

Dear Helen,

Sorry for the delay. I had to finish an article that was overdue.

I think it can certainly make sense to interpret (core) values as having to do with the sacred. You might also relate that to work by Kenneth Pargament, who in his book on religious coping defines religion as the search for significance in ways related to the sacred. As you describe it, some values would be closer to the sacred than others. For me a clean desk has a value, but it is not essential to me. Integrity, on the other hand, is. Similarly, a pop group may embody the sacred IF it becomes a centre of awe and wonder around which ones life gravitates. It would be less sacred if one just loves the music. The sacred in my view can be more or less transcendent in the classical sense, although it would certainly transcend our everyday existence, lift us up, move us beyond ourselves, or something like that.

So my suggestion would be: don't try to show that your values are sacred and your daughter's pop group is not. Try to describe how both may or may not be closer to the sacred...

Does that make sense?

Best regards,
Ruard

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Onderwerp: Values and the sacred

Dear Ruard,

I hope you are well.

I have been working on my thesis, especially trying to justify my work as a practical theologian, which has always proved tricky.

My research focuses on the influence of personal values in relation to the founding of the school in Swanage.

Your work has been very helpful, especially the 'forks in the road' paper, but I just wanted to try and clarify a few things if that's ok (more questions, so sorry!).

In my writing I am trying to say that values mean something in relation to your definition of the sacred, *'that it is a center around which one's life gravitates and a presence that evokes awe and passion'*.

I am trying to suggest that because values are a centre around which our lives gravitate, and they are a presence that evoke awe and wonder in some respects, that they have a sacred dimension.

But, I'm not sure that my argument holds water as my teenage daughter might argue the same about her favourite pop group!

So, I'm also thinking that values have a transcendent quality, in the sense they 'exist' beyond our material existence, but they are also immanent as they are operational in our lives (but maybe the same is still true of my daughter's experience of the pop group??).

Some might argue that values come from God, which would explain a link to the sacred, but I am trying to explain it in a wider understanding for the secular context I am studying.

Do you think I can justify arguing that values are sacred, using your explanation of what sacred means? Or is it too far removed from what you mean?

Secondly, if values can be understood as having something sacred about them, can I justify going another step and argue that my research into the influence of values is related to studying 'religion', bearing in mind your definition of religion as *'transcending patterns of action and meaning embedded in and contributing to the relation with the sacred'*?

Thank you if you have time, but please don't worry about responding if you are too busy.
Helen