit of one's personal interest in all circumstances) 218
 (Bréchon 2017, 2021a). The EVS 2008 data clearly showed that disadvantaged 219
 social categories were more individualistic and less individualised. One can expect 220
 the same trends to be observed in the EVS 2017 data. 221

For the analyses, we have selected 22 European countries in EVS 2017 (where 222
 the survey has been carried out since at least 1990), which can be grouped by geo- 223
 graphical area into Western Europe (Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, The 224
 Netherlands), Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, 225
 Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), Southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain) and 226
 Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden). 227

All results will be weighted according to the country's population size and 228
 sociodemographic variables. 229

8.3 Who Are the 'Precarious'? 230

According to Eurostat, at the threshold of 60% of the median income of each country, 231
 17.3% of the Union's population lived in poverty in 2016. At the threshold of 232
 40%, which can be considered a threshold of extreme poverty, it was 6.4%. But the 233
 gaps between countries are wide. At the 60% threshold, they range from 11.6% in 234
 Finland to 25.3% in Romania, and at the 40% threshold from 2.2% in Finland to 235
 13.5% in Romania. The poor are most numerous in Romania, Greece, Spain, 236
 Portugal, and Italy. By contrast, the Scandinavian countries and France have the 237
 lowest rates. These poverty percentages also provide a comparative picture of the 238
 degree of inequality between countries. 239

In the EVS 2017, for the lowest ISEI quartile, 40% are located in deciles 1 and 2 240
 and only 5% in deciles 9 and 10 (Cramer's $V^8 = 0.25$). They also have fewer quali- 241
 fications: among people with only primary education, 53% belong to the precarious 242
 category, whereas this is the case for only 4% of individuals with a master's or 243
 doctoral degree. There is an overrepresentation of people who have experienced 244
 unemployment and have been receipt in social benefits among the precarious: while 245
 22% of people who have not experienced these situations are in the 'precarious' 246
 group, 41% of those who have known both are in the precarious group. But being 247
 currently unemployed is also an important element of precariousness. The rate of 248
 precariousness rises to 42% among the unemployed and to 34% when it is the 249
 spouse who is concerned, while having a part-time job (less than 30 h a week) does 250
 not change the level of precariousness, either for the interviewee or for their spouse. 251
 And precariousness is significantly higher among people of foreign nationality 252
 (34% versus 24% among nationals). 253

We can also verify the weight of family socialisation on current precariousness. 254
 This can be seen first of all at the economic level: among the interviewees whose 255

⁸In the rest of the chapter, we will abbreviate the use of this statistical test with only *V*.

256 parents ‘had difficulty making ends meet’ and ‘replacing broken things’, the rate of
257 precariousness rises to 37%, while it is only 17% among those whose parents had
258 no financial difficulties. We also observe the impact of family socialisation at the
259 cultural level. Six questions asked whether the father and mother ‘liked to read
260 books’, ‘liked to follow the news’, and ‘discussed politics’ with the respondent. In
261 this way, a scale of family culture can be constructed. The rate of precariousness
262 rises from 39% among those whose parents were not at all educated to 12% among
263 those whose parents were highly educated ($V = 0.18$). The survey also provides
264 information on the level of education attained by the father and mother; here again,
265 the link with the respondent’s precariousness is quite strong: when the father and
266 mother have a low level of education, the rate of precariousness rises to 33%,
267 whereas this rate is only 9% when the father and mother have a high level of educa-
268 tion. These results show that there is indeed an inherited precariousness that is trans-
269 mitted from one generation to the next.

270 Moreover, precariousness is more rural than urban. When the respondent lives in
271 a municipality of fewer than 5000 inhabitants, the precariousness rate is 35%,
272 whereas it is only 18% in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants ($V = 0.11$).⁹ The
273 explanation is most certainly linked to the social composition of rural areas, with
274 less schooling, more low-skilled jobs, and lower incomes.

275 At the family level, precariousness seems to be associated with a high number of
276 children: it is 21% for people without children, but 33% for three and 39% for four
277 or more children. Regarding family status, precariousness is particularly high
278 among widows (40%) or separated people (34%). Part of the precariousness rate
279 among single parents can be assessed by looking at two-person households consist-
280 ing of a single adult living with a child aged 16 years or younger. Here, 32% of the
281 parents are classified in the ‘precarious’ group compared to a rate of 24% in the
282 survey as a whole.

283 Depending on age, precariousness is greater among old people, particularly
284 among those aged 70+ (36%), but there are apparent variations depending on the
285 country and social policies in relation to seniors. Precariousness is very similar
286 among men and women.

287 It should be added that the underprivileged have a certain awareness of their situ-
288 ation, since more of them recognise that they are not happy: 54% of the underprivi-
289 leged say they are little or not at all happy, compared with only 36% of the most
290 privileged quartile. Awareness is, however, very relative, since 46% of those in pre-
291 carious situations say they are quite happy.

⁹This link is verified in all countries except Iceland.

8.4 Precariousness and Religious Attitudes

292

8.4.1 Global Religiosity According to Social Position

293

The survey includes a large number of indicators of religiosity. I selected ten that allow us to construct a very solid scale to measure the average level of religiosity of individuals.¹⁰ When we consider this level of religiosity according to social position for the 22 countries (Table 8.1), it becomes clear that the differences are small, even if they are statistically significant. For an average level of religiosity of 3.7 in 2017, it is 4.1 in the most disadvantaged group and only 3.4 among the most privileged.¹¹ These small differences are found in all geographical zones, but are weaker in Western Europe and Nordic countries. The underprivileged thus appear in many countries as a little more religious than do the other social categories, but the differences are much smaller than those generated by the geographical area because of an extreme religiosity in Eastern Europe and a very weak one in Nordic countries.

For the last 10 years, global religiosity seems to have been stable for the whole of Europe, with the same average of 3.7 in EVS 2008. However, this stability hides contrasting trends. Religiosity has continued to decline slowly in Western Europe (-0.2) and the Nordic countries (-0.4), but it has risen sharply in Eastern Europe (+1.0) and a little in Southern Europe (+0.2) (Pickel & Pickel, Chap. 5, this

Table 8.1 Average religiosity index^a by social position^b and geographic area (EVS 2008 and 2017)

Social position	Western Europe		Eastern Europe		Southern Europe		Nordic countries		Average	
	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017
Very low	3.6	3.4	4.3	5.2	4.4	4.5	3.4	3.0	4.1	4.1
Rather low	3.1	3.1	3.8	4.9	3.6	4.1	3.2	2.9	3.6	3.8
Rather high	3.6	3.3	3.8	4.5	3.9	3.9	3.4	2.7	3.7	3.6
Very high	3.4	3.0	3.7	4.5	3.7	3.6	3.1	2.7	3.5	3.4
Average	3.4	3.2	3.9	4.9	3.9	4.1	3.3	2.9	3.7	3.7

^aThe index ranges from 0, totally without religiosity, to 10, positive on all indicators

^bMeasured by the ISEI index, recoded into quasi-quartiles

¹⁰The ten indicators are: being part of a religious organisation; attending religious services at least once a month; praying at least once a week; feeling religious; believing in God, in a personal God or life force, in life after death, in reincarnation; finding God important in one's life (7 to 10 on the scale); finding it important to encourage religious faith among children. For each one, we count the number of indicators where the person shows religiosity. The index thus goes from 0 to 10 and is very consistent, since Cronbach's α is 0.82.

¹¹One could object that our lowest category is too broad (24% of the European population) to truly isolate the most precarious. In fact, a variable in eight positions with 10% to 15% per category does not really change the distribution: the average religiosity ranges from 4.1 among the most precarious to 3.4 among the most advantaged. The intensity of the relationship remains very low ($V = 0.05$ according to the two crossings).

310 volume). Globally, there was a slight trend in EVS 2008 towards a stronger religiosity of the precarious, but rather smaller than in EVS 2017.

312 The differences by country seem to be due less to the level of economic development than to the dominant religion of the population. Table 8.2 shows that Protestant and multi-faith countries have the lowest religiosity, while religiosity is much higher in Orthodox countries. Religiosity in Catholic countries seems average, but is in fact very heterogeneous, ranging from 2.6 in Czechia to 6.2 in Poland, because of truly diverse, national histories and cultures (Polak & Schuster, Chap. 6, this volume). 318 However, small differences in religiosity according to social position can be found in almost every national culture (except in Germany, Estonia, and Slovakia).

320 Let us now consider specific dimensions of religiosity to see if this slightly stronger sensitivity of the precarious to religiosity comes from belief in God, belief in an extramundane future, or simply from more frequent practice.

323 8.4.2 *Precarious People Believe a Little More in God*

324 Three questions provide a fine measure of belief in God (Table 8.3). According to the first question – which is quite simple, since it is dichotomous – 65% of Europeans believe in God. However, this percentage rises to 72% among those in precarious situations and falls to 57% for the highest social positions. The second question is a little more precise: 28% say they believe in a personal God and 38% in a kind of spirit or life force God, while 18% are non-believers and 16% agnostics. The precarious believe more often in a personal God and less in a life force.

331 The third question measures the importance of God in one's life on a scale from 332 1 (not at all important) to 10 (very important). Here, four Europeans out of ten 333 attach a high importance to God, while the same proportion finds God not important. The gap according to social position is confirmed.

335 In total, the differences in belief in God according to social position are slightly 336 larger than for overall religiosity. A synthetic scale based on the three questions

Table 8.2 Average religiosity index by social position and dominant religion in the country (EVS 2017)

Social position	Catholic ^a	Orthodox ^b	Protestant ^c	Multicon-fessional ^d	Average
Very low	4.3	5.7	3.5	3.3	4.1
Rather low	4.0	5.3	2.9	3.4	3.8
Rather high	3.7	5.1	2.9	3.7	3.6
Very high	3.5	5.0	2.9	3.3	3.4
Average	3.9	5.3	3.0	3.4	3.7

^aCatholic-dominated countries: Austria, Czechia, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain

^bPredominantly Orthodox countries: Bulgaria, Romania

^cPredominantly Protestant countries: Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Iceland, Norway, Sweden

^dMulti-denominational countries: Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands

t2.1

t2.2

t2.3

t2.4

t2.5

t2.6

t2.7

t2.8

t2.9

t2.10

t2.11

t2.12

t2.13

Table 8.3 Beliefs in God according to social position (EVS 2017)

t3.1

<i>Vertical %</i>	Social position				Average
	Very low	Rather low	Rather high	Very high	
Believe in God: no	28	33	37	43	35
Believe in God: yes	72	67	63	57	65
Don't think there is a God/life force	14	17	18	22	18
Don't know what to think	18	18	15	14	16
Believe in some kind of spirit or life force	32	36	42	41	38
Believe in a personal God	36	30	25	23	28
Importance of God in their life: weak (1–4)	32	38	42	50	41
Average (5–6)	18	18	19	15	18
Strong (7–10)	50	43	38	35	41

t3.2

t3.3

t3.4

t3.5

t3.6

t3.7

t3.8

t3.9

t3.10

t3.11

t3.12

t3.13

Table 8.4 Beliefs in an extramundane future^a (EVS 2017)

t4.1

<i>Vertical %</i>	Social position				Average
	Very low	Rather low	Rather high	Very high	
Belief in life after death	53	49	50	44	49
Belief in paradise	52	44	39	31	42
Belief in hell	37	32	25	20	29
Belief in reincarnation	27	27	27	21	25

t4.2

t4.3

t4.4

t4.5

t4.6

^aQuestions are dichotomous (yes/no). *V* is significant at 0.06, 0.15, 0.14, and 0.06 respectively

t4.7

shows that strong belief in God is 37% among the precarious and only 24% in the highest category.

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8.4.3 Precarious People Believe More in a Future Beyond This World

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Those in precarious situations have more expectations and beliefs about the world to come (Table 8.4). Here, 53% believe in an afterlife (44% for the betteroff), 52% believe in heaven (only 31% for the betteroff), and 37% believe in hell (20% for the betteroff).¹² As for reincarnation, it is probably not (yet?) sufficiently anchored in European culture to seduce many, whatever the social category.

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¹²In all waves of the EVS surveys, for a long time it has been observed that individuals believe more in heaven than in hell. This is partly linked to the evolution of ecclesial strategies that no longer play much on the fear of hell to guide the actions of their faithful, and also to the evolution of theologies that today value God-given salvation, whatever the actions of individuals.

346 It is therefore for belief in heaven and hell that the differences according to social
 347 position are the most marked. One may be tempted to explain these stronger gaps by
 348 the situation of the precarious: living with difficulty in the present, they may have
 349 more reason to hope for salvation beyond this world.

350 **8.4.4 Precarious People Are a Little More Often Followers** 351 **of a Religion and a Little More Assiduous in the Practice** 352 **of Their Religion**

353 In the precarious group, 65% said they belonged to a religion, compared to 56% of
 354 the advantaged group, and 48% say they trust the church compared to 38% in the
 355 most advantaged group. They claim less atheism than others (8% of convinced athe-
 356 ists in the precarious group, 16% in the most advantaged group): 29% attend a
 357 religious service at least once a month (compared to 22% at the other extreme) and
 358 41% say they pray every week, compared to 29% of the most advantaged. Thus, in
 359 terms of both group and individual practice, those at the bottom of the social scale
 360 are somewhat more religious. Their religiosity is therefore not marked by anti-
 361 institutionalism. Rather, they are conventional believers. This is in line with a stron-
 362 ger explanation for their religiosity and their greater difficulty in adopting
 363 new values.

364 After taking into account all the dimensions of religiosity tested in the survey, we
 365 can conclude that the responses are very consistent. Regardless of the dimension,
 366 the same phenomenon is observed: a slightly greater importance is given to reli-
 367 gious attitudes by the disadvantaged categories of the population. The common-
 368 place expectation that religion would be strongly implanted among the bourgeois
 369 while popular categories would be more secularised is therefore not at all verified.
 370 Perhaps this representation may have been true in the past, but in any case, it is no
 371 longer true. It must be added, however, that the differences are generally quite small.
 372 This tends to mean that the consolations of religion – making people hope for
 373 another world that would be more favourable to them – do not constitute a very
 374 powerful driver of their religiosity. The explanation for this slightly stronger religi-
 375 osity of the precarious would instead lie in more traditional and more conventional
 376 value systems, with a weaker propensity for change. An examination of the political
 377 attitudes of the precarious makes it possible to confirm this interpretation.

378 **8.5 Precariousness and Political Attitudes**

379 If the links between precariousness and religious attitudes are not extraordinarily
 380 strong, do we find a stronger relationship between precariousness and political val-
 381 ues? Let us begin by examining the general attitudes of those who are precarious.

8.5.1 *More Individualistic But Less Individualised Precariousness*

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In previous works (Bréchon and Galland 2010; Bréchon 2017, 2021a), I have shown that individualisation should not be confused with individualism, as is extremely common. The values of individualisation correspond to a desire for autonomy in choices in all areas of life, especially in relation to sexuality, the body, and death (Halman & Sieben, Chap. 4, this volume). More and more, each person wants to choose their own future and to overcome social constraints. ‘*Each person has their own choice*’ could be the maxim of individualised people. Individualism corresponds to a very different attitude, consisting in always seeking one’s own interest and never acting in solidarity with others. The maxim of individualists is ‘*each person for themselves*’. From surveys on values, one can distinguish the two attitudes and thus construct two different scales of attitudes.

The individualisation scale has 15 indicators: five relate to permissiveness of morals (accepting homosexuality, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, suicide); three relate to the meaning given to work (it allows one to have initiative, to achieve something, to have responsibilities); five take into account essential qualities to be encouraged among children (independence; responsibility; imagination; tolerance and respect for others; determination and perseverance); and two relate to essential objectives to be prioritised for the country (freedom of expression and citizen participation in political decisions). Aggregated, these 15 indicators synthesise the will of individual autonomy in all areas of life (Cronbach’s α^{13} at 0.75), 23% variance explained on the first factor of a principal components analysis). The individualism scale is constructed with 17 indicators: nine measure lack of solidarity with others (not feeling concerned about one’s neighbours; people in the region; members of the same country; Europeans and the whole world; the elderly; the unemployed; immigrants; and the sick and disabled); two concern the degree of interest in politics; four are about political non-participation (not signing petitions; not participating in boycotts, demonstrations, and strikes); one concerns the lack of associative participation; and the last one concerns not wanting to give money to prevent environmental pollution. Again, aggregated, a consistent measure of individualism is obtained (α at 0.86, 33% variance explained).

AU2

The two scales are, depending on the country, either almost statistically unrelated or inversely proportional: the more individualised one is, the less individualistic one is. For the sample as a whole, the Pearson’s r is -0.34 . Thus, the desire for individual autonomy is more frequent among people who are open to the world and concerned about the future of others. But what about precarious populations: are they more or less individualised, more or less individualistic than privileged categories?

For individualisation (Table 8.5), the answer is clear whatever geographical area is taken into account: precarious populations are much less attached to the values of

¹³In the rest of the chapter, we will abbreviate the quotation of this test with only α .

Table 8.5 Low individualisation (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	54	85	67	32	64
Rather low	41	79	57	25	53
Rather high	29	65	47	14	38
Very high	19	59	37	8	27
Average	34	74	53	18	45

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 54 are classified as low in relation to individualisation*

Table 8.6 Strong individualism (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	63	81	61	51	65
Rather low	54	75	57	47	59
Rather high	44	71	50	41	49
Very high	31	61	38	33	37
Average	47	73	53	41	53

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 63 are classified as highly individualistic*

423 individual autonomy than privileged categories (from Western Europe to the Nordic
 424 countries: $V = 0.22, 0.17, 0.16, 0.19$). However, the table also shows that the differ-
 425 ences according to geographical area are significant and even slightly higher over-
 426 all: from very low to very high social position, the relationship with geographical
 427 area shows V at 0.22, 0.24, 0.22, 0.26. Low individualisation is most common
 428 among the disadvantaged in Eastern Europe (less developed and more religious
 429 countries) at 85% (with the exception of Czechia), whereas it is much rarer among
 430 the wealthiest in the Nordic countries (highly developed and highly secularised
 431 countries), at 8%. A country's economic development, the personal situation of
 432 individuals, and level of religiosity are probably the most explanatory variables
 433 relating to the level of individualisation.

434 The answer is just as clear concerning individualism (Table 8.6): whatever geo-
 435 graphical area is considered, precarious populations are more individualistic than
 436 privileged categories (from Western Europe to the Nordic countries, $V = 0.18, 0.11,$
 437 $0.13, 0.11$), the relationship being the most intense in Western Europe. Here again,
 438 strong differences are also observed according to geographical area: whatever the
 439 social category considered, the relationship with geographical differences indicate
 440 $V = 0.14, 0.14, 0.15$ and 0.17 respectively.

441 The two tables above therefore have a very similar structure because of the
 442 inversely proportional link between individualisation and individualism. A coun-
 443 try's low economic development and the precariousness of individuals lead to a
 444 greater focus on oneself (and therefore less value placed on solidarity with others)
 445 and a low value placed on individual autonomy. These results should not lead to the
 446 stigmatisation of countries or social groups, but an attempt should be made to

explain the differences recorded. It is possible to think that the material situations of individuals play a strong role in their value system, even if other influences are significant. For example, strong religiosity, which greatly hinders the valorisation of individual autonomy, on the contrary favours the values of solidarity somewhat: among those in precarious situations, strong individualism goes from 62% among the most religious to 71% among the most secularised ($V = 0.07$). The relationship is significant but nevertheless weak.

The most individualised people value the rights of individuals more than they do their duties. So, it can be expected that the precarious population categories, like the most religious, will remain attached to a culture of duty. The sense of duty can be measured through three questions that can be used to construct a scale: considering work as a duty for society,¹⁴ having children, and taking care of one’s elderly parents. This is what is observed in the results: the most precarious are 49% in relation to valuing a sense of duty compared to only 30% of the most privileged ($V = 0.10$).

8.5.2 Low Politicisation Level of Precarious People

Even if politicisation is a dimension included in the scale of individualism, it is interesting to consider more specifically the level of politicisation of the precarious. Two questions measure this level fairly well: attaching importance to politics in one’s life and being interested in politics, each with four modalities of response, which makes it possible to construct a scale. Here, 36% of precarious people are very weakly politicised compared to only 11% of the most privileged quartile. The relationship is therefore quite strong, especially in Western Europe (Table 8.7). This relationship is hardly surprising, since all surveys – for a long time – have shown that there is quite a strong link between politicisation and level of education. But it should also be noted that the geographical area has almost as strong an effect on politicisation as does social position. And it can be observed the relatively strong

Table 8.7 Very low politicisation (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	34	39	41	18	36
Rather low	25	31	32	15	28
Rather high	16	29	22	8	19
Very high	7	20	19	5	11
Average	20	31	30	11	24

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 34 are very weakly politicised*

¹⁴Regarding the question whether it is good or bad that work is less important in our lives, only 32% of those in precarious employment agree, compared to 45% of the most advantaged group. Those in precarious employment find it difficult to imagine that work occupies less space in their lives.

473 politicisation of precarious people in the Nordic countries. These have long imple-
 474 mented a policy of politicising disadvantaged groups that has been successful
 475 (Milner 2002). But the phenomenon can also be explained by the Protestant culture
 476 of these countries (Bréchon 2021b).

477 8.5.3 Strong Political Discontent of the Precarious, Low 478 Political Participation

479 Two questions, with scales from 1 to 10, measure the degree of political dissatisfac-
 480 tion of the population: are people satisfied with the way the country's political sys-
 481 tem works and do they think the country is democratically governed? The two
 482 measures are closely related ($V = 0.31$) and can therefore be analysed together by
 483 isolating the most dissatisfied part of the population (Table 8.8).¹⁵ Those at the bot-
 484 tom of the social scale are more dissatisfied than others, but the differences are rela-
 485 tively small ($V = 0.11$). In fact, this relationship is sensitive only for Western Europe
 486 and the Nordic countries¹⁶ ($V = 0.14$ and 0.16). For Eastern and Southern Europe,
 487 there is no difference according to social position: almost the whole society is very
 488 dissatisfied with political functioning.

489 If Europeans are often quite dissatisfied with the policies of their governments,
 490 do they express this in action? Political participation has two distinct components –
 491 a more conventional form through the frequency of voting and a more active form
 492 through citizen actions. Concerning voting, the EVS 2017 questionnaire asks
 493 respondents to say whether they always, often, or never vote in three distinct situa-
 494 tions: local, national, and European elections. An index of electoral participation
 495 can thus be constructed. Concerning active participation, such as protest, four forms
 496 of commitment are taken into account: signing a petition, boycotting products, dem-
 497 onstrating, and going on strike.

Table 8.8 Strong political discontent (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average	
Very low	58	67	59	32	60	t8.1
Rather low	56	70	57	35	59	t8.2
Rather high	46	69	61	25	52	t8.3
Very high	41	71	60	18	47	t8.4
Average	50	69	59	26	54	t8.5

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 58 are very dissatisfied with*
the political functioning of the country

¹⁵That is, all those between 2 and 12 on the scale from 2 to 20.

¹⁶The Nordic countries are characterised by a much higher level of satisfaction with their national policies.

For electoral participation, a distinction was made between those who say they always vote in all three types of elections and those who are much more abstentionist (Table 8.9). The two least favoured categories are more abstentionist than the others. The relationship exists regardless of the geographical area ($V = 0.15, 0.12, 0.13, 0.17$). This result is consistent with what is observed in all surveys. The low voter turnout of the popular categories is explainable by their low political competence, which is itself linked to their level of education.

The more people are regular voters, the more likely they are to express themselves actively in the public space. For each question about so-called protest participation, three answers are possible: has already done so, could do so, will never do so. By constructing an additive scale (ranging from 3 to 12), it is in fact the protest potential of individuals that is measured (Table 8.10). The table shows the low protest potential (from 10 to 12), representing 40% of the population. This is much lower among those in precarious employment than in the more privileged categories ($V = 0.24$). The relationship is more intense than with voting. It may be thought that, for the precarious, it is easier to vote than to protest. Voting costs little, and the invitation to fulfil one's electoral duty is strongly reminded by the authorities and by the candidates during the campaign. Protesting requires a more costly commitment and the social incentives to engage are weaker. It is known that even in social movements to defend the popular groups, it is generally not the most disadvantaged who mobilise the most. Popular discontent with politics generally seems to lead to withdrawal from action rather than mobilisation.

The low protest potential is particularly high in Eastern Europe, while in the Nordic countries citizen action is much more frequent. In these countries, again there are smaller differences according to social position. Precarious groups in these

Table 8.9 Low voter turnout (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	60	56	45	56	55
Rather low	56	61	40	60	53
Rather high	48	53	31	49	45
Very high	41	43	29	39	39
Average	51	55	37	49	48

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 60 have a low voter turnout*

Table 8.10 Low protest potential (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	43	77	56	31	54
Rather low	40	67	44	26	47
Rather high	27	57	36	20	33
Very high	18	48	28	16	24
Average	31	65	42	22	40

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 43 have a low protest potential*

523 countries seem to be much more capable of mobilising for political action than in
 524 other parts of Europe. National political cultures, which are the result of regional
 525 histories (and in particular their religious matrix), strongly influence individual pro-
 526 test potential.

527 **8.5.4 Low Trust in Others and in Institutions**

528 Trust in others is a very important element of social cohesion and of the dynamics
 529 of societies, as well on the economic, social and political level. People who trust
 530 others are also more open and tolerant, and are much more sociable and active in
 531 associative life. By contrast, mistrust of others promotes attitudes of withdrawal
 532 (Zmerli and van der Meer 2017). Precarious categories, which seem to have fewer
 533 economic, human, and social resources, could well be characterised by low trust
 534 in others.

535 The survey includes first of all a general dichotomous question on trust in others:
 536 can most people be trusted, or should we always be careful with them? Respondents
 537 are then asked whether they themselves trust different categories: neighbours, peo-
 538 ple they know personally, people they are meeting for the first time, members of
 539 another religion, and finally those of another nationality. These six indicators are
 540 strongly interrelated and can be summarised in a confidence scale ($\alpha = 0.83$, 48%
 541 variance explained on the first axis). Table 8.11 shows that precarious people admit
 542 to less trusting others. The relationship is particularly strong for Western Europe
 543 ($V = 0.24$), but weaker elsewhere (respectively $V = 0.17, 0.13, 0.16$).

544 The phenomenon can be explained according to a mechanism once put forward
 545 by Ronald Inglehart (2018): when you are poor, there are many risks in spontane-
 546 ously trusting those you do not know, and being abused by them would have serious
 547 consequences for someone who is precarious. By contrast, it is much easier for
 548 economically advantaged individuals to take risks in their social ties. We can
 549 broaden the explanation: to trust others, one probably needs first to have sufficient
 550 confidence in oneself, and above all to 'know how to deal with' others in order to
 551 negotiate what is expected of them. Those who do not have the know-how and inter-
 552 personal skills are likely to be more fearful, to feel inferior, and to favour cautious
 553 attitudes. However, trust in others also depends on national cultures. Here again,

Table 8.11 Low trust in others (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average	t11.1
Very low	59	77	62	25	63	t11.2
Rather low	49	75	61	25	57	t11.3
Rather high	41	64	56	17	47	t11.4
Very high	26	57	44	11	33	t11.5
Average	43	70	57	18	50	t11.6

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 59 have a low trust in others*

t11.7

Table 8.12 Low trust in institutions (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	62	68	61	43	62
Rather low	66	71	63	41	65
Rather high	59	75	66	37	62
Very high	50	76	62	30	54
Average	59	72	63	37	61

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 62 have low trust in institutions*

there are huge variations by geographic area, with Eastern Europeans showing enormous mistrust of others, probably due to the long communist era, while Scandinavians show very strong trust in others. Precarious people in the Nordic countries trust others much more than the advantaged categories in Eastern Europe.

When one trusts others, one also tends to have more trust in collective institutions. One might therefore expect that precarious people, who have just been shown to trust others less, would be more critical of institutions. Trust in institutions is measured in fine detail using a long list of 18 collective institutions. The results show that, as in previous EVS waves, trust is generally strong for the institutions of the welfare state (education, health, and social security systems) and the maintenance of public order (army and police), but medium for the intermediate bodies and low for the central institutions of the political system. Nevertheless, the more one trusts one institution, the more one tends to trust others as well. So, a global scale of trust can be built in order to analyse its relationship with the social position of individuals and to see whether the ‘precarious’ are indeed less confident in collective institutions¹⁷ (Table 8.12).

Rather surprisingly, this is not really the case at the European level: there is no gap in institutional trust for three out of four social categories. Only the very advantaged show slightly less distrust. In fact, the results should be considered by geographic area. Trust in institutions is much lower in Eastern Europe. And in these regions, precariousness loses all influence on institutional support because society in its entirety does not trust institutions, which are looked down upon.¹⁸ For Western Europe and the Nordic countries, by contrast, the expected relationship is observed, even if it is not very strong ($V = 0.12$ and 0.11): the precarious have less confidence in institutions. But national cultures remain very strong. Here again, the Scandinavian precarious appear much more confident than those in other geographical areas.

Given the strong diversity of the institutions taken into account, are there greater differences between precariousness and certain types of institutions? This is not the case. Even for the institutions of the welfare state, the precarious do not show greater trust than the other categories. Theoretically, these institutions should be favorable to them, since they give them free access to essential common goods. But they may

¹⁷ Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.89$, 35% of explained variance on the first axis.

¹⁸ In Eastern Europe, the relationship seems even almost reversed: it is the privileged categories that tend to be a little more critical towards institutions.

585 also be aware of the shortcomings of these organisations and their insufficient open-
 586 ness to disadvantaged groups. It is only in the Eastern countries that a fairly large
 587 difference can be observed: the low level of trust in these welfare institutions is 44%
 588 among the precarious but rises to 62% among the more privileged. It is impossible
 589 to know whether this phenomenon can be explained by strong criticism by the rich
 590 of institutions that consume a lot of credit and contribute to taxes that are considered
 591 too high, or by a greater awareness among the disadvantaged of the benefit that
 592 these institutions would give them in less developed countries than in the rest
 593 of Europe.

594 **8.5.5 Not Very Sensitive to the Left–Right Divide and More** 595 **Often to the Right**

596 Political values can also be identified through ideological orientations. The left–
 597 right scale is the most classic tool for measuring this orientation in a global manner
 598 (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Knutsen 1995). In the EVS survey, everyone is asked
 599 to place themselves on a scale ranging from 1 for the left to 10 for the right. For the
 600 sample as a whole, the most striking fact is the importance of non-response among
 601 people at the bottom of the social scale: 23% of the most precarious say they cannot
 602 position themselves, compared with only 7% in the most advantaged group.
 603 Moreover, the most precarious people are less clearly on the left than the most afflu-
 604 ent (Tables 8.13 and 8.14). On the other hand, there is almost no difference for the
 605 centrists (5–6) and the right (7–10). The precarious of today thus appear in line with
 606 what Karl Marx said about the political values of the lumpenproletariat; they do not
 607 at all constitute a conscientised proletariat, the spearhead of the revolution.

608 The differences between social groups in non-positioning are quite strong what-
 609 ever the geographical area: the strong non-positioning of the precarious, which may
 610 be due to a lack of political competence as well as to a rejection of party politics,
 611 seems to be to the detriment of the left. The differences according to cultural area
 612 are also very important: the non-positioning is strong in Eastern and Southern
 613 Europe, in connection to the weak politicisation in these two geographical areas.
 614 And positioning on the left is minimal in Eastern Europe: the memory of the

Table 8.13 Non-positioning on the left–right (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	17	31	27	6	23
Rather low	15	26	25	7	20
Rather high	11	21	19	4	14
Very high	5	14	13	1	7
Average	12	24	22	4	16

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 17 do not position themselves on the scale*

t13.1

t13.2

t13.3

t13.4

t13.5

t13.6

t13.7

t13.8

t13.9

Table 8.14 Positioning on the left (1–4) on the left–right scale (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	21	13	22	27	19
Rather low	25	14	25	30	22
Rather high	28	17	30	32	27
Very high	37	19	42	34	35
Average	28	15	28	31	26

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 21 position themselves on the left side of the scale*

Table 8.15 Strong xenophobia (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	16	54	26	15	28
Rather low	17	50	24	14	27
Rather high	11	46	20	12	19
Very high	7	37	17	6	14
Average	12	48	22	11	22

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 16 show a strong xenophobia*

communist era could explain this disavowal of the left. The left–right positioning is a very synthetic value measure, and certain groups can be on the left in certain political dimensions and on the right in others. So, we must now consider more specific political dimensions.

8.5.6 *Xenophobia and Strong Nationalism Among Vulnerable Populations*

Data show that left–right orientation is fairly predictive of xenophobic attitudes, which are much more developed on the right and among people who are weakly politicised. Xenophobia is measured using five questions that encompass: wanting to reserve jobs for nationals when they are scarce and not wanting to have as neighbours people of another race, foreign or immigrant workers, Muslims, and Jews. In this way, 22% of the population are considered as having a high level of xenophobia. The links are important in terms of both social position and geographical area (Table 8.15).

Eastern Europe appears very specific, with an enormous level of xenophobia,¹⁹ probably partly explained by the very strong nationalism of this geographical area, where the national community and the ethnic inter-self are privileged, in a context

¹⁹No Eastern European country is immune to the phenomenon. High levels of xenophobia are found in Czechia (67%), in Lithuania (61%), in Bulgaria and Slovakia (59%), in Hungary (58%), in Romania (46%), in Poland (38%), in Slovenia (37%), and in Estonia (36%).

Table 8.16 Strong nationalism (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low	29	52	34	23	36
Rather low	23	46	31	17	30
Rather high	17	37	27	13	22
Very high	10	30	24	9	16
Average	19	43	29	14	26

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 29 show strong nationalism.*

632 of recurrent conflicts towards national minorities. But, independently of this geo-
 633 graphical factor, for each zone, xenophobia is much stronger at the lower end of the
 634 social scale. The explanation often put forward is the competition for employment
 635 between precarious nationals and foreigners, which fuels their enmity. But the
 636 explanation also lies in the weaker school education and a general orientation
 637 towards more authoritarian and nationalist values among the precarious
 638 (Bréchon 2012).

639 Xenophobia and nationalism are very generally coupled (here $V = 0.28$). There is
 640 also a link with the left–right scale ($V = 0.14$). And so, as might be expected, the
 641 precarious are much more nationalistic than the advantaged categories. The scale
 642 used in relation to nationalism includes a question on national pride and five ques-
 643 tions on the conception of nationality: being born in the country; having national
 644 origins; respecting the law and institutions; speaking the language; and sharing the
 645 culture ($\alpha = 0.73$). Nationalism is strong everywhere, but with significant differ-
 646 ences according to social position and geographic area (Table 8.16).

647 Because of its history and also because of current events, Eastern Europe is very
 648 strongly nationalistic, whereas the Nordic countries are not so. Whatever the geo-
 649 graphical area, the precarious are more nationalist than the other social categories.
 650 It is probably their low education level that explains both their xenophobia and their
 651 nationalism (Hjerm 2001). This low level of education probably also explains their
 652 lack of openness to Europe and the world: while 37% of the disadvantaged say they
 653 have little attachment to Europe and the world,²⁰ this is the case for only 22% of the
 654 most advantaged group.²¹ Being in positions of identity withdrawal, one might also
 655 expect that the precarious would be more favourable towards the death penalty than
 656 other social categories. This is indeed what is observed. Only 42% of those in pre-
 657 carious situations say it is ‘never justified’, compared to 54% of the most privileged.

²⁰From a battery of five indicators of geographical identity: whether or not one is attached to one’s city, region, country, Europe, and the world, with four different types of responses, we use the two largest spaces – which are very strongly linked ($V = 0.51$) – to construct a scale that makes it possible to identify those who say they are strongly attached to Europe and the world.

²¹On the other hand, there is no link with social position on the question of whether the enlargement of the European Union should continue or whether it has gone too far. It is a question of political judgement and not of values and openness to globalisation.

And those in favour of the death penalty (on a scale from 7 to 10) represent 27% of the most disadvantaged, compared to only 14% of the most advantaged.²²

8.5.7 A Very Relative Attachment to Democratic Values

It was previously noted that dissatisfaction with the functioning of the political system was very high and that the precarious were even more dissatisfied than the others. But are the precarious people strongly attached to democratic values and are they more or less attached than other social groups? Several questions help to answer this question. At first glance, democracy seems to be well entrenched in the political culture of Europe as a whole (Table 8.17): 95% consider democracy to be a very or fairly good political system and, on a scale of 1–10 to measure whether it is important to live in a democratically governed country, 61% choose the maximum answer. But doubts about a true commitment to democracy arise when one observes that a government of experts is considered a good political system by 54%, that leadership by a strong leader (who does not depend on Parliament and elections) can satisfy 28% of the population, and governance by the military can satisfy 11%.

Precarious populations tend to broadly share a positive vision of democracy with society as a whole, considered a good system by 91%. However, significantly fewer find democratic governance very important, and there is greater sympathy for a government of experts or that of a strong leader. To refine the diagnosis, a scale was

Table 8.17 Importance of democratic government compared to support for other political systems (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Vertical %	Social position				Average
	Very low	Rather low	Rather high	Very high	
Democratically governed country:					
Not important (1–5)	11	8	5	3	7
Somewhat important (6–7)	12	10	7	5	9
Important (8–9)	27	25	23	22	24
Absolutely important (10)	51	57	65	71	61
A good political system:					
A democracy	91	94	97	98	95
A government of experts	59	57	51	49	54
A strong leader (without parliamentary and electoral constraints)	36	34	24	16	28
That the army rules the country	17	14	8	4	11

²²This gap according to social position exists in all geographical areas but is very small in Eastern and Southern Europe.

Table 8.18 Finding very or fairly good at least two undemocratic political systems (in per cent; EVS 2017) t18.1
t18.2

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low (11–24)	30	39	27	20	31
Rather low (25–37)	24	41	27	19	29
Rather high (38–59)	18	29	21	11	20
Very high (60–88)	10	21	14	8	12
Average	20	34	23	14	23

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 30 find at least two undemocratic political systems very or fairly good* t18.12
t18.13

678 constructed with the four types of political systems considered in the questionnaire
679 to distinguish between those who exclusively support democracy (find it a very or
680 fairly good system and find the other three very or fairly bad) and those who also
681 accept an undemocratic system, two or three. Only 40% of Europeans are ‘exclusive
682 democrats’, 37% support at least one undemocratic political system, and 23% two
683 or more. Consider the latter group to discern its importance by social position and
684 geographic area (Table 8.18).

685 Anti-democratic attitudes are much more common among precarious popula-
686 tions, regardless of the geographical area considered, even in Eastern Europe, where
687 the anti-democratic culture is the most widespread.²³ Here again, school education
688 certainly plays a major role.

689 **8.5.8 Precarious People Who Are a Little More Social and Less** 690 **in Favour of Economic Liberalism**

691 The political values of left and right generally have an economic and social dimen-
692 sion, with those on the left denouncing social inequalities while those on the right
693 defend freedom of enterprise and competition between economic actors. In the EVS
694 survey, one can construct a scale of attitudes opposing liberal economic orientations
695 to social positions.²⁴ The scale is not very coherent ($\alpha = 0.51$), which shows the
696 complexity of opinions in these areas (Gonthier 2017). Here, 45% of the sample
697 expressing the most social orientation are retained (Table 8.19).

²³Romania is a particularly worrying case. Only 8% of Romanians are exclusive democrats, while 72% consider at least two undemocratic systems to be good.

²⁴It must be noted that the most precarious wish for more income equality, but there is only a small gap between social groups: 40% of the most precarious wish for more egalitarian incomes against 29% of the most advantaged ($V = 0.06$).

Table 8.19 Favouring a social orientation of policies (in per cent; EVS 2017)

Social position	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Nordic countries	Average
Very low (11–24)	50	51	52	41	50
Rather low (25–37)	48	47	47	36	47
Rather high (38–59)	43	37	49	34	43
Very high (60–88)	41	31	50	33	40
Average	45	43	49	36	45

Reading: *Out of 100 Western Europeans of very low social position, 50 show social rather than liberal orientations in economic matters*

Whatever the geographical area, the precarious are a little more demanding of social policies, but their anti-liberalism is not virulent. Basically, one can consider the precarious as quite ambivalent. They want social policies that are favourable to the poorest, but they are also prepared to improve their situation within the framework of the liberal system in place. Precariousness does not often lead to radicalism but rather generates moderation in political expectations. The above statement is confirmed by the results of several other items about income equalisation, and on the need for a society to eliminate major income inequalities as well as to guarantee basic needs for the entire population and to recognise people on their merits. While a weak relationship exists with the ISEI index for the two questions on income inequality, there is no difference for the latter two. Demanding social policies, precarious people also expect economic growth and job creation. One question invites a choice between the priority given to environmental protection, even if it slows growth and some lose their jobs, and the priority given to economic growth and job creation, even if the environment suffers in one way or another; 45% of those in precariousness give priority to economic growth, compared with only 25% of the most advantaged. Once again, there is a significant gap in all geographic areas, with the Nordic countries being particularly sensitive to environmental protection, while those in Eastern Europe are not very sensitive.

8.5.9 Intolerance of Deviance: Small Differences by Social Position

The survey tests a range of behaviours usually considered deviant, such as incivility. The results show a massive rejection (Table 8.20). White-collar deviances (acceptance of bribes and false tax declarations) are even more stigmatised than blue-collar incivilities (fraud with social benefits and public transport).

One might have thought that the precarious would be particularly severe in relation to white-collar deviance and indulgent for blue-collar fraud. However, there is very little difference according to social position: tax cheating and bribes are equally

Table 8.20 Never finding deviance justified (in per cent; EVS 2017)

t20.1

In %	Social position				Average
	Very low	Rather low	Rather high	Very high	
Accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	78	79	80	80	79
Cheating on your tax return if you can	67	68	70	69	68
Claiming benefits beyond what one is entitled to	59	63	66	65	63
Arranging not to pay for your ticket on the train or bus	59	57	56	50	56
Taking drugs, marijuana or hashish	64	59	53	45	56

t20.2

t20.3

t20.4

t20.5

t20.6

t20.7

t20.8

t20.9

t20.10

Reading: *Out of 100 Europeans of very low social position, 78 never find it justified to accept a bribe (answer 1 on the scale)*

t20.11

t20.12

726 condemned according to social position; benefit fraud is condemned a little less by
 727 precarious people, but precarious people, by contrast, are a little more severe with
 728 regard to incivilities regarding transport tickets. These moral judgements are there-
 729 fore not strongly dependent on the social positions and interests of the precarious.
 730 They broadly share common morals and would even be more conformist, especially
 731 with regard to drugs: they are much stricter in this area, whereas the privileged tend
 732 to be much less so, whatever the geographical area.

733 **8.5.10 How Have the Political Values of the Precarious** 734 **Evolved Over the Last 40 Years?**

735 Using data from EVS 2008 and earlier waves, I demonstrated (Bréchon 2012) that
 736 the level of authoritarianism of the working class had been fairly stable since 1981²⁵
 737 and that the difference with other social groups has been erased because of a rein-
 738 forced authoritarian demand in the privileged circles. At the same time, the anti-
 739 democratic and nationalistic workers were on the rise, but their xenophobia was
 740 declining (though mainly among skilled workers). Table 8.21 shows that, from EVS
 741 2008 to 2017, the strong valorisation of authority increased in the sample as a whole
 742 (+7 points), but there is a very small difference according to the social position of
 743 individuals. Anti-democratic attitudes have moved very little (except among the
 744 most privileged), and the same is true for nationalism. Xenophobia is declining in
 745 all social categories, with the same gap of social positions. The precarious are
 746 always more favourable to undemocratic political systems and more strongly
 747 nationalist and xenophobic.

748 Let us now consider the changes between 2008 and 2017 for the other political
 749 values taken into account, and first for individualisation and individualism

²⁵Data from 13 European countries, excluding Eastern Europe.

Table 8.21 Level of anti-democratic attitudes, nationalism, and xenophobia (in per cent; EVS 2008 and 2017) t21.1
t21.2

Social position	Strong authority		Strong anti-democracy		Strong nationalism		Strong xenophobia	
	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017
Very low	17	25	30	31	34	36	33	28
Rather low	15	22	30	29	29	31	30	27
Rather high	15	22	22	20	22	22	26	19
Very high	14	21	22	12	17	16	19	14
Average	15	22	25	23	25	26	27	22

Table 8.22 Political values and social position (in per cent; EVS 2008 and 2017) t22.1

Social position	Weak individualisation		Strong individualism		Very weak politicisation		Political discontent	Would not vote	Weak protest potential	
	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2008	2008	2017
Very low	68	64	73	65	39	36	60	27	62	54
Rather low	56	53	74	59	32	28	57	26	52	47
Rather high	43	38	65	49	22	19	48	19	41	33
Very high	29	27	56	37	15	11	46	15	32	24
Average	48	45	67	53	26	24	52	21	46	40

(Table 8.22). Individuals’ desire for autonomy has increased slightly and this slow evolution is observed in all social groups. By contrast, evolution concerning individualism is very clear: it is strongly decreasing in all social categories, but nevertheless more at the top of the social ladder than at the bottom. So the social gap is stronger than before.

The level of politicisation is very stable, which is hardly surprising. As for political discontent, we have seen that it is significantly more developed among the precarious; the same scale cannot be constructed for EVS 2008, but a comparable question is selected, measuring dissatisfaction with the way democracy functioned in the country (1 to 4 on a 10-point scale). This strong critical tendency towards politics was therefore already present in EVS 2008. And, as in EVS 2017, criticism did not very often translate into action: precarious people said more than others that they would abstain if a general election were held next Sunday,²⁶ and they are still very reluctant to show their anger through political action, even though, overall, the potential for protest is growing.

Table 8.23 continues the comparison with EVS 2008. The scale presented in Table 8.11 could not be constructed at that time, but the classic dichotomous

²⁶Again, the same scale cannot be constructed as in EVS 2017 (Table 8.9).

Table 8.23 Political values and social position (in per cent; EVS 2008 and 2017)

Social position	Caution others		Institutions: ^a no trust		No answer left–right		Left-oriented		In favour social		Intolerance to deviances ^b	
	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017	2008	2017
Very low	75	76	45	62	28	23	22	19	54	50	51	54
Rather low	72	71	47	65	21	20	23	22	46	47	44	54
Rather high	60	61	43	62	15	14	24	27	40	43	45	54
Very high	48	45	38	54	11	7	28	35	36	40	42	48
Average	64	64	43	61	18	16	24	26	41	45	45	52

^aThe EVS 2017 scale takes into account 18 institutions, the EVS 2008 scale only 17 (social networks were not tested in 2008 but, in fact, very few people trust them)

^bChoose four or five times ‘never justified’ for deviances in the public space

767 question distinguishing between trust in others and caution towards them was present in the two waves. A wide gap between social categories can be observed. The general attitude of caution is therefore permanent among the precarious.

770 The low level of trust in institutions has risen sharply since 2008,²⁷ in roughly equal proportions for all social categories. This weakening is therefore a general phenomenon linked to the loss of trust in elites.

773 The orientation between left and right was already a dimension of values that was not always understood and accepted by the Europeans. The non-response rate was already much higher in 2008. For those who express an orientation, there is a decrease to the left at the bottom of the social scale and an increase to the right. The left appears to be losing popular categories, in line with the rise of right-wing populism in these popular categories. At the same time, expectations of social orientation are slightly increasing in all social groups. Finally, it should be noted that intolerance to deviance is increasing in all social groups.

781 8.6 Summary

782 Even considered globally, without being able to take into account all the internal specificities of precariousness, our analyses show that people at the bottom of the social ladder present specificities of values. At the religious level, the precarious are slightly more religious and practice more than the more privileged categories. This is an unexpected result in relation to the commonplace expectation that popular categories would be more secularised than the well off. I have tended to explain it by a slightly stronger conformism in the popular categories.

²⁷The difference in measurement at the two dates (17 institutions in one case, 18 in the other) cannot explain the rise recorded.

Differences in political values are more important than in religious matters. The precarious are more individualistic but less individualised. They are less interested in politics and they position themselves less often on a left–right scale, probably because of a lack of knowledge and insufficient political landmarks among some of them to display a general political identity. This does not prevent them from being more dissatisfied with those in power, but they mobilise less strongly in public action, whether through voting or social and political protest. They do not easily trust in others and in institutions. They are less inclined to left-wing values, they show greater xenophobia and nationalism, and they are less attached to democratic values. However, they are a little more supportive of social policies and a little less supportive of economic liberalism. These specificities of values are not epiphenomena, but correspond essentially to perennial trends, which are deeply rooted in the sociology of this group.

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