



Deliberately planned and encouraged confusion between cults and religion

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¹ Groupe d'Etude des Mouvements de Pensée en vue de la Protection de l'Individu, Marseille

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² Resolution 1992 (2014). The protection of minors against excesses of sects

³ Association Chrétienne de France et des pays Francophones

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⁴ Espace éthique méditerranéen & UMR 7268 « ADES », auteur de « Le gouvernement des émotions et l'art de déjouer les manipulations », Albin Michel 2014

Deliberate and concerted confusion between sects and religions

Thematic approach through the spectrum of FECRIS' experience in the Council of Europe, OSCE, FRA and UN

Danièle Muller-Tulli, President of FECRIS which she represents in the INGO⁵ Conference in the Council of Europe

An analysis of the situation in Europe, through the report commissioned by the PACE⁶ from the Parliamentarian Rudy Salles, entitled, "The protection of minors against sectarian abuse."

History

FECRIS obtained its status as a participant to the Council of Europe in January 2005. It had introduced its application in 2002.

In his remarkable book, 'Scientology, the autopsy of a cult of State', Emmanuel Fansten wrote, "The Council of Europe provides Scientology and its allies a new sounding board... the organisation deals principally with Human Rights within a wider Europe. This is an obvious opportunity for sects⁷ seeking official recognition.

During the 1990s, we thus observed the growing power of sectarian networks. Some parliamentarians would knowingly or not become bullet targets, choice targets in fact, for the entry tactics, first of Scientology and then others. NGOs were bought at the price of gold to form important allies (we saw an example in Copenhagen) and other minority movements, supported by certain scientologists and religious historians, formed common networks.

Their objective: To bring the debate onto the field of free religion, to position themselves as victims of attack against this fundamental freedom.

Thus in 2002 FECRIS submitted its application for status as a participant.

In normal circumstances, a few months suffice for the preliminary enquiry and for the NGO to be either approved or rejected. Hundreds of NGOs have followed this procedure.

FECRIS's application was blocked. The applications got held up in offices... or simply disappeared. Then, three parliamentarians placed their vetoes on the application and submitted a voluminous memoire against FECRIS to the Human Rights Commission. FECRIS for its part sent its own report of activities to the Council of Europe, but strangely the report never reached its destination.

It is important to note that during parliamentary sessions, everyone goes to the parliamentary hall, the offices are emptied of people and doors stay open. It is easy to enter and remove documents.

Other factors clearly highlight the lobbying powers of the sects; the lady due to report on the dossier suddenly resigned on health grounds. She was replaced by Dick Marty, Public Prosecutor for the Tessin Canton of Switzerland, who is used to dealing with problems involving the Mafia. I often met him in the parliament's bar. He admitted never having been so harassed within the context of his work.

Finally, after three years and largely thanks to Dick Marty, it was demonstrated that FECRIS met the required criteria to obtain this status. Thus in 2005 it obtained that status and

⁵ The INGO (international non-governmental organizations) Conference is the body representing civil society in the Council of Europe, a European organization founded in 1949. The Council of Europe has 47 member States with some 800 million citizens and its seat is in Strasbourg, France.

⁶ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

⁷ *Sect* comes from the Latin word *secta*, which means "school of thought." It may apply to a religious faith or denomination, or it may refer to splinter group. In contradistinction, the word *cult* always carries a negative connotation. Cult lobbies in international organizations have obtained that the word "cult" may not be used.

I was appointed a delegate to the Council of Europe, a position which I hold since. I represent FECRIS on the Human Rights, Education and Culture, and Social Affairs commissions.

Very rapidly, and this is exceptional, the Human Rights Commission of the Conference of INGOs decided to set the day of the **28th June 2007** for research into sectarian abuse: **"Sectarian Abuse: A challenge to democracy and human rights."**

The programme was co-organised by the President of the INGO Conference, Annelise OESCHGER, who was aware of the danger of sects and their damaging powers, and me.

Several members of FECRIS figured amongst the speakers; Jean-Pierre JOUGLA, Tom SACKVILLE and Maxim YURCHENKO.

Some of FECRIS's detractors were also present including Jeremy GUNN, great opponent of the "anti-sect" organisations and defender of "New Religious Movements", strongly critical of France before the OSCE and friend of Eileen Barker. Also present: collaborators of Scientology.

In his statement Jean-Pierre JOUGLA declared that:

To continue dealing with the question of contemporary sects as a religious matter is to conceal the essential aspects of this phenomenon which currently involves health, well-being, personal development, psychotherapy, corporate training, science and culture, etc.

Confusing sect with religion reinforces the error behind which sects hide with even more determination than that with which they persuade their adepts of the need to 'evangelize' with their utopian message and give it body, making them militants and spreaders of propaganda for their cause.

Infact this amalgam has the objective of detracting people from thinking of the true nature of sects, because sects depend on single and totalitarian thought. Religion is just one mask, amongst many, that certain sects adopt to impress and win over their future adepts.

Pursuing the objective of making political leaders aware of the question of sects and of recalling the commitments made in the PACE Recommendation 1412 (1999) relating to the illegal activities of sects (which followed REC 1178 (1992) relating to sects and new religious movements), on 27th January 2011 the Conference of INGOs adopted the Recommendation: "Sectarian abuse and the violation of human rights".

This Recommendation recalled that Rec. 1412 placed very particular importance on the protection of those who are most vulnerable, especially children.

In order to be effective, this REC. needed to be presented to the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council, be approved by at least ten parliamentarians and then be the subject of a report to the Assembly.

Mrs OESCHGER and I thus discussed the matter with Mr Rudy SALLES, whom we knew to be aware of the subject for having raised it on several occasions during various parliamentary commissions of enquiry in France.

The MIVILUDES had already approached the Legal Affairs Commission of the European Council's Parliamentary Assembly, which took interest in the report on "The Protection of Minors against Sectarian Abuse". The Member of Parliament Rudy SALLES was appointed in September 2011, to report.

FECRIS made its contribution both directly through the report by Branka DUJMIC for the "Sectarian abuse and the violation of Human Rights" working group, and indirectly by providing various useful information to the Legal Affairs Commission, as well as by recommending certain people of importance.

We know what happened next:

A vast campaign of attacks against the report and Rudy SALLES in person, against the MIVILUDES and of course against FECRIS, was orchestrated by the sectarian lobby. Letters inundated the office of Anne Brasseur the PACE President, pamphlets circulated, a side event was organised on the 8th of April within the very walls of the Council of Europe and posters were plastered on lift walls and corridors, all denouncing, "a serious threat to reli-

gious freedom". This was supported by some unexpected personalities; an ex legal advisor of the European Court of Human Rights, an ex-member of the Helsinki Group and a member of PACE.

This was previously unheard of.

The recommendation did not get over the hurdle. The resolution suffered 58 amendments, meaning that it was quite emptied of its substance.

I will end with the recommendation by Rudy SALLES, who could not join us today, has asked me to read it out. You will clearly understand why we have chosen the conference name, "Deliberate and concerted confusion between sects and religion."

I wish you all an excellent conference.

Rudy Salles, French Parliamentarian, Author of the Report on "The Protection of Minors against the excesses of sects" in the Council of Europe

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would have loved to have participated in your conference, as I had been invited to do by the Vice-President of FECRIS, Danielle Muller-Tulli. Unfortunately, my busy agenda did not allow me to join you in Marseilles.

I did nevertheless wish to give you my testimony, that of a parliamentarian who for 25 years has been speaking out in the fight against cults in the French parliament. In France this subject is dealt with very responsibly. Thus, in all the commissions of enquiry in which I have sat, voting has been unanimous. This is certainly rare enough to be stressed. It highlights the fact that in France the fight against cults is a subject that brings consensus and that it transcends party political considerations.

On the other hand, I could not have imagined the extent to which this same subject could solicit so much controversy in Europe. In my capacity as a member of the Legal Affairs Commission at the Council of Europe, I was appointed to prepare a report on the protection of minors against sects. A subject of this nature should have mobilised both the members concerned with the fight against sects and even more so, those with the protection of children. This was not the case. From the very first auditions, it was apparent that there was a wide difference of interpretation between the member countries of the Council. Certain parliamentarians even expressed reservations on the very principle of the report. Others went as far as denying the existence of sects, preferring to speak of new religions. Others were totally ignorant on the subject.

As our work progressed, the atmosphere became more and more tense. The sects' propaganda was at work, even to bringing accusations against the one reporting. In fact, as a member of MIVILUDES, I was accused of not being impartial. Multi-coloured pamphlets were distributed, to make people believe that freedom of thought was being threatened and that I was a horrible liberty killer. This campaign of defamation bore its fruit, with the result that the report did not raise the requisite majority vote.

This experience leaves a bitter taste because I was motivated, as I have been all these years, by the will to protect personal freedom against all cultic excesses, because we know the devastating effects of this on so many individuals.

Thus there is major work to be done at European level, to bring awareness of the reality of this scourge. This is all the more essential in that Europe is a continent without frontiers, which facilitates the development of certain multinational cultic organisations.

We have lost a battle, but will not give up. There will be other fights in this field and we will be present.

Rudy Salles

Introduction by Didier Pachoud , President of GEMPPI, and Director in charge of FECRIS' Finance, organizer of the Conference in Marseilles

Hello everybody, welcome to Marseilles!

Thanks to the members of GEMPPI present today for their help in organizing this conference and thank you all for coming from afar, from Russia, the United States (New York and California) and Canada.

In 5 minutes, I'll have to be very concise.

I chose to bring answers to the question I am often asked: What is FECRIS?

First, for an association like ours, the GEMPPI, member of FECRIS based in Marseilles, one might ask what use is FECRIS in our daily work?

Indeed, how can the European organization FECRIS help families and people who come to us or contact us every day here in Marseilles (1200 calls per year)?

For several years, cultic groups have tended to crumble into a multitude of small therapeutic entities and it has becoming increasingly necessary to be connected to a network of specialists spread across France, Europe and even the wide world, for proximity information that can serve victims precisely because all these movement tend to internationalize. You will recall that FECRIS has among others, correspondents in Australia and Israel...

There is also the fact that the Internet has revolutionized communications. Thus, as I said before, many cultic groups, even tiny ones, working abroad can easily and cheaply thanks to the Internet creep into people's homes without external contact. Our associations can confirm this from experience. So here in Marseilles we face, as you do too, activities at a distance by Canadian, American, Japanese, African, Korean, cultic groups, which are sometimes unknown in our country but notorious in other parts of Europe or the world and which cause serious damage to families here. If you look for information about the internet very often there is no special explanation concerning this. Finally it is by questioning the FECRIS network of associations (Austria, Australia, Canada, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Russia, I shall not quote them all as FECRIS concerns at least 23 countries) we get useful information to help families and individuals victim of cultic excesses in Marseilles (Court cases, sex cases, scams, etc.). This happened to me again recently and an answer came from Austria.

Other FECRIS associations across Europe could tell the same story. In fact, when a person uses a local or national association like the GEMPPI, it relates to an international network. Similarly when a person goes to the FECRIS site, it may transfer the question through the global associations' network.

Another thing I could say about the usefulness of FECRIS: cults and sects and extreme religions have NGO and people of influence in all European and international institutions. They often manage to influence political, economic, and cultural policy makers at all levels. It's like a shadow army of fanatical volunteers, draped in a mantle of religious or humanist respectability, offering charity but acting slyly under different labels voluntarily forgetting to specify their real identity. There are only a chosen few who are still aware of the danger specialized in this field, MIVILUDES in France, supported by CIAOSN⁸ in Belgium, Bundesstelle für Sektenfragen in Austria. Given that FECRIS is a private organization not dependent of a State, of a religion or political party has fewer constraints in its capacity of expression and therefore more freedom to denounce the actions of sectarian and cultic groups in the various international institutions. This is a very difficult work to do because France with its tradition of secularity and vigilance, FECRIS with a somewhat similar ap-

⁸ Centre d'information et d'Avis sur les Organisations Sectaires Nuisibles (www.CIAOSN.be)

proach in its religious neutrality, are exceptions in the concert of nations and it is very difficult to overcome opposition by cults and sects disguised as religions in such a minority context.

However, FECRIS has repeatedly been able to hamper cultic efforts. Note that some other European States have implemented appropriate measures to prevent or contain the cultic/sectarian phenomenon, including Germany, Austria, the Russian Federation, and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Very special thanks to Danièle Muller, the new President of FECRIS, who for years as our representative in the Council of Europe has carried a difficult diplomatic battle since we are not in a position of strength rather the opposite. I would say that we face a hostile environment in some European institutions, but it is also a tactical exercise that has sometimes achieved results that deserve recognition. I wish to express our gratefulness to our founder, Jacques Richard, our president(s) Jean Nokin, (who is no longer with us), Rosa Maria Pujol, Friedrich Griess, present here today, and last but not least, Tom Sackville.

There is still much to be said but I will stop here.

Just one information related to the cult phenomenon that is currently shaking Europe and since we are in Marseilles, was just created 10 days ago the "Association of victims of radical Islam and anachronistic practices - Turquoise Freedom".

The aim of this association is to help prevent, train, inform, meet, assist in confidence and promote the cause of legal and natural persons confronted or victims of sectarian or other abuses linked to Islamic radicalism or anachronistic and harmful customary practices. The association is secular, humanistic and politically neutral and forbids itself any direct or indirect promotion of a political party or religion or belief which it addresses rationally. This association has an international vocation and plans next year to seek to rally to FECRIS.

This emphasizes the fact that FECRIS is constantly evolving to meet new needs that arise. May I introduce its President, Khaled Slougui, former journalist and former professor of University in Algeria and teacher of the rules and customs of France to newcomers wishing to settle in this country, especially axed on Secularism. He has devised a training module for preventing religious radicalization of interest to the public and professionals who may be faced with radicalized or potentially radicalized people.

SECULARISM

Serge Blisko, President of MIVILUDES

Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires

A topical issue:

The recent tragic events highlighted tensions, misunderstandings and crises which cross through the social fabric certainly with regard to religious matters, but also cultural and identity issues, which endanger our peaceful coexistence. Facing these challenges, the role of those carrying the responsibilities of the State and particularly the elected representatives is essential, because they have, as you have, to carry forth the values and principles of the Republic.

Secularism, today more than ever, is the heart of the issue, because, faced with the societal transformations, it is the principle by which the diversity of convictions and identities can be integrated in the world we share.

An issue which meets MIVILUDES' substantive work:

Last year, MIVILUDES were asked by the Inter-ministerial Centre of Prevention against Delinquency (CIPD - Centre Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance) in

charge of the preventive component of the government scheme, to tackle violent radicalisation and terrorist organisations. Thus MIVILUDES participates in the training scheme of the State's actors on issues of undue influence and, on a larger scale, brings its expertise to the government on the matter of deviances linked to religious expression.

Introducing the Mission:

The MIVILUDES is an inter-ministerial mission established under the responsibility of the Prime minister by the 28th of November 2002 decree. It has three main missions:

- To observe and analyse the cult phenomenon with respect of its prejudicial acts to human rights, to fundamental freedoms and other reprehensible activities.
- To coordinate the public authorities preventative and repressive action against cult-related abuse, and participate in the training and information of public agents.
- To inform the public of the risks and dangers threatening it and to implement action to help victims of cult-related abuse.

Mission Objectives:

Secularism is a central concept in MIVILUDES' work⁹. Following the Order of the Solar Temple (OTS) tragedies, the struggle against cult-related abuse was born from the obligation that the State forged for itself to prevent the harm done to individuals or to public order due to undue influence by a group on behalf of an ideology. By instituting this mission, the State aimed to ensure the defense of Republican principles when rights are attacked "in the name of" and often "on behalf of" religious, spiritual or philosophical beliefs. In other words: our goal is to ensure that behind claims of freedom of conscience there is no attack against the law, and especially to protect individuals from undue influence by a group.

MIVILUDES may intervene within the strict framework provided by secularism: to defend individual freedoms while ensuring state neutrality. That is the reason why cult-related deviance cannot, under any circumstances, be assimilated with religious-related deviance: in the course of its work the mission never places itself in the field of convictions, or of ideological or religious doctrines.

The concept of cult-related abuse we have forged is an operating and pragmatic concept, which finds its legitimacy in reports and observations collected by the MILS¹⁰ then the MIVILUDES: cult-related abuse is characterised by the implementation, by an organised group or by an individual, whatever their nature or activity, of pressures or techniques aiming to create, maintain or exploit a state of psychological or physical submission in a person, depriving him of part of his free will, with prejudicial consequences for him, his relatives or for society.

Thus, no matter what the doctrinal foundations of the group or the movement at the origin of the abuse may be: as soon as a certain number of criteria exist, the first of which is submission, the repressive action of the State has to be implemented.

The line of action of the mission is this red line: identify who is threatened and who threatens us. (Quoting Prefect N'Gahane).

What the mission can observe:

The watch dog work of the mission is to warn public opinion about the acts of groups but also to attract attention to the various fields which favour cult-related abuse.

⁹ The reflection about Sects and Secularism is so important to the action of the State that the MIVILUDES organised an academic seminar in partnership with the Practical school of High Studies which has been set from October 2003 to June 2004, the works of this seminar has been published by La documentation française.

¹⁰ Mission Interministérielle de Lutte contre les Sectes

A marginal phenomenon...

The phenomenon of radicalisation and the temptation of communitarianism or cultism have two common points at least. First, a belief modality characterised by a radical adherence to a radical idea: to concur unconditionally with an ideology which refuses any compromise with common sense. Then, a totalitarian and totalizing ideology which subjects every area of life to a norm exceeding positive law. Such forms of beliefs threaten peaceful coexistence and, even though they are fortunately extremely marginal, they still are the extreme and deviant tip of a substantive movement presently existing throughout society in its cultural, identitarian and religious components.

Who falls within the contemporary religious landscape?

Far from being a resurgence from the past, these forms of beliefs are profoundly modern: they fall within a globalised world where cultural exchanges increase, where the religious scene has become plural and complex, and where, with the development of New Information and Communication Technologies (NICT), the whole world, with its diversity of proposals and spiritual and religious lobbies, has broken into what used to be intimate. They also fall in a world where the individual affirms himself and claims his autonomy in every sphere of his life, including the spiritual one. Secularisation of our societies does not imply less belief. Today, anyone can do his shopping with a plethora of spiritual offers: therapeutic, professional, educational, personal development, self-realisation, etc. Sociologists speak of "Spiritual Do it yourself (D.I.Y)." to characterise this quest that the individual pursues alone, finding in various traditions what makes sense to him, leaving behind him familiar religious institutions: in general individuals no longer feel at home as easily in churches and traditional interlocutors of the State, and new religious actors manifest themselves in small evangelical groups, various branches of Islam, internal tendencies of Catholicism, new religious movements, etc.

Individuality in belief does not exclude the need for community:

Indeed, individualism in the approach does not exclude the need for the community, on the contrary: the aim is to validate beliefs to concur within relationship to others, and this is accomplished by exchange, experience sharing, creation of little groups, of social networks with shared interests...

The possible path to abuse:

The cult phenomenon appears when this community reassurance takes an extreme form: the group establishes itself against society, loses touch with reality and radicalises itself around a leader or an idea. Cult movements that the mission knows well express their rejection of society and mistrust in institutions, media, common knowledge, and by adopting alternatives beliefs which find their roots in a well developed conspiracy theory (about vaccines, medicine, school, food). Most of the time, violence is turned inwards toward themselves or their families. In the radicalisation phenomenon, distrust and opposition to society are linked to an extreme claim of identity that can lead from word to deed, to violence toward the outside world.

Facing these new tensions, secularism should be reaffirmed:

I repeat, these extreme phenomena are rare, but it is up to us to make sure they are forestalled, and to prevent communities from closing upon themselves, to prevent distrust and hatred toward society, and to prevent any kind of coercion by an ideology or a group. The tools to success are the law, and the legitimacy provided by the political framework that underpins it, that is secularism.

Genesis of secularism

Postulation of secularism in France was born of our specific history, the French Revolution, where politics tear themselves away from the influence of the clergy, where a system of Republican schools is established, where education is based on reason and rejects any reference to dogma, and finally, where the institutional struggles for power made it necessary to bring about separation between the different forms of power.

Thus, secularism comes from the necessary differentiation between two orders, the political order and the religious one, and consequently leads to the separation of the public and private spheres: the State does not intervene in the citizen's religion, and religion does not intervene in the functioning of the State. The legal framework in which the regime of separation between the political and the religious orders was progressively elaborated through the 1905 law on the Separation of the Churches and the State, whose first article states that , "*The Republic ensures the freedom of conscience. It guarantees the free practise of religion subject only to restrictions imposed in the interests of public order*", while the 2nd article of the 1905 law specifies: "*The Republic does not recognise, employ or fund any religion*"; and through the 1946 Constitution and the repetition of its preamble in the 1958 Constitution *which states that "France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It ensures the equality before the law of all the citizens without distinctions of origin, race or religion. It respects every belief (...)"*

New challenges:

But today the issue has shifted: the question of conciliating everyone's convictions in their relation to the State is less problematic than their relation to the whole of civil society, as it is not about the regulation of relations between the State and the Roman Catholic Church but, in the heart of society, to regulate a plurality of religious minorities among which a few - i.e. some particular evangelist groups - have a vision of religion very far-fetched from the distinction between private and public, claiming that "the whole religion in the whole life" to quote Danièle Hervieu-Léger¹¹.

Facing this observation, allow me to make this point: I want to see in the plurality of religious expression today, as the sign of the good health of secularism in France. But for this plurality to live, along with the values that made it possible, we must guarantee good quality coexistence and protect the individuals against some community tendencies that either directly harm individual rights (and, on the first hand, the rights of children) or threaten peaceful coexistence by rejecting common norms. Faced with this new kind of issue, we have to go back to the basis of secularism, to return to its spirit in order to guide political action: today as yesterday secularism has to be understood as the statement of two requirements - the guarantee of everyone's freedoms and the refusal of discrimination between citizens.

The spirit of secularism: autonomy and non-discrimination

Secularism is a principle of societal organisation which seeks to conciliate the expression of religious convictions and preserve public order by stating two principles: the first one is to base politics out of any religious vision of the world, it is the neutrality of the State through non-discrimination which confirms the citizen's equality before the law. The second one, through the recognition of freedom of conscience, is the affirmation of the autonomy of the citizen, without any institutional or community membership, and in this case the assertion of the right for everyone to have or not to have a religion, or to change religion.

Ensure religious plurality

This neutrality of the State is not to be understood as a passive indifference to religion: secularism is not the refusal to recognise the religious identity of its citizens and it is even less an atheism of State. On the contrary, it is the only guarantee of the practice of the

¹¹ Well known French Sociologist

law, of all the rights, among which is included the right to practice a religion, the only limit to the expression of the freedom of religion being defined by public order. Secularism is the token for an open society in which each one keeps their own convictions on the condition that they share the core of values on which it stands. To preserve this freedom, and to guarantee the optimal conditions for it to flourish, leads every day to new challenges.

The elected representative's role

Today the social transformations in society moved the cursor from the political organisation of powers to the regulation of various forces inside society, and it is often up to the elected representative to decide. It is a delicate exercise as the law leaves room for interpretation, and they have to evaluate each situation independently and to maintain public order so that everybody may practice their own freedoms. The approach respects the spirit of secularism: facing a conflict of values or norms, the fundamental principles of the Republic have to be respected. It is not about defying religions or denying their existence and importance in some citizens' lives, but it is about ensuring the practice of this religion while ensuring the respect of the two principles of autonomy and non-discrimination.

MIVILUDES expertise: affirming freedom is ensuring the conditions of its real practice

Taking the equality of subjects before the law into account, it is accounting for the differences between rhetorical rights, formally applicable to anyone, and practical rights, those anyone is effectively able to use. That is the meaning of the first article of the 1905 law: to affirm freedom of conscience and to guarantee the practice of religion, is to demand that the political power find the optimal conditions for the practice of a right.

It is on this matter in particular that the MIVILUDES can share its expertise: the objective of the mission is to detect and prevent situations of psychological subjection, that is, situations where in relations between individuals a very special bond of power is instituted, a relation of dependency is created, forbidding the weaker to use a freedom which is statutorily theirs. It is specifically in the intimate realm, where the freedom of choice and decision is most protected, when an individual has to judge alone the issues of spirituality, self-development or even issues regarding their health, that phenomena of control and psychological manipulation are developed today. What legitimises the action of the State against the intrusions of cults, is the idea that, in a State of law, the State has to ensure the possibility for everyone to practice their freedoms: at the heart of the intimate realm fundamental rights have to be guaranteed too.

Conclusion

The MIVILUDES' action shows the specificity of the French legal and political system: this system ensures the protection of the weakest and promotes a "social concept of freedom" where freedom is not conceived without good coexistence and where, conversely, forming a society cannot be done without the guarantee of the effectiveness of everybody's right.

End of conclusion n°1

The only way to prevent cult temptations of any kind is, as Henri Pena-Ruiz reminds us, "that each individual is effectively in possession of all the rights the secular Republic gives them, and that they experiment the authenticity of these rights at the heart of the economic and social life."¹²

¹² Henri Pena-Ruiz, What is secularism, Gallimard 2003. p.200

End of conclusion n°2

The issue that the actors of the State have to face is a variation of this famous tolerance's paradox formulated by Karl Popper in "The open society and its enemies": "Unlimited tolerance, he says, must lead to the extinction of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to the intolerants, if we are not ready to defend a tolerant society against the impact of intolerance, then the tolerant will be destroyed and tolerance with him." The issue is raised in the same way here: secularism cannot be thought of as the State's unlimited indifference because, for secularism to live, it is necessary that the State fights those who use the freedoms of speech, of religion and of association to harm the very fundamentals of these freedoms.

Combined psychological, physical and spiritual approaches leading to deviant practices.

Bertrand Chaudet, Physiotherapist, member of CCMM

A preventive campaign against undue influence in the health field was launched by the Centre against Mental Manipulation (Centre Contre les Manipulations Mentales, CCMM) on the 3rd of November 2014. The scheme aims to raise awareness among health professionals and patients of "self- development" or "well-being" medical therapies increasingly used in Europe.

"We are witnessing a multitude of small bodies", reports Laure Telo, Ile de France CCMM president.

As a physiotherapist, in practice for 36 years, I can confirm this statement. I have seen the proliferation of new therapies with holistic pretensions i.e. offering to heal the whole body, everybody, from any kind of illness. Training courses varying from a few hours to whole week-ends supposedly allow participants to master these methods, or even to teach them to others.

Main principles that these "therapies" rely on to attract customers

A New-Age assumption states that: *"No human being has ever used more than 10% of the neurones in his brain."*¹³

What we would need to do then, is to exercise or initiate ourselves so as to reach complete fulfilment.

Some of these new therapies have grown from a mix of scientific or pseudo-knowledge with a perception of the world inspired by Buddhism, Hinduism, or even occultism.

Initiation to these new therapies call on notions of spiritual energy which are difficult to define: *ki*, *prana*, cosmic energy, divine light vehicle, spirit of love, etc. The world here is perceived as a large system of energy. The individual is criss-crossed by fields of energy physically, psychologically and spiritually, which influence organs and body systems. The spirit must not follow any goal, but free itself from all ties to reach a state of disembodied ecstasy.

Energetic therapies mix up notions and categories: thus Christ or Buddha, whatever the name which has been given to the highest perfection's incarnation.

The patient or disciple is told: *"You are realising that you are your own master and the master of your own life, and that you can reach self-healing or self-redemption with your own investigations, as all initiates did before you; but for this, you must follow the path we teach you, without*

¹³ Aldous Huxley (one of the New Age spiritual leaders), Conference "Human Potentialities, University of California, 1960. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mouvement_du_potentiel#cite_ref-2

thinking, by developing your intuition”.

Three progressive steps can be noted in this initiation.

- The first step, very practical, mainly concerns the body, with body awareness and breathing exercises which can allow a better knowledge of the self. At this level there are only signs of the risk of deviance.
- The second step more subtle and intuitive relates to the psycho-somatic dimension, also called spiritual, with mental induction or suggestion exercises.
- On reaching the third step the initiated person enters a new dimension where time and space seem to no longer have limits. Thus one can penetrate the other’s memory, his past, his present and even his future. This is possible even at a distance, by communicating with “entities” from the invisible world.

These introductions can be given with the help of secret methods revealed at each step of the process or by simple contact with the guru or the initiated. Some introductions would supposedly give access to more and more extended “powers”: power of healing, of control of relatives, power to obtain what one wished for, power to know the past present and future. In other words, some of these therapies give access to mediumship and magnetism.

We can cite among other therapies: Reiki, various kinds of chakra liberation, some martial arts with initiation rituals, neo-shamanic initiations, kinesiology, trans-personal psychology, some kind of fluidic osteology, *psychophanie* also known as facilitated communication.

What to think of all this?

Diagnosis does not rely on any objective data. Herein lies the risk to declare healthy people as ill and ill people as healthy; to prescribe useless exercises, diets or ineffective medication and to prevent indispensable treatments. The initiated or the therapist is subjectively testing the patient’s perception, but also their own perception by inducing what they want to test. There are no clinical signs defined or verifiable.

The virtually magic symptom(s)’ suppression in functional pathology with no lesion for which the patient is consulting can be dramatic, that is why these methods can be so appealing. But symptoms are only buried and reappear as anxiety, mental distress or more serious concealed illness.

Indeed, suggestion leads to an important *placebo* effect which is apparently efficient but has no effect in the long term.

There is a risk of the patient becoming addicted to the therapy or therapist.

The attractiveness of the invisible, of the mystery

The Christian credo states the faith in God, Creator of the invisible and visible world. The Catholic Church has been timid, since the Vatican II Council, when it came to mention the invisible world. Yet New Age, occult or esoteric movements reinvested this world of the invisible, as well as movements coming from Tibetan Buddhism. The number of books published relating to *channelling*, spirits and angels is constantly rising, not to mention Satan, his services and works, who re-emerges thanks to gothic movements and Satanism, music, cloth, tattoos and scarification.

The attractiveness of secrets and mysteries living through history and explaining its secret resources relies on credulity and a complete lack of a frame of reference.

Worldwide successful books and films for children and teenagers convey ambiguous symbolic concepts. *Eragon* by Christopher Paolini tells the story of a child who finds a dragon named *Saphira*. An old dragon breeder will teach him how to live with his female dragon, with which he will be able to communicate by telepathy and benefit from all her powers. He will even be able to heal her, with the help of magnetic tricks and magic words,

when she will be mortally wounded. The child is in harmony, fused with the dragon, symbol of the four elemental powers: air, fire, earth and water. What we see here is an initiatory process dear to the New Age. Many cartoons, comic books or "manga" are bathed in these representations of the world. Formerly, in traditional fairy tales, the Prince charming on the contrary had to fight the dragon to meet his beloved... witches were really mean... It is important to notice that in a few years we have changed our frame of reference and archetypes have changed their meaning. New Age announced a shift in paradigms. Here it is.

Abuse in the Catholic Church.

This search for the immediate healing of all wounds, of our minds, the will of fulfilment, well-being and self-knowledge affects the Christians too. As a permanent deacon of the Catholic Church for 20 years, I was saddened to witness much undue influence with tragic consequences to many families.

When I became a member of the national board of the Pastoral on new beliefs and undue influence of the French Conference of Bishops in 2006, deviance in new therapies and self-development techniques had held all my attention. Today, I also pay close attention to these deviances at the heart of the Catholic Church.

Some Christians looked for, and are still looking for, healing or pathways to knowledge and self-development among charismatic leaders, organisations or communities aligning themselves with the Catholic Church.

Healing.

The Beatitudes' community, and in particular Ephraïm, Philippe Madre, Fernand Sanchez and Bernard Dubois are at the origin of sessions or retreats known as "*psycho-spiritual healing*." The name has been changed after some scrutiny from the authorities and a few comments from the ecclesial authorities, but after cosmetically tidying up the look, these sessions continued along to the same concepts. At this stage the "*Anne Péguy Agapé*" sessions, which took place in Le Puy-en-Velay and received the blessing of Bishop Brincard, now deceased, will be considered.

The very well documented book "*Le Renouveau charismatique, une église dans l'Eglise*" (*The Charismatic Renewal: a Church in the Church*) makes an inventory of the leaders of these sessions. It rightly analyses the stakes of what it considers as very serious deviances.

Numerous families have been the victims of this kind of retreat, leading sometimes to the breaking up of relationships between spouses or between parents and children, some of them irreversible. Most of those attending these retreats were from privileged families. Sessions were expensive!

People wishing to take part in such retreats had to explain their motivations for wanting to participate in writing thus from the start exposing the origin of their unease. Some sessions could have up to 80 attendees. In less than a week they are encouraged to revisit, with the help of a leaflet mixing biblical quotations and inductive or intrusive questions (all of which are negative), the history of the attendees and their remembrance: conception, in utero life, birth (they will be asked to model in clay the baby they were!), early years, relationship with their parents, brothers and sisters, hidden, buried and painful memories, incest, abortion, divorce, things unspoken of in the family, ... and to present all these secret wounds for the Lord to heal to set them free of their sufferings which are harming their inner and personal lives. In the first instance, many attendees feel that they have finally found the origin of their unease that they finally understand the difficulties they have in their relation to themselves, to others, to their father, mother, brothers, sisters, to the superiors in their community, to God... Then emotional response takes the advantage over analysis and reason: wouldn't it be better to let go, to tell everything? In this system approved by the Church, the attendees drop all their defences. They confide everything to a "*guide*" who is often incompetent on a psychological or spiritual level.

These “discoveries” can lead to the person’s reconstruction based on memories hurriedly retrieved and revealed before God. False or partial memories can be confirmed by the guide. How far can this be considered as a free interpretation of his souvenirs by the attendee?

This process has been analysed by Elisabeth Loftus¹⁴ under the name of *induced false memories*. After a few days or a few months the impression of improved well-being, the humble everyday existence in the family or the community can become too much to bear. The father, the mother, the spouse, the brother, the sister, the superior, who did not attend these sessions leading to this “healing” would need to be set free from un-confessed wounds as well! From contaminated one becomes contaminator. This kind of psycho-spiritual interpretation can gradually obsess those who went through this process. After the retreat, whilst pretending that they have forgiven everything, a callousness with respect to relatives follows, even more cruel because these relatives are abandoned. Most of the time these relatives go through this abrupt or progressive abandon in silence, always suffering and without understanding why.

The Black book of psycho-spiritual domination was published by the CCMM (Centre against mental manipulation) in July 2012. I personally know almost every victim testifying in this book. Following the trauma they suffered themselves or their relatives during retreats or sessions, these victims looked for support and comfort among members of the clergy. Their statement was not recognised at the height of their suffering. Worse, after collecting some of these testimonies and promising a response and appropriate reparation, the members of the clergy failed to continue the process, interrupting contact with the victims. This happened despite a commission initiated by the French Bishops' Conference to hear victims and analyse the facts of the cases¹⁵. All the specialists in this commission, clerical or lay, each according to their field of competence, had given an adverse opinion regarding the healing sessions mixing psychology and spirituality. They submitted their report to every French Bishop. No effect followed. Sessions went on. The leaders have never been asked to stop their activities. Bishop Aillet recently prefaced one of these sessions' main leader's book: *“Ways to heal childhood wounds following the path of Thérèse de Lisieux”*¹⁶ by Bernard Dubois.

The CCMM's psycho-spiritual victims' group has been created. Its goal is and will be to appeal to the Catholic authorities as long as the truth is concealed and justice is not achieved regarding these practices, which the ecclesial authorities have, at best, avoided seeing or, at worst, explicitly supported.

A self-knowledge and self-development tool: the Enneagram.

First, I wish pay tribute to Daniel Lafargue who, for years, has completed a remarkable body of research work, of analysis and synthesis on the enneagram, its creator Gurdjieff, its disciples and its current developments. I can only recommend to read his book: *“La face cachée de l'ennéagramme”* (The dark side of the enneagram)¹⁷.

Practitioners and adepts of the enneagram do not like to be reminded of Gurdjieff's - its promoter in the West - scandalous history. However, the start of a story often explains its development and its end... Gurdjieff was probably illiterate, but he was a clever man and an opportunist able to subjugate and charm his entourage. He was beyond good and evil, manipulating, without remorse, the men and women who fell under his influence.

He arrived in France in 1922 and settled in Avon's priory in Fontainebleau. Renowned French intellectuals followed him, at least for a while, then some of them distanced

¹⁴ Elisabeth Loftus, *Le syndrome des faux souvenirs et le mythe des souvenirs refoulés*, Ed Exergue 2001. See also Brigitte Axelrad, *le ravage des faux souvenirs*, 2010, book-e-book.

¹⁵ « Agapé's sessions » then named « Anne-Péguy Agapé » and their founder's writing, Bernard Dubois member of the Beattitudes' community, were at the center of these analyses.

¹⁶ Ed. des Béatitudes, novembre 2014, Nouan-le-Fuzelier (Loir-et-Cher).

¹⁷ Daniel Lafargue, *La face cachée de l'ennéagramme*. Ed book-e-book. 2014

themselves from him, among them: Louis Pauwels, Jean-François Revel, René Daumal, René Barjavel, and English speakers as well: Katherine Mansfield, Peter Brook, Aldous Huxley and Jodorowsky.

Gurdjieff fed himself on all his adepts' esoteric dogma and "occult sciences", and concocted a synthesis in his own way which he would serve again with persuasive loquacity. He offered his student permanent introspective efforts to know themselves better by cutting themselves off from everything they thought, knew, believed, or what they had thought before. No scientific validation according to any rigorous protocol can confirm the relevance of the enneagram affirmations regarding the nine types or bases, which can evolve or regress according to the very criteria of this system. However, experts of enneagrams suggest psychological or spiritual practical orientations based on this system to their student.

We hear of the enneagram again in Esalen, on the West coast of the United States, in the 1960's and the 1970's, driven by the hippy movement's spiritual leader Aldous Huxley, a follower of Gurdjieff and the enneagram. Ichazo, a multifaceted wizard, Gurdjieff's disciple, born in Bolivia, close to the theosophical movements, gave nine character types to the enneagram's nine figures. Naranjo, a Colombian psychiatrist, while staying very close to the initial Gurdjieff's structure and use, conceptualised and normalised the enneagram's nine types as it is reintroduced in Europe today. Father Robert Ochs, a Jesuit, teacher at the Loyola's University in Chicago, reworked the enneagram "tool" to integrate Catholic dogma, including the concept of sin. Helen Palmer, by turning the enneagram into a so-called non-confessional and non-religious "tool", has had a considerable impact. Among others, Erik Salmon allowed the penetration into France of the revisited enneagram.

A fulfilled man, according to the Gurdjieffian perspective, is a man who is conscious and has suppressed the good and bad dualism in himself, becoming indulgent on everything, indifferent on moral ground and mild on religious ground. Everything has to fit into the preliminary enneagram's logic understood as the highest point of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. Only faith in the concept can save and make everything coincide. Which, for that matter, is very efficient, thanks to a virtually hypnotic inductive or suggestive effect. Magic works the same way, doesn't it?

In society.

The enneagram is offered in the frame of professional courses, sometimes associated to other techniques such as NLP - neuro-linguistic programming, transactional analysis or Ericksonian hypnosis. These training courses do not aim to improve professional skills, but to allow a better self-knowledge and understanding of others. That is where the ambiguity of the courses lies, promising self-development to employees in a professional environment.

In the Catholic Church.

Father Pacwa¹⁸, a Jesuit, after having been initiated to the enneagram, saw its dangers on theological and pastoral grounds, denouncing them through remarkable articles. People entering this system accept to adjust their spiritual and psychological life to these principles. What is wanted is an adherence without questions. It is dangerous to consider that our acts are not free but the result of hidden compulsions revealed by the enneagram.

The Beatitudes' community lived under the influence of the enneagram, driven by its founder Ephraim. The community's executives, called "shepherds", received an introduction. Today, despite numerous warnings, the enneagram is offered in Catholic spiritual centres, training centres like the CLER¹⁹, or inside religious communities.

¹⁸ In particular the Father Pacwa's analysis of the enneagram <http://www.equip.org/PDF/DN067.pdf> 1994 and "Tell me who I am, Ô enneagram", Christian Research Institute periodical, autumn 1991.

¹⁹ Le CLER Love and Family, association recognised as public interest, work on the affective and familial blossoming of anybody, young or adult, in couple or not, organism recognized and recommended by the French Catholic Church.

*"This has not prevented the Saint-Etienne's diocese from organising, in partnership with the Eric Salmon's Centre for the study of the Enneagram (Centre d'Etudes de l'Ennéagramme, CEE)²⁰, the first Christian enneagram congress, where working groups, round tables on Gurdjieff's sacred dances, Christian enneagram tutors, former Beatitudes' shepherds and Free University of Samadeva's teachers all came together."*²¹

Simply enter the word enneagram in the official French Catholic search engine, directly dependant of the Bishop's Conference of France, to find information on most of these training courses or sessions.

Conclusive reflection.

The manifest narcissism of post-modern western man, focused on his own well-being, his self-sufficiency and his performances makes it necessary, to attract particular attention on the dangers of the New Age, new therapies and self-development techniques by the actors of society and Church. Without such warnings undue influence cannot be detected, whilst is consciously or unconsciously introduced, in a determined manner, by manipulators. Failing this, the leaders of society and the Church would be even more seriously involved and could be held responsible and considered as accomplices.

Testimonies about the Smith's Friends (ACFF)

Friedrich Griess, concerned father, GSK Austria

When in 1983 our daughter, then aged twenty, sympathized with a questionable Christian group, at first my wife and I were not too worried. When she temporarily had a Muslim friend, we quietly considered what it would mean for her to convert to Islam. But gradually we realized that this was not just a matter of faith because she started beating me, her father; because she believed it was her duty to convert me to her new religion with violence. She went skiing with a skirt because the leaders of the new religion taught that women who wore trousers would never go to heaven. She later said she was damned and that God could not save her. She claimed she had done something against her conscience that, according to the teaching of this group, was a sin against the Holy Spirit and could not be forgiven. She said she was trying to convert her parents and then commit suicide. Then we realized that it was not just a religion but a power system that could lead people to suicide, and we were afraid for her life. We decided that my wife had to try to keep in touch with her, while I, because of my conscience to public accountability, was determined to warn the public against this group so far quite unknown, which turned out to be "The Smith friends." Since we had lived in Norway where this group came from and we understood the language, it was possible for me to fully investigate them. We have had contacts with more than a hundred former members in various countries, including France, where the group is called "Assembly of Christians of France and Francophone countries". Over the past 30 years, the group changed its outward appearance while the pressure on the members has not changed; the old dress code for women has disappeared, while the pressure to donate huge amounts of money became current.

Ms. XXXX was born in this group and she lived thus for many years until she escape;

²⁰ The CEE presents itself as: The Centre for initiation and improvement to enneagram open to all. A professional training center offering a certificating program. A research center on the enneagram. A network of consultants offering team cohesion interventions.

²¹ Daniel Lafargue, *La face cachée de l'ennéagramme*, p. 64. Ed book-e-book, 2014.

she will now tell you about her experience.

Ms XXXX:

I was born into this extremist religious group in 1964, 3 years after its foundation; my parents and a couple from Switzerland and the three children they had then, were the first adepts of the Assembly in France.

It is around this core name of "Assembly" that the group is recognizable from within. Apart from the fact that it is an association, nothing appears beyond the constitution of the administrative team and few know its different names, which vary from country to country, such as "Smith's Friends" in Norway or "Norwegian Brothers" in the Netherlands ...

In 1976, after the death of Elias Aslaksen, friend and successor of the original founder, Johan Oscar Smith, the different assemblies were forced to rally "The Friends of Smith", which became the Community of Brunstad and then DKM²² (initials of The Christian Community in Norwegian).

In France, the Assembly chose ACFF (Assemblies of Christians of France and Franco-phone countries). In the late 70s, the leaders began to travel on other continents and created other ramifications to finance, among others, the development of the Brunstad complex in Norway, complex which at the time was presented as the largest, most modern conference centre in the world, with translation facilities ... Of course, the place was a bottomless financial pit but at the time it was out of question to bring in laymen that we called "people of the world"...

I cannot address the context in which I was raised, not to mention my parents. Both have had a very difficult life course; they had in common that they were both the last from large sibling families and have experienced rejection and violence.

- My father was an orphan. He was placed from family to family and experienced acts of abuse that have favoured that he developed a kind of pseudo-autism: he rocked in his chair, humming a song representing each of his anxieties, etc ... in order to find refuge and protect his world Back in France after four years in Africa during his military service, a neighbour had introduced him to a Pentecostal group.
- My mother, meanwhile, was disabled at the age of 11 years after the war; she spent five years in hospital in Berck-Plage, in a Catholic institution, with perverse sisters who martyred their young patients. On leaving the hospital, 5 years later, she was raped and experienced rejection from her family. That's where the Pentecostals entered her life. I always knew my mother through long phases of depression followed by more positive phases which did not last ... For my father, my mother was the woman who replaced his mother; also at home and in contrast to the doctrine of the Friends of Smith, it was she who led the dance ...

Since I was born, the Assembly was only based in Nancy. At first, it recruited its followers among the Pentecostals, where my parents were and where they met the Swiss couple and their three children ... On one of their trips to their native country, the Swiss couple had heard good reports from one of its cousins about this group, about his meeting with Smith Friends of Norway.

Back in Lorraine, the Assembly was founded and soon The Smith's Friends sent one of their Norwegian families to Nancy.

As we did not live together, each family educated its children according to the strict doctrine of The Smith's Friends but each with its own understanding of biblical texts, literal or figurative, and according to its social context and its own experience ...

²² Den Kristelige Menighet – The Christian Community (or Assembly)

There's no place for jokes ... if we show our emotions, joy or sadness, there's necessarily something suspicious ... anger or any other emotion revealing frustration, have to be repressed if we do not want to be punished. Obedient, we could not talk about our feelings they could only be basely human, devil inspired ... Children were constantly under the control of expression, of saying and doing ... innocence was not recognized ...

Children who had character were more controlled than the others, for example, changing school to escape bad influence from wrong friends ...

Devastating effects: discipline your being in order to remain nonexistent, existential negation to follow the culture of denouncement of beliefs, human reality perceived as negative. A direct consequence of renunciation and one of its achievements is that of submission. A totalitarian, authoritarian, autocratic, education and if I face the truth it was close to an auto-promoted fascism.

In the Assembly, when a child is born, it is assumed to be already full of vice, until it is baptized and all sins are washed away and it commits itself with regard to God, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus without ever sinning since invested by the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is from majority, an age when one is supposed to be responsible, engagement, marriage, and procreation usually follow in the wake ...

As the child grows, the bad side of human nature grows and he naturally wants to feed on evil ... So, man being bad by nature, the only possibility of transformation is through learning from the life of Jesus as an example, he, who overcame the flesh (needs, desires and pleasures), who suffered unto death and saved the poor sinners that we are ... So total self-sacrifice and empathy that make us even more docile is required ...

Devastating effects: learning self-denial, what the psychologists call "repression".

As children, we seemingly lived normal lives; obedience was the key word ... I had to keep quiet and obey ... Our references were the Assembly and its preaching, and our parents, to whom we gave all our trust, were convinced that the "world" was the door of Hell. When believers speak of the world, they talk about the other sphere, the sphere of human error, their lifestyle and their anti-values that were precursors of the today's society which has lost its values ...

My mother had to undergo several operations and long hospitalizations and my father resumed his studies and continued his job. My sisters and I had to be placed several months in the health centre, with a host family or hostel for my elder sister ... At that time, my family had very little help from the members of the group; this shows the gap between the word and the way it was applied, and consequently the reading and the analysis of the biblical texts; this often shows the ambiguity between theory and practice.

Devastating effects: all this acts further to achieve non-recognition of one's identity, and once again accentuates the persuasion of self-negation.

There is a quadruple negativity: social, tribal, familial and individual. Once again abandon of identity which actively participates in the de-socialisation of Self.

As the school was not obligatory before the age of 6, I had no contacts with the outside world before that age; I made my entry into this world that was supposed to be evil... For me this meant: going to school without being there; we had to remain unnoticed, to avoid eye contact that later could lead to a conversation, the friendly gesture that would enrol us unwittingly, or just the questions this provoked to which we could not reply because we were ignorant or because we were terrified and shameful ... Every day we endured mockery, real trial by fire when we tried to think like Jesus on the cross who said: "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing."

We were taught to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, to do well to those who hate us and pray for those who do us wrong and persecute us, as the apostles in the

New Testament recommend. But to remain unnoticed was not possible because we stood out in the street, without any doubt as the Americans recognized the Amish ...

The Assembly rented, later bought a hall where we met 3 to 4 times a week. We only lived together during the conferences, several times a year in various countries that united the members of various nationalities for one to three weeks.

My parents worked so hard and were so taken by their work in the community ... Every month, money was collected from everybody, each watching the other, and thus all obliged to donate ...

Between the meetings and conferences, everybody when living at home should fight against the world and its temptations ... We were not entitled to speak with the "people of the world" who could contaminate us with their satanic words and acts ... This only was allowed at school because it was necessary and we could not escape; anyway, we did not speak or we spoke little with the other children, only with the teachers and always in connection with school work ... Everything that was taught was censored; we were not allowed to take part in courses of natural science treating the subject of sexuality ...

Humour, music, art, the media were forbidden, what we read was controlled: I remember that my mother made a fuss at college because the French teacher had asked us to read "Le Grand Meaulnes" by Alain Fournier ... I read it secretly, under my blankets with a torch; but my resistance to this rule helped open the doors to culture; I henceforth read several "forbidden" books ... We were only allowed to read the Bible that we studied daily, books about the Shoah, about conversions, and ... the dictionary ... I never went to any end of term party at school or in the village, nor any birthday party, or other festive occasion ...

If, when we were very small, school was a world where the danger of temptation was everywhere, with everyone and in everything, a world full of fear, because we had to fight our nature the whole time; when we grew up, school was a revelation, a human zoo to observe and at the same time we felt that we carried a universal secret, a secret only for us about the 144000 chosen by God to be part of his heavenly kingdom, the People chosen by Him if we managed to reach a Christ-like perfection here below... Although we had a deep and faithful admiration for the Jewish people, it was out of question that they should be the chosen people of God, because they had not believed that Jesus was the Messiah ... with regard to Israel and Jerusalem, it was more of a symbol because it was Jacob's country and a heavenly Jerusalem, that should come after the last judgement ...

The threat of the Apocalypse was permanent, the arrival of Jesus imminent: in our lifetime ... We were taught to live in a parallel world that was THE truth, the outside world was just an abomination. We were taught to live in the fear of ourselves, we could betray, consciously or not, the doctrine we were taught; we were taught to fear each other, inside the group, but also to fear the original family outside, and the world in general ...

School which is expected to be the first place where children are socialised after the family, became (as Durkheim²³ said) its antithesis by its effect of de-socialisation with respect to me ...

In my time, the teaching of Johan Oscar Smith was cold and very strict: boys were not allowed to have long hair, the hair-cut was military. The girls should have long hair, but as this could be seductive, they had to attach them in braids or in a bun; no stray hair must be left free.

Clothes should be buttoned at the throat or be crew necked, no décolleté was allowed, even one open button; sleeves should be long enough and armpits hidden; dresses and skirts should reach below the knees. Trousers were absolutely forbidden and parents asked for adolescent girls to be dispensed from sport so that they need not wear tracksuits or swim suits. Makeup, jewellery, and everything that was related to fashion were banned.

²³ Émile Durkheim, French sociologist and ethnologist

Nothing should provoke boys or men ...

Paradoxically, the leaders' children wore top designer brand clothes, bought in Paris; their daughters wore make up, bleached their hair and wore high heels. Although boys and girls were not allowed to look at each other, nor mingle and talk together, their daughters laughed at the boys' jokes without anyone taking any notice, it was normal. But if the others, considered of a lower class and intellectually "poor", were caught doing so, especially the girls, we were harassed by the brothers and sisters of the movement, told to repent and to convert ; but we were also very closely watched. We inevitably suffered from setbacks or from a forced departure of a family abroad or by beatings, confinement, deprivation of food, teasing and isolation within the group and treated as if we had a virus to avoid ...

Devastating effects: by the representation of our family within the caste system of the Assembly; we were at the bottom of the pyramid.

It should also be noted: the identity stigma effect by the quality of clothes.

Double negation social-identity: of self with regard to the Assembly and of self as inferior. Once more existential self-sacrifice, heavy to bear; a heavy load for a little girl.

They told us that we were not here to think; reason was considered as the beginning of perdition, we just had to have confidence in the Word of God received through the elders; our duty was to obey without asking any questions; simply because it was written ... We were not allowed to doubt the Word which would have meant questioning the very existence of God ... Unifying and devastating conversion where I was concerned.

The movement grew from the inside; few people from outside joined the Assembly; newcomers were accepted with a certain curiosity and always with warmth and open arms; but from the minute of their conversion onwards, they were quickly subjected to the ordeal of suffering: humbled, humiliated, infantilised ...

My mother who was 80% physically handicapped had only three children, and the fact that she could have no more, discredited her and questioned her loyalty, because the other women chained pregnancy after pregnancy. I knew the case of one woman in Germany who delivered her 18th child while her eldest daughter delivered her first one.

A woman who did not have a child within the first year marriage or who marked a too lengthy period between pregnancies was quickly suspected and very quickly one heard questions whispered from ear to ear: "Why does she not have children?", "Does she refuse herself to her husband?", "Is it that she is taking the pill?", or "Did the couple sin?".

There was always a kind of rivalry in the group between individuals and families and many unspoken words; an internal coercive xenophobia, competition to achieve a state of virgin purity ... encouragement of performance to get to the top of perfection rapidly ...

We were always expected to be active; idleness was the root of all vice; many games were forbidden, certain toys too: i.e. Barbie dolls ...

From the youngest age, common household tasks were only for girls, and our manual activities were sewing, embroidery, knitting layettes for the many births

... Young girls were not encouraged to study; we were educated to be wives who would submit and serve, exemplary mothers in self-denial, and I insist on the choice of that expression ,... self-denial. It was considered good luck when the first born were girls, because they could share the housework and take care of the smaller children. During the holidays, children would be exchanged between families: the girls became "au pairs" in families abroad, and the boys were expected to work in the building trade where they built a new hall, or at the complex of Brunstad that grew larger and larger ...

In one of the families where I worked in Switzerland, I had, among others, to scrub the kitchen and living room floors using my nails to scratch between the tiles or planks of 150m², on my knees, the whole day, while being insulted by the couple that hosted me; they enjoyed to dominate and see others suffer.

We were trained to follow in Jesus' foot-steps who had suffered for us and who left us

his model, never having committed sin nor spoken lies; if we violated the rules, which happened every day and very often unconsciously, we were beaten (with metal curtain rods, broomsticks or hazel sticks, fathers' wide leather belts, wooden spoons and other sticks... not to mention being smashed against the wall or floor, punched and kicked, hit hard on the head, slapped...).

During my youth, I have adopted a posture in order to protect myself, which I call the "Turtle" (in French "Tortue", if you add an "r" before the "e", you understand the link): I squatted down to protect my limbs, neck, breasts, and soles. We were verbally humiliated: my mother often treated us of "dirty Arab girls" because my father had a dark complexion: she told us she "preferred the children of the Assembly" or "her daughters were the daughters of the Assembly"...

Confined without speaking for hours, starved, sometimes because of poverty, but more often as a punishment for one or two days; and on and on ... We were Nothing, and paradoxically we were educated as part of an "Elite", the chosen People of God, who would be saved at the end of the time.

It is easy to understand the devastating effects on my health; I had an ulcer at 10 years, chronic gastritis, I wet my bed until adolescence, suicide attempts through drugs, pains and aches in a body old before its time ...

Violence against the children and youngsters was justified every time with the quotation: "Who loves well chastises well" and biblical verses "Those who withhold the rod hate their children, but the one who loves them applies discipline..". The more they believed this, the more they beat with arrogance ...

Thus they justified the right to violate the physical and mental integrity of the child and had no qualms for the suffering they caused ... As Jesus suffered, one had to suffer, because out of this physical and more specifically, mental suffering would come redemption ...

Just before my fifteenth year, my father left and gave no more news. My mother started taking drugs to sleep, but also increased in aggressiveness. I had to stop her in the act of stabbing my 18 years older sister because she had cut a lock of her hair. I felt invested with the motherly mission of protecting my sisters. Therefore, I encouraged my older sister to join my father; in turn, she came to fetch me and I went to live with them, and there I started to live ... But my mother contacted the youth protection judge and the gendarmes came to fetch me. She sent me to the Mennonites in Ain²⁴ where several summer conferences had taken place. There I was made to believe that I was possessed by Satan. Then, I was harassed every day by the patriarch of this house, to force me to convert.

However my mother, judging that I had too much freedom (loose hair, trousers) came to fetch me, but our relation was so degraded that she dropped me on the motorway ... I ran away and she threatened me with a research warrant by Interpol (about 10 km from the Swiss border), and finally I attempted suicide with my mother's sleeping pills before her eyes. When the ambulance arrived, I was in a coma. They needed her parental authorisation to take me to the nearest hospital, passing through Switzerland. She refused and screamed: "She wanted to die, let her die!" Finally, my father gave the authorisation by phone ...

The medical team heard my cry for help and contacted the youth's judge in Nancy, and I was taken care of by a foster home of the DASS²⁵. I looked so responsible that they took me for a teacher.

The last time I met the group was at the funeral of the older son of the Swiss couple. We two had lived a small romance that caused a scandal and my departure from the Mennonites near Geneva. This young man died at the age of 21 in a car accident, while he participated at the summer conference in France. From that what I was told, the boys, among them 8 minors, have been given the exceptional permission to go to the pool in the nearest

²⁴ French department close to the city of Geneva in Switzerland

²⁵ Direction des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales – Direction of Health and Social Affairs

city. They had to be back at 6.30 p.m. Five minutes too late, the young man missed a turn because he was driving too fast ... He was old enough to live independently and to assume the fact that he was five minutes late ... He lost his life, because he was afraid ... afraid of the punishment that his violent father would give him ... at 21 years.

Eighteen months after leaving the Assembly, I met my husband. He turned out to be a manipulating personality, who was unfaithful, who was violent with me several times and forced me to abort ... I was fascinated by this living encyclopaedia: he was an eloquent speaker and a manipulator of quality. I let him speak and fill my emptiness; he rationalised my thoughts by his enlightened dialectic. This made me feel safe and kept me with him. He became a tyrant and an exploited me financially: at that time I earned more than he did; without any doubt this was unconsciously a relationship of inverse domination, producing a kind of balance of demands.

In spite of all this, we had 4 kids, all desired as far as I was concerned; he took the opportunity to develop his zeal to exploit me, but 23 years later and after multiple conflicts, though I still did not know that he had a mistress, I could no longer tolerate his perversity towards me, his criticism of my very existence in this world saying that I did not have my place on earth, that if I was paid for my foolishness, I would be a billionaire, etc. ... I once again attempted suicide by drugs on our holiday in the South. But realising that I was going to leave my kids without a mom, I called the SAMU²⁶ and there I awoke, in a psychiatric hospital.

I had a dozen books in my suitcase, bought at Emmaüs, treating about cults, in view of writing a book about my experience. Thence, I was accused by the psychiatrist of wanting to take my kids to the cult, according to the sayings of their father ...

Devastating effects: political and administrative incomprehension. I experienced this institution as a prison and not as a place to improve before returning to normal life; I became a victim of the pharmaceutical lobby, nobody listened to me; for these people, I was sick and a protocol of care was imposed against my will ...

I should add that, today I am about to regain my dignity because I won my lawsuit against the hospital. I am considered as having been arbitrarily detained and my case has reached the stage of demands for damages and interests.

At this stage, I went back to my employment in Lorraine, I regained the custody of my children, although in this respect nothing has yet been won with regard to my image as a mother; one of the key elements was the image the father had painted of me through his hatred and the way he manipulated them ...

Assuming the role of a dedicated mother, which was in fact the natural product of my own education, without realising it I have spoilt my sons, the consequence of excessive kindness and love, one could say, but also my inner submission to the male gender which my education had instilled since birth. They took advantage of the situation and I think that my children, as young adults, show themselves quite indifferent with regard to me ...but they are very balanced beings, smiling and full of life; they agree that their education was special, non-violent, built on dialogue, complicity and trust, which gave them an open mind; that makes me think that with the required hindsight, they will one day understand my wish to make sure, with all my love, that they be balanced and free beings ...

Devastating effects: I have a trend both to agoraphobia and claustrophobia. Therefore, where I live, I always eliminate a maximum of doors, except those of the bedrooms and intimate places, but I never close them when I am there ... Likewise, I never put curtains on the windows either ...

For a long time, I was unable to just go out and buy a baguette from the bakery, for

²⁶ Service d'Aide Médicale Urgente – Medical Emergency Service

example ...

Even now, I still need to have some time alone during the day, to recharge my energy so as to face the world in a more serene way ...

As recently as last fall, my father mentioned the word cult in a discussion and I took the opportunity to ask him how he had met the Pentecostals. He replied, but then lost his temper; he cancelled his visit to the party planned for my 50th birthday and shut me out saying he wanted to end his life in peace, without hearing about this period of his life any more ... I have not seen him since ...

In fact, I can say that one lives with it all one's life, you too cherish your past ... but that's where we feel the theft of our childhood, of our adolescence ... not to mention that our character was forged by these people and the education they forced on us; every new encounter, every relationship is based on brotherhood, which can cause serious setbacks or serious disappointments.

Sometimes, at the very beginning of our exit to freedom, there is a certain "nostalgia", doubts, when discovering the world outside and understanding the way it works, doubts may arise concerning our choice ... But in the end, freedom is priceless and far exceeds the discomfort of this other society of casts, which is neither better nor worse, and in which, having deciphered the codes, I share today with you with pleasure anyway ... because I am me ... and that I give myself the right to exist and to affirm that I am !

According to the latest news I heard that followers were told that no one ever left the Assembly ... and those who have tried had returned ... terrified, unable to adapt to a foreign world for which they were not prepared ... For the youth of the Assembly, they are the living example of the parable of the prodigal son who ventured into the world but returned to his family, repentant ... Two months ago, I read on a Dutch forum²⁷ that there were now about 150-200 followers among the Norwegian Brothers in the Netherlands, ready to get out but that they did not have the courage.

I want to thank Yves Toni who asked me to speak in his stead, thinking that my testimony was more important than his. He has fought for years, without success, to be able to see his children who have now reached their majority ... and who today regularly receives messages from people in the Assembly, who are in distress or lost ...

I can't do anything for them, for all those people and all those children, I can just tell them what I experienced and what some still experience ... I dare to hope that you could do something for them, but I doubt it, remembering the statements made, a short while ago, by the president of the French Association of Magistrates for Youth and Family, Marie-Pierre Hourcade, that "to educate one's children in accordance with religious principles, considered by some as radical, is not prohibited in France" ...

As far as I'm concerned, rigorous religious practice tolerated on the child assumes that the human being is not considered, as one, from birth ... This is an abuse of power that deprives the child of its freedom of thought, of its freedom of just Being ... this is what I want to denounce.

It seems important for me to clarify that I do not feel that I am a "victim" of my life ... My life is as it is; I was born in that environment that was my "normality" throughout my childhood and I joined another world that also has its own "normality" in which victimization can be nourished ...

Also, to best preserve my freedom and my personal balance, I have learnt to accept these events as experiences, mitigating the impact on my life by not looking at the perspective of victimization but by choosing to focus my views on the enrichment of being; that's probably what helped me in my education and today has lead me to fully accept my differences, my "originality".

I wrote a collection of poems, self-published, in which there is, although it is not the

²⁷ <http://www.hotforum.nl/forum/index.php?name=anderekant&>

subject, some information about my experience in the cult and particularly Le Bac à lauréats²⁸ and La tortue²⁹, about which I spoke to you just before...

The Aum Shinrikyo cult's proselytizing on the Internet.

Alexey A. Voat, Senior Lecturer of the Department for Theology in Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University of Humanities, Candidate of Philosophy

Good afternoon, dear participants of the conference!

I would like to invite the attention of those present to an overview of some major modern advertising and recruitment technologies that Aum Shinrikyo, a destructive terrorist pseudo-Buddhist cult, is making active use of on the Russian Internet (slide 1).

Modern advertising and recruiting technologies on the Internet have created a new special product, namely, a complex system of signs that affects a human through almost all major channels of perception. Many destructive cults began to use this tool actively and successfully in their recruitment, with Aum Shinrikyo among them.

Advertising and recruiting techniques that destructive cults use in terms of their transmission channels on the Internet can be direct and hidden (slide 2).

Aum Shinrikyo successfully uses the following direct recruiting and advertising techniques (slide 3):

- official website of this destructive cult (the slide shows the main site of the cult (slide 4)
- video channel of the cult (slide 5)
- online broadcasting of meetings (it enables real-time participation in prayer meetings of the destructive cult) (slide 6)
- banner advertising (slide 7)
- recruiting videos (slide 8), (I would like to offer one recruiting video for your attention VIDEO)

- spam (both postal and address (mainly e-mail servers and social networks), spamming is performed on the basis of segmentation of customer-oriented bases (slide 9)
- on-line cult seminars, conferences and prayer meetings (slide 10)
- recruitment through IP-telephony (mainly via Skype and ooVoo) (slide 11)

Hidden advertising and recruiting techniques that the cult makes active use of to recruit new members are following (slide 12):

- contextual advertising (slide 13)
- other hidden anonymous recruiting sites (which do not expressly indicate that they belong to the cult, but all their activities are aimed at recruiting new followers and raising funds for it (two covering sites of Aum Shinrikyo cult are presented on the next two slides (slide 14,15))

Another platform that Aum Shinrikyo cult actively uses for recruitment on the Russian Internet is social networks whose final product is social and group identification represented mainly by social groups, namely, VK³⁰ and Facebook. The cult uses the following techniques here (slide 16):

- creating the cult groups and fake accounts for further recruitment into this terrorist organization (slide 17)
- direct advertising and invitations to various recruiting events (this slide gives an example of an invitation to free recruiting lectures of the cult) (slide 18)
- spamming (the slide is an example of an invitation to recruiting lectures) (slide 19)
- viral marketing through various schemes (using some striking audio- and video content) (slide 20)

²⁸ final examination qualifying for university entrance

²⁹ the turtle

³⁰ VK (originally VKontakte, Russian: ВКонтакте, literally "in touch") is the largest Russian social network in Europe

- recruitment in through groups from the closely related fields (for instance, a user can be recruited into the cult through a disguised group Buddhism) (slide 21)

- blogging (creating of transformed public opinion using biased articles and comments in blogs written by numerous active followers. As a result, target audience receives deliberately false information. Creating themed blogs in social networks, posting comments in other users' blogs and amateur video on YouTube and other video hosting services are among the most widespread methods.) (slide 22)

I would also like to pay special attention to recruitment and indoctrination that Aum Shinrikyo performs in Vkontakte, the most popular social network in Russia, in my report. This process consists of the following stages (slide 23,24):

At the first stage (slide 25), an e-mail robot sends the word 'hello' from a recruiting account to a potential victim. If the victim responds to this message, the correspondence will be forwarded to the real follower of the organization who will carry on communication with potential victims from this moment. The cult's parlance has the term "bhakti" or "donating oneself and one's time to propagate the doctrine of the cult" for recruitment; an alternative of the initial stage of recruitment is possible when potential victims are invited to join one of the cult's social groups through spam and viral marketing that spread advertising videos for recruitment.

At the second stage (slide 26), potential victims are invited to attend a course of free lectures on Buddhism on one of the disguised sites of the cult. Potential followers watch a video instruction on such websites in detail.

At the third stage (slide 27), potential victims take free on-line recruiting video seminars and lectures of the cult within ten days. One lecture takes one hour. Seminars and lectures are held at 8:00 PM Moscow time. Thus, attendees are gradually indoctrinated in the organization's statements within ten days.

At the fourth stage (slide 28), further studying of lectures is offered to victims, but for money by making a donation of \$2 via electronic settlement system, for example, Webmoney or Qiwi.

At the fifth stage (slide 29), victims study video lectures about Shoko Asahara, Aum Shinrikyo's guru, and continues his or her being indoctrinated in the cult.

At the sixth stage (slide 30), lecturers who supervise victims collect personal information about new followers and their contacts and begin to communicate with them personally on a daily basis via VoIP with them. In addition, every lecturer has a certain number of learners.

At the seventh stage (slide 31), new members of the organization begin to perform religious practices of the cult, for example, sacrifice for the guru, asanas, qigong, evening worshipping, Sunday worshipping the guru, all this happens on-line via VoIP. At the same time, victims study reading materials of the cult in detail, Shoko Asahara writings, and transfer money to the organization via electronic settlement systems. Donation in this stage amounts to about \$150 monthly.

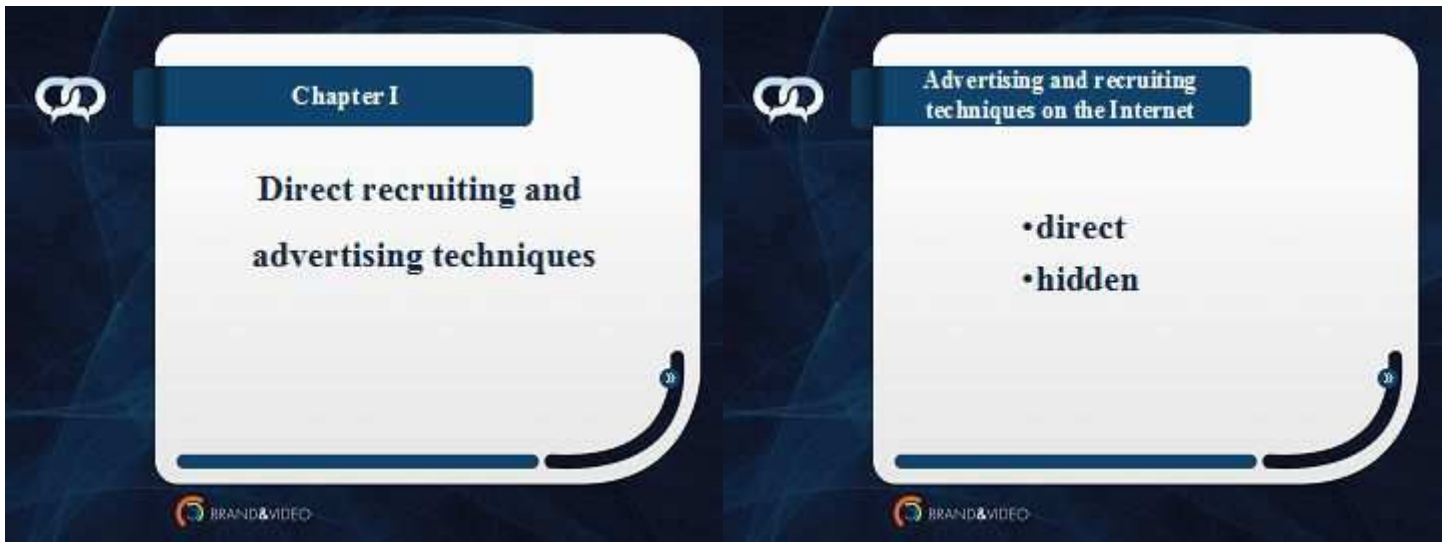
At the eighth stage (slide 32), after about two months of indoctrination, doing the bhakti practice is offered to a new follower of the terrorist organization. It means the recruitment of new members of the cult through spamming and communication with potential victims in social networks.

At the ninth stage (slide 33), new members of the cult are invited to a closed workshop in one of the headquarters of the terrorist organization four months after the first lecture. This workshop costs \$500.

At the tenth stage (slide 34), followers are invited to away events of the terrorist cult in other countries that cost around 1000 to 1500 dollars after six to eight months. Giving online lectures for recruiting or becoming an instructor for asanas and qigong via VoIP can also be offered.

This way (slide 35), we see how Aum Shinrikyo, a destructive terrorist pseudo-Buddhist cult, actively uses modern Internet technologies to recruit new followers into their organization and suppresses, changes, and then destroys the ideas, concepts and beliefs in the minds of their victims that are undesirable for the cult with the help of modern electronic technologies; then it inculcates and solidifies the views, attitudes and ideas desirable for the terrorist organization among its followers. In the meantime, it actively raises funds for their operation.

Thank you for your attention! (slide 36)



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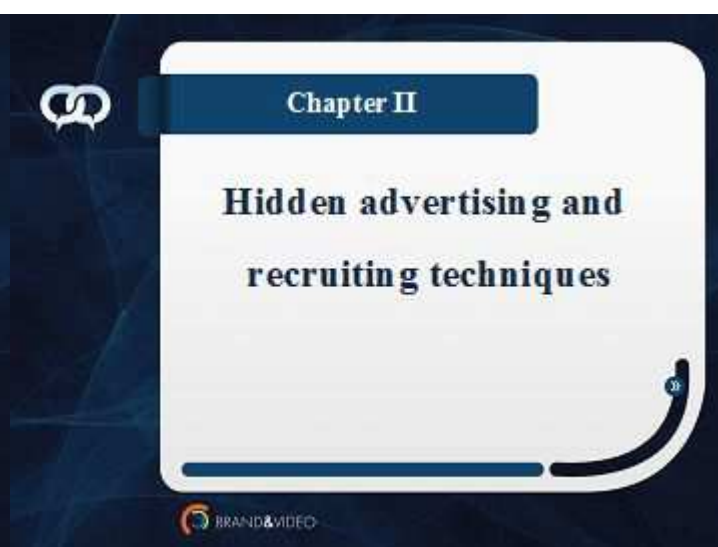
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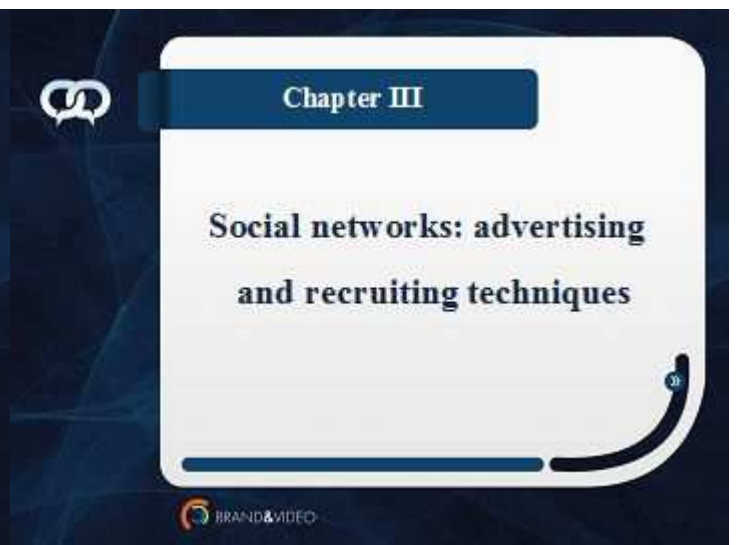
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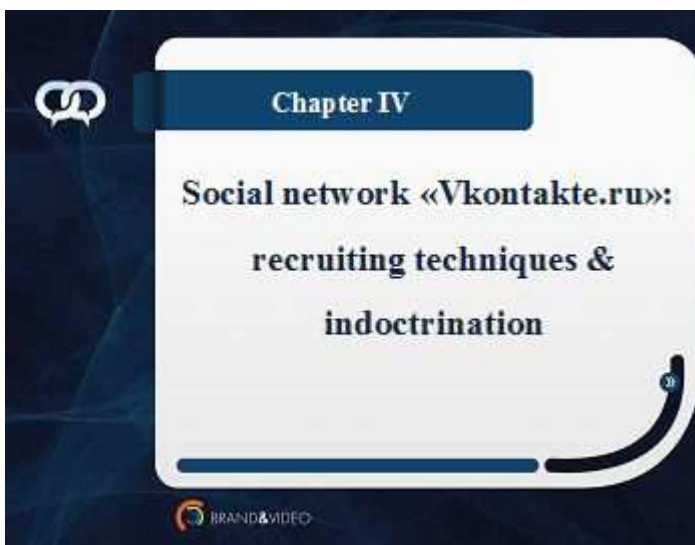
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False Gods and how to eliminate them

Dr Franceline James, Psychiatrist, psychotherapist FMH, Responsible of the Consultation for victims of cults, Geneva Association of Ethno-Psychiatry AGE

Introduction: Who We Are

We are a group of therapists working as a team within the Geneva Association of Ethno-Psychiatry to treat victims of undue influence. Our first consultation service, for patients from the migrant community whose therapists had been unable to help them using conventional methods, has been running since 1990.

In 2006, AGE launched a second consultation service for victims of undue influence, applying the same theory and clinical practice as with ethno-psychiatry.

We are an independent group, co-therapists who work on a voluntary basis. We are not affiliated with any religious, political, or other type of group, party, movement, or institution.

Ethno-psychiatry and undue influence

People who are caught up by undue influence are hooked through a specific form of exchange that enables the guru to get inside their mind. The theory on this type of mind control resembles what traditional societies consider as possession. Confronted with a victim who has been possessed, traditional healers seek to identify the intruder entity and to understand what it wants so as to make it leave. When we practice ethno-psychiatry and we receive a patient who is a migrant, we base our approach on such "traditional schools" to help him recover.

Mind control or possession, as a theory, has much in common with the tenets of Western trauma psychology. Accordingly, ethno-psychiatry methodology is ideally suited to handling people whose minds have suffered manipulation as a result of joining a cult.

False Gods: A Synopsis

Doubts

Typically, people who have come out of a cult and who consult us will say in the first session: *"I don't know what I believe"; "I don't know what I can trust anymore"; "I don't know what I think anymore"; "I don't know what is true anymore."*

None of them trust their ability to relate to reality at all, which often means they are diagnosed as psychotic.

Their very capacity to think or to act has been undermined at its very core. How can spending time in a cult have had that effect?

Note

Let us note at the outset: one cannot not trust anything.

Belief is the primal act of the human psyche that makes thought possible.

Before there can be Descartes' "I think, therefore I am", there has to have been a mental process of: "I believe, therefore I can think".

Normally, the sequence is so tangled as to be indistinct to the individual mind. Only too naturally do we assume our ability to think, forgetting it presupposes belief.

Belief

What sort of belief?

At the very start of life, the newborn has to know before anything else that he can trust an existing reality: his own, his mother's.

The certainty conditions the whole way the mind functions. Yet the process of exchange between the baby and the mother will already be based on what came first: the sensations related to bodily functions.

The infant becomes convinced of his reality through those bodily sensations when they are validated by his mother's words as she empathises: "Oh, you're cold", "You're hungry", or "Something frightened you"....

At the very outset of life we thus find ourselves wholly dependent on that guiding support: it is that other, the mother, who validates what I am feeling by ascribing a name to it. The mother thus enables me to emerge from turmoil.

From that point on I can believe a reality exists and I can begin to think.

The Guru as Mother, Not Father!

To our amazement then, and contrary to popular notion, we discovered that a guru's power is not that of an idealised or overbearing father constraining the devotee to adopt his philosophy.

One does not subscribe to the thinking of a guru for having renounced one's own, which is why there is precious little point in attempting to convince the devotee how inane or crude the thinking is.

The guru has operated far more subtly by penetrating the very source of thought, gaining an inordinate control over the working of the victim's mind. From then on he can impose his teaching and program the devotee no longer capable of independent thought.

How has he gone about that?

Infiltration

In point of fact, the guru has infiltrated the interface between belief and thought that conditions the individual's ability to think.

The mother enabled the infant to escape the turmoil of his earliest sensations by validating them with her own words. She also acted to soothe the child, appeasing his hunger, changing him, and comforting him.

By contrast, the guru will recreate the turmoil and insinuate himself into the position of he who knows what the other person is going through.

The turmoil is recreated by perverse and brutal means that bewilder and paralyse thought. Physical pain, disorientation through an induced state of permanent confusion over right and wrong, day and night, propriety and counterclaim, the forfeit of former support systems through the forced break with other attachments, and the alternation of humiliation and ego gratification are all ways to deprive someone of their frame of reference.

Having thus re-created the original sense of turmoil and utter dependency on the mother to stay sane, the guru can exercise control over the devotee by shaping his /her thinking and beliefs.

"I will tell you what you are feeling (you are angry, you are afraid, etc.)"

"I hold the key to your inner ordeal; therefore it is only through me that you can enter the world."

Daniel was caught in a dilemma. When Daniel was 18 his father had a serious heart attack for which Daniel blamed himself, because he and his father had argued a lot, yet the guru insisted that Daniel had been abused as a child.

Daniel was stunned, all thought paralysed.

That is how a mentally healthy adult can fall under another person's sway, for having drastically lost all power of independent thought.

Faced with people who come to us in a similar state, what kind of therapy do we offer?

False gods and How to Eliminate Them

Our Therapeutic Practice

Our efforts entail locating the weak points the guru exploited to deceive the devotee and penetrate his /her psyche in the capacity of pseudo-mother. We aim to identify the exact part the guru played in order to neutralise his power.

More specifically, we work with the victim initially to establish not the guru's actual vision of the world but the antecedent, the precise ploys he devised to break down the devotee's fundamental trust of reality.

Question: *"How did the massage sessions go?"*

Answer: *"It was all mixed up, the masseurs, the people getting massage, the teachers, the students...no one knew who did what. It was surreal, completely impossible to workout."*

Question: *"What sort of sensations did you experience?"*

Answer: *"I couldn't say. All I knew was I had a huge knot in my stomach. He was telling me," I know what you're feeling."*

Question: *"Where was he in relation to you?"*

Answer: *"Standing over me, fully clothed, digging his fingers into my stomach. Me lying there in my underpants, trying to keep face with all the people looking on, standing around me." Etc.*

Our Tools: Countertransference and Group Dynamics

We work as a group of co-therapists on one person (or one couple) at a time.

We are guided by our own countertransference reactions: e.g. together we feel the rage, the sense of powerlessness, the humiliation, the desperate need for acknowledgement that overwhelmed the victim.

We ourselves take on the role of mother, naming, attaching words to what we feel. We put the senseless conundrums the victim conveys to us in perspective: e.g., *"Freedom is gained through submission."* We identify the thought the guru implanted in manipulating the victim's mind: e.g., *"I am so ashamed/ useless/ worthless"*.

The group is there to back each victim: *"I am getting completely confused here. I don't know what to think anymore. What about you?"*

By encouraging debate the group also checks any tendency to play the unequivocal guru ourselves: e.g., *"I disagree with what you just said!"*

We pay close attention to our own bodily sensations and inquire about the consultee's, in order to avoid reproducing the confusion that was originally instilled: e.g., *"My legs feel paralysed. I can scarcely breathe. Etc."*

We rely on countertransference to decipher what the patient conveys about his/her own experience where that experience was damaging.

Marc's parents joined a cult when he was 14, after a death in the family. He came across as devoid of all emotion.

After our second session, one of the co-therapists had a crisis: she was overcome by enormous doubts as to her own professional capabilities and shame before the group. We can relate her feeling to Marc's emotionlessness the previous time. The co-therapist's insecurity about her competence and her sense of shame actually have to do with Marc's story.

Bit by bit we explore with the victim his/her associations with the past: e.g., *"Was there another time when you felt that paralysis?"* We re-establish the connection with the previous episodes the guru will have exploited to gain control.

The constant interchange within the group keeps us fixed on the objective of defusion. *"We believe what you are feeling. We are naming what we feel."*

That is how we render unto Caesar what is the guru's, which enables the consultee to recover what is his/hers.

That person is obviously our sounding board, the one who indicates whether our hunches make any sense and whether our support is any help, etc.

By recovering the ability to think for himself or herself, the victim also regains the self-esteem that was so dreadfully eroded by the methods practised in the sect.

In the process we think we will have worked together to develop the psyche to some extent, both our patient's and our own.

We will have restored life and creativity there where a destructive will power would have taken over.

Combined confusion between cult and religion

Jean-Pierre JOUGLA, lawyer, UNADFI – France

The word religion is connected to the notion of what is sacred. Its meaning has changed through the ages.

The way in which we consider religion nowadays goes back to the second century. Lactantius traces the origin of the word religion from **ligere**: to link, to connect. Thus, religion is what connects someone or something to God.

Saint Augustine adds to this the notion of attachment, the notion of choice, whilst giving **eligere** (to choose) as the origin of the word.

Cults want to link their activities to this origin of the term that came into existence along with Christianity.

If we refer to what former members tell us of the reality of life inside the group they had chosen to join, we are far from the dimension of choice and attachment to God. We are also far from the Greek concept of religion whose purpose was to maintain concord with the gods by worshipping them. It is obviously not the concern of the groups that we call cults today.

We often find in former members' testimonies that, among other factors, their disillusionment occurred when, to their alarm, they suddenly became aware that the idea of God had totally vanished from their life inside the group.

Worse was the realisation that their love of God had been replaced by a dedication to their guru, who had become the purpose of their lives, their identification model, the object of idolisation.

In this case we are very close to what ancient Latin writers such as Cicero qualified as superstition as opposed to religion.

For Cicero, the superstitious carry out rituals without knowing their meaning whereas the religious understand the meanings of these rituals.

In the Roman religion, adherence to formality reaches an essential dimension.

For Cicero the word 'religion' has its origin in **relego/relegere**, i.e. **to read again, to process again through thought**. To read the rite again in order to faithfully carry it out.

The Latin religious accomplished the rituals whilst understanding their meaning. For Cicero, the religious reflects a philosophical approach whereas the superstitious is only cult enslavement.

This **relegere**, to read again, etymology, rather than **ligere**, to join together allows a better understanding of why contemporary cults are not religious: they do not connect to transcendence, and most importantly they do not know how to re-read the rite and therefore, if we look closely, they are in the superstitious domain, which allows to better understand the fanaticism and extremism of their positions.

At the same time, there is another conclusion to make: the observation of contemporary cults in their diversity shows that the vast majority do not even claim a religious dimension and carry out their activities in fields as far from religion as self-development, health, business, education, the environment, etc.

Why then, continue stubbornly to confuse cult and religion, as can be seen not only by the "cult syndicate" " but also by some sociologists who follow a certain tendency of public opinion?

Surely an interest exists which does not follow the usual search for respectability and tendency to avoid any critical analysis of the conveyed dogma, which finds its origin in a misplaced respect of freedom of belief.

And I can follow the interest of connecting cults to religion in the persistent effort to submit the "temporal" sphere to the "spiritual" one.

When seen in this perspective we can understand that the "religious" which is mentioned here has nothing in common with the one which wants to read the rites again in order to faithfully carry them out., nor the one close to God, but one wishing to exercise power, of take over power in a political sense.

Cult spirituality, presenting itself as similar to religion wants to subdue the temporal.

Even if, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the philosophy of enlightenment stripped religion of its rationally unjustifiable contents, insisting on the separation of the temporal and the spiritual, and if, in the 19th century, analyses by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud show religion as an alienation, the predictable death of God and man's liberation these ideas are slow to progress, sociologists as Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, founding fathers of sociology, introduced the concept of « the disenchantment of the world » and the idea that religion was no longer the structure of society. Their theories, which preceded the 20th century's totalitarianisms, were nevertheless used as a core for religious analysis by sociologists who, naively, assimilated cults to «new religious movements». A false idea that dies hard.

Our fieldwork allows us to understand that cultist superstitions have more to do with totalitarianisms than with religions!

Cult of the guru's personality, submission to his delirious interpretations of reality, renunciation of critical thinking, demonization of society: that is cult's daily life which implement a relation of power – submission not only among members of the cult but also as a model of society to be duplicated in the non-believer's world.

This is the old model of temporal, political submitted to spiritual, a confused concept that we find in archaic religious forms that constitute fanatical radicalism, in the New Age paradigm or in modern forms of management in companies.

To lead every one of us into the same confusion would bring us to accept this philosophical regression, which would cause the political to lose the hard gained independence, which had allowed it to free the individual and make him into a citizen.

To bring us to forget that a cult is first and foremost a process of undue influence and to overlook the guru's pathology: that is the objective of combined confusion between the concept of contemporary cult and the notion of religion. This confusion may simply be due to ignorance; but this confusion is above all a concerted and deliberate plan to create confusion and block all independent thought.

We should never cease to condemn this confusion, which is a danger to democracy!

Fundamentalism

Anne Edelstam, journalist, FRI, Sweden

Western media started to talk about fundamentalists after a *fatwa*, condemning to death among others, the world-famous writer Salman Rushdi and terrorist acts such as the 11th of September 2001 against the US followed by others in Spain, London, Egypt... Fundamentalism isn't any more referred to as extreme Islam such as the one in Saudi Arabia, but it's now a question of terror and violence perpetuated essentially against the West and our democratic values, but mostly against other Muslims.

Mona Karashy that I met in my grandparents' old apartment in Garden City in Cairo gave me her essay on 'fundamentalism, Islam and women'. According to her, the word 'fundamentalism' stems originally from the United States and a group of Christians that had retired from society to live in autarky as during Jesus Christ's times. Then the word was transferred into Arabic and is now used to name groups that want to live as they imagined that the first Muslims did. The Islamic fundamentalists refuse any modern interpretation of the Koran. They mix religion and ancient traditions and politics. They don't balk at violence and don't hesitate to use it to attain their goals. Their aim is to have us all governed by Islamic laws; they are opposed to our modern society and to women's emancipation.

There exists different fundamentalist movements, some more inclined towards violence than others. But they all have in common a very traditional interpretation of the Koran where social, financial and political development is denied while still taking advantage of the most modern techniques. They want a static society when life is just the opposite.

In Egypt, Islamic fundamentalism started with the **Muslim Brotherhood (MB)**, a movement that was created in 1928 by Hassan el-Bannah (1906-1949) who wanted to give Egypt an Islamic identity. The party grew and in 1949 it counted millions of adherents divided into two thousand different cells. They operated in schools, syndicates and in different charity organisations. Their ideology can be summed up as four central concepts:

1. The organisation: belonging to that organisation is a religious duty for all Muslims. Members sworn in become the property of the organisation and are bound to dedicate their time, money and even lives to it.
2. Secrecy: is a fundamental cornerstone of the MB org. It did not arise in response to persecutions or as security measures. That's why there are so many "sleeping cells" ready to "wake" up at any time. The MB are to "adapt a façade of stupidity in its dealing with its allies and enemies, so as to learn their plans while pretending ignorance. The movement should place some of its men in the ranks of the enemy".
3. Pretence: meaning "temporarily accommodating the exigencies of the present in order to attain an ulterior goal later on" thus giving promises it intends to break and makes commitments it never intends to fulfil. An example being the Fairmont Hotel agreement made before the final round of the presidential elections in 2012 between the still rather unknown Mohammed Morsi and Ahmed Shafiq. Morsi and MB officials then vowed to meet the demands of liberals and revolutionary forces if they backed him in the polls. Once in power Morsi and the MB didn't keep their promises. Pretence means that deliberate lies and deception is okay as long as it serves their ideology.

4. Force: MB literature confirms that violence and force is an authorized instrument. Terror is a tactic that's encouraged to make a regime fall. Arms and terror training is part of its organisation.

In 1954, President Nasser banned the Muslim Brotherhood from the country. That same year, he just escaped an attack on his life. After that, many of the fundamentalists' party's adherents were arrested, tortured, deported or eliminated. The movement was silenced, but not entirely. In the 1970s, President Sadat encouraged the Islamists, fearing his communist opponents more. That triggered the beginning of a new movement: el Jamaa.

Despite President Mubarak's improvements accomplished during the 1980s, the situation was worsening for a vast majority of people, amongst whom the university students that Nasser had promised work to in an already overloaded Civil Service. There is housing shortage and the shantytowns are developing. Even the young people's sexual life is hindered because marriages become more and more costly and young couples can't find lodging. An increasing number of youngsters thus find themselves, against their will, single. Their role models aren't any more academics or politicians, but citizens coming back with their pockets full of money from work in the Gulf countries, their women veiled. In Saudi Arabia, even a Western woman cannot walk outdoors without the black sheet, *chador* that covers her from head to toe. Women are forbidden to drive a car; those who work do so with other women, serving women; few girls are sent to school; their lives are dominated by men. Egyptian workers are influenced by these ultra-conservative ideas in this country that 'God has rewarded by oil in abundance'.

The young generation is disappointed by nationalism and socialism. Their answer is Islam. It should be mentioned that Egypt is soaked in religious beliefs, you cannot express any wish without adding *insh'Allah*, God's willing.

Sayyed Qutb (1906-66) is the Sunnite movement's primordial reference. He was an intellectual Egyptian that had solid university studies possessing a good level of English. He was first pro-Western and then turned his back on those values to embrace radical ones instead. In 1953, Qutb became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood after having read the Pakistani Abdul Ala Mawdudi's political literature. The following year he was arrested and sentenced to fifteen years behind bars. In prison, he became even more radical and preached the return to the 'sources'. The followers of the fundamentalist movement, el Jamaa el Islameyya, read his book 'In the shadow of the Koran'. Qutb didn't have the time to put his ideas in practice though. He was released from prison in 1964 just to be put back there again one year later along with hundreds of other members of radical movements. Nasser ordered him hanged. His brother, Mohammed Qutb, escaped to Saudi Arabia, where he taught amongst others, Osama bin Laden, at university. We are hence suffering under Qutb's influence today through el-Qaida's deeds.

Khaled el-Berry is an Egyptian Muslim coming from a well-integrated and educated social background. Despite that he was recruited by el-Jihad. He relates in his book '*La Terre est plus belle que le Paradis*' – Earth is more beautiful than Paradise – how through mental manipulation he became increasingly militant within the fundamental movement, el Jamaa el-Islamayya. Another interesting testimony to a similar recruitment, but in England, is the book written by Ed Husain: 'The Islamist, why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left' (Penguin Books, 2007). Khaled repented and returned to a normal life after some time in prison. His testimony, and Ed Husain's, resembles that of any cult adherent. The manipulation, the lies, the fanaticism, the isolation, it's all there.

Khaled thought, as all cult members do, that he was one of God's 'chosen'. He had, along with his 'brothers', decided to combat Western 'consumer society' and create the 'true road to Islam' instead. Their mission was to combat for an Islamic state running from Palestine to Andalusia delivering the countries deprived of Islam and establish the Islamic model everywhere in the world. Khaled's task was to recruit university students. As in most cults,

he had to give up his own ideas and identity to dress differently, talk and walk in a special way, let his beard grow and trim it in a special way etc. All manipulative and totalitarian groups isolate thus their members from the rest of society so that they lose their own identity in favour of the cult identity and its ideology instilled by the leader. In the beginning, it seems easy just to follow orders and not to have to think, but in the long run, the identity loss becomes increasingly difficult to manage. The constant pressure never to be good enough, to always have to obey, never be allowed any spontaneity or laughter (fanatics are seldom any fun...) and always to be on guard, becomes eventually such a burden that cult members often develop psychological disorders.

As in other cults, Khaled wasn't allowed to meet 'non-believers' even among his own family. There were many different rules to follow and respect; such as to eat without cutlery, using the right hand and three fingers; to cross legs in a certain manner and not in another while sitting on the floor; to walk into the mosque with the right foot first and walk out with the left foot first; to walk into the lavatory with the left foot and out with the right foot; the *galabeyya*, or robe, (they dress traditionally and not Western), had to be shorter than normal not to look too ostentatious; to walk slowly; to brush their teeth with a special toothpaste; never whistle... In a cult every detail is regulated in order to keep the mind busy on trivialities as a thought-stopping method to avoid reflection and ultimately doubting about the doctrine. The thoughts being thus controlled, the members repeat incessantly the group's ideology.

Khaled's world was divided into two: the believers and the non-believers. The Afghan believers had won the war against the Russians because 'the angels had fought with them' as he had been taught by the videos shown to him and to the other members. The cyclones hitting the United States shores were in fact: 'God's anger'; each earthquake was 'God's threat'; Aids, droughts etc are but 'God's revenge'. In that respect, Jamaa el-Islameyya, also resembles most cults that refer to natural catastrophes as 'divine punishments'.

The fundamentalists' retro conception of women in Egypt has hindered the women's emancipation movements. According to the fundamentalists, looking at women 'is sinful' that's why women cover up to protect themselves and the men from temptations. Women belong to Satan. They aren't allowed to wear make-up, to put on perfume, to go out alone or to talk to men; if a woman gets raped it's her own fault. Even the Imam that I talked to in the Stockholm mosque was affirming those degrading ideas about women while his salary is paid by Swedish taxpayers!

In this perspective, it shouldn't be forgotten that Egypt is a country where belly-dancing, a very erotic dance, is one of the major attractions. Om Khalsoum, referred to simply as *el-Sitt*, the Woman, in Egypt, is legendary. She was the Egyptians' favourite singer. The Egyptians love to sing and dance; they are a joyful people. Om Khalsoum was appreciated all over the Arab world. During thirty-seven years, the entire Arab-World was listening to her on Thursday evenings at the radio. From the Qasr el-Nil cinema she gave marathon concerts that sometimes went on for six hours in a row and were always full. Her fans would cover her with gifts. After the 1967 war she amassed millions of pounds to reconstruct the army. From her hospital bed, the Syrian radio kept the line opened to be able to quickly alert the people of her state. Her funeral in 1975 was even more important than Nasser's had been. More than two million people marched in the streets of Cairo. They still listen to her records and there are numerous Internet sites about her.

But the fundamentalists banned her. Khaled and his 'brothers' made sure that there weren't any contacts at the university between both sexes. They were just as strict regarding homosexuals and regarding anything that was sex-related. To oppress their sexual frustrations, the members would fast a lot.

According to the fundamentalists women have to wear black robes with as sole decoration some Mickey Mouse looking gloves to hide all human flesh. In the most extreme cases,

women wear dark glasses on top of their veil. An increasing health problem among Egyptian women has become a vitamin D deficiency due to the lack of exposure to sunrays. Even Swedish doctors are getting worried about that problem among our immigrants. Too little exposure to the sun hinders the body's calcium production. The skeleton is weakened and bone-cracks difficult to discern even on X-rays as a result. On children, especially young veiled girls, the skeleton can be deformed for life. The less extreme women can opt for the 'nun-fashion' with a veil that surrounds the face and falls down on their shoulders, just like the Christian nuns. There is also the version 'scarf- matching' the clothes, be they joggings, school uniforms or jeans. To the chemists' benefit, most scarves are made of nylon or of polyester, thus getting wealthy on anti-allergic drugs. The women within the groups (or living in neighbourhoods where they are in majority) who divert from this fashion risk being mocked or badly treated.

The Copts are another group that the fundamentalists try to intimidate. El Jamaa pursues and attacks them. In Upper Egypt, el Jamaa introduced, for its own benefit, a religious tax, *el jizia*. Its adherents terrorise the Copts by thefts, rapes and even murders. Regularly they organise murders perpetuated against Copts; it happens every two or three years since 1979, which contribute to their emigration.

President Sadat was assassinated by another group of Islamists, el Jihad, which leader is the brother of Mohammed Istambouli, el Jamaa's then imprisoned leader. He became one of Ben Laden's lieutenants in Afghanistan. In 1982, el Jamaa took control over the universities and the poorer districts. Murders of liberals and Copts continued with thousands of members fighting for the Islamic cause, regularly putting Coptic churches on fire.

The sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, el Jamaa's spiritual leader, escaped to the United States in the 1990s, after several years behind bars in Egypt. El Jamaa allied itself with other similar movements inside the country and in other countries (Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, Yemen, Algeria and Pakistan) and created antennas or ramifications in Europe and in the United States. Ayman el Zawahiri, one of el-Qaida's leaders, became the link to Afghanistan. After Rifaat el-Mahgoub's – the Egyptian Parliament's President – murder, 25 000 of el-Jamaa's adherents were imprisoned. That marked the beginning of an open war and several murders and attacks followed suit.

Intellectuals, such as the writer Farag Foda, as well as other official personalities paid with their lives. Professor Nasr Abu-Zayd of the Cairo University was condemned to divorce his Muslim wife. His 'fault' was to suggest that some parts of the Koran were to be interpreted as metaphors rather than literally. All his books were as a result removed from the bookshops. As he had no intention of divorcing and that he feared for his life, he and his wife immigrated to Europe.

In 1993, Sheikh Omar Rahman ordered his first attack on the World Trade Centre. Two years later, he was condemned in the United States to life imprisonment. Next year, the murders and the attacks accelerated in Egypt. They even attempted to assassinate President Mubarak in 1995. In 1997, dozens of tourists were killed in Luxor. Thousands of el-Jamaa's adherents were arrested as a result. From their prison-cells, the leaders accepted a truce. But another leader, Abu Yassir Rifai-Taha, a refugee in Afghanistan, joined Osama ben Laden's *jihad* against the Christians and the Jews. In the year 2000, Taha threatened the United States. The more militant el-Jamaa's members left to join terrorist groups all over the Middle East or Ben Laden's group in Afghanistan.

In the Arab world, the Islamists are hindering all modern development. The United Nations, in an alarming report in 2002, 'the Arab human development report', warned that the Arab countries are handicapped in their development because of a lack of political freedom, censorship and women's oppression. Financially, several among those countries have moved forwards thanks to the oil revenues. But culturally most Arab countries have stagnated. Internet usage is ephemeral; film productions decrease; few new books are written and even fewer are translated from other languages into Arabic. The entire Arab world

translates around 330 books yearly, which correspond to a fifth of Greece's translations. During the past millennium, the Arabs have translated the same amount of books, as does Spain during one year! It's essentially religious books that are written and published in the Arab world.

According to Laila Abou-Saif, an Egyptian writer and theatre director, the Islamists are one of the factors in the explanation of the cultural downward trend in Egypt. Egypt used to be an artistic and scientific centre, but Laila had to close down her theatre in Cairo in 1979 after having produced a satiric play about polygamy, an indication of the fundamentalists' pressure exercised on the government. Fouad Ajami, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at the John Hopkins University, said that the Arabs are oppressed both by religion and by the State. The lower middle class is increasing. It's a literate group but not a well educated one. That group of people, according to Ajami, distrusts intellectuals, liberals or just people with different opinions.

From the United Nations, Khalaf Hunaidi, a former Jordanian vice-first minister, who headed the report, said that it showed the link between censorship and scientific development. The renowned American historian, Bernard Lewis, asked himself in his book 'What went wrong' what didn't work out in the Arab countries' development. The Islamic civilisation dominated in all areas 600-700 years ago, when Europe lived in misery and ignorance. For this experienced historian, the answer to that question lies in the lack of freedom in the Middle East: lack of freedom of the press, of financial freedom, of women's freedom and of free elections. Even homosexuality is forbidden by law.

The world's worry about Islam is however based on a misunderstanding. Fundamentalism isn't the same as Islam. To mix up the two concepts, credits the fundamentalists that want us to believe that Islam is a retrograde religion, unable to adapt to modernity. Many scholars try to give us a more honest image of its content. One interesting book on the subject is the dialogue between Laila Babès, a professor in sociology of religion, and Tareq Oubrou, an Imam in Bordeaux, France. In their book: 'Allah's law, men's law, freedom, equality and women in Islam', most questions concerning women's emancipation and justice are raised and enlightened according to the Koran. Both authors are believers in their own way, with different values, but based on Islam. Laila represents the modern Muslim woman that works and refuses to veil. Tareq has a more restricted view of women. The simple fact that they are capable of holding a discussion shows that there are different ways of interpreting the Koran.

Islam is a tolerant religion. Islam isn't against the Human Rights, but the fundamentalists are. They possess too much power today and as long as they continue to do so, the Arab world will regress. We can make the comparison with a fundamental evangelical movement taking power in the West, women's and children's rights would regress, minorities and homosexuals would have to go into hiding again. It's the fundamentalists' dream coming true in many Arab countries.

Magnus Norell, a Swedish researcher working for the Swedish Defence and research Centre (FOI), concentrates his studies on the Middle East and terrorism. He wrote an essay for the Foreign Ministry, entitled 'Terror in the Name of God'. According to Norell, the terrorist act that we witnessed on the 11th of September was just the beginning of a wave of violence. At the bottom of this Islamic militancy lies a conviction of fighting 'the evil' represented by our modern, Western society. The fundamentalists see no way of compromise or trust. The movement blames others for its own failure, instead of trying to reform Islam from the inside.

Norell also draws parallels between this form of Islam and other cultic or totalitarian groups where the individual is eclipsed in favour of the community and the ideology. They are submitted to an irrational and fanatical language that makes murders in the name of Allah possible because the Islamists don't want to be 'contaminated' by "atheist" thoughts. That's why they isolate themselves from society.

The Egyptians love their belly dancers and their jokes. They were fooled to vote for the Muslim Brotherhood in June 2012 and it took them one year of economic disaster (the MB are extremely liberal in their view of economics and thus not to the poor people's advantage) and societal chaos to overthrow Morsi during a massive demonstration with 33 million people in the streets (eventually backed by the army). I shudder at the thought of what Egypt would have become otherwise.

Anne Edelstam

An extract from a chapter of her book "Three Ladies in Kairo"

Cults or Religions, a misleading debate

Olivier Faelens, President of SAS-Sekten, Belgium

Who of you has seen the documentary *Going Clear*, a documentary broadcasted by HBO about the abuse within CS.

Hopefully you all went to the United States to be able to watch the documentary in a legal way...

Scientology doesn't like critics. They tried to stop HBO from broadcasting *Going Clear* by sending them a great amount of letters.³¹ An analysis of these letters shows that: all negative information about Scientology is a lie and witnesses are immoral or criminal. In those instances that Scientology did become convicted, it is due to discrimination towards religions in general or Scientology specifically. They are having different beliefs, and that is why they, as a non-traditional religion, are being discriminated.

We all know it is not because of different beliefs, but because of harmful practices. And in the case of Scientology, a lot of harmful practices are known, especially through documentaries such as *Going Clear*. But even then, talking about being discriminated compared to other religions, makes a lot of sense to an open-minded public.

This brings us to the topic of my presentation. I want to show you how going into a discussion about real and false religiosity and belief, about whether a belief system is based on the fraudulent fantasy of one man or a sincere religious experience, is obfuscating a clear informative analysis of cult problems. If we participate in this discussion, even if we didn't start this discussion ourselves, it raises more questions than it solves and shifts the focus from our real concern: harmful sectarian practices.

To give you an example of this strategy, I will take a look at three of the letters CS sent to HBO to prevent *Going Clear* from going viral.

Letter to Sheila Nevins, President, HBO Documentary Films, by CSI, February 24, 2015

Concluding paragraph:

You cannot hide from the truth and pretend that your film is anything but a one-sided exercise in religious bigotry that relies on lies.

This is a nice summary: the documentary is made of lies and religious intolerance

Letter to HBO Senior Counsel Stephanie S. Abrutyn, by Bisceglie & Walsh, attorneys at law, March 16, 2015

³¹ Various of those letters are to be seen at auf <http://www.freedommag.org>

I am writing about the documentary on Scientology Alex Gibney has done using Lawrence Wright's book as a foundation.

*But worst of all is Mr. Wright's referring to Scientology as spreading like a "virus" which may "turn lethal." This is shocking language, amounting to hate speech and evidencing malice. There is of course only one thing to do against a lethal virus: eradicate it. This precise analogy of a "mutating virus" has been used by **anti-religious extremists in France to advocate stamping out the "pathology of belief" in Europe.***

MIVILUDES, laïcité, FECRIS ... an anti-sectarian witches' brew. But that is not the accusation of CS. We are not fighting against sectarian abuses, but against religion and belief... Three more quotes of the same letter.

*The Church documented more than **1,500 cases of discrimination against its parishioners in Germany during this period ['90]** and presented the evidence to international human rights bodies, governments and the human rights community.*

...

*On page 243 of his book, Mr. Wright states that the policy of the German government is to refuse to recognize Scientology as a religion; he then quotes Norbert Blum, the former Minister of Labor in the Kohl administration, and a official as notorious as Mrs. Caberta, for his **discriminatory utterances directed at Scientology, who states that Scientology 00" is not a church or a religious organization"**.*

*While giving the reader the distinct impression that Scientology Churches are treated as commercial organizations in Germany, Mr. Wright fails to mention that there are over 40 German judicial decisions recognizing that the **Church of Scientology and its members are entitled to the protections of freedom of religion and belief** granted in Article 4 of the German Constitution.*

This time it isn't France but Germany in the '90 who is the discriminator, whom CS as a hero of justice was fighting against. A 1500 cases. . . Cults, and especially CS, love to sue for discrimination.

And how are they discriminated according to CS? When we state that CS **"Is not a church or a religious organization"**.

One more letter.

I.letter to HBO Senior Counsel Stephanie S. Abrutyn, by Rabinowitz, Boudin, Standard, Krinsky & Lieberman, P.C., attorneys at law, March 19, 2015

I am an attorney practicing in the areas of constitutional rights, civil liberties, and First Amendment protections of religious free exercise, speech, and freedom of association. I have represented churches of Scientology for nearly forty years in that capacity. I successfully have argued cases on behalf of the churches, as well as other organizations and persons, in the Supreme Court and most federal circuit courts of appeals.

*I write with respect to the "documentary film" by Alex Gibney, based closely upon the book authored by Lawrence Wright entitled *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief*. I strongly urge HBO to cancel its sponsorship of this film, which will only serve to disseminate religious intolerance and prejudice against the Scientology religion, its ministers, and its membership, contrary to American principles of religious freedom and equality.*

*Mr. Wright's book proceeds from a fundamentally biased and indefensible premise: that there is a "widespread assumption that Scientology is a cult and a fraud." (*Going Clear*, pg. xii.) Giving that premise its ordinary and plain meaning, **according to Wright both the general public and government authorities agree (a "widespread assumption") that Scientology is a false re-***

ligion, its religious beliefs and doctrine are without basis and unworthy of respect and the Church promulgates them knowing they are false (the definition of fraud), and that it, as a "cult" (as that term is used in common parlance as a term of degradation), is not entitled to the respect and constitutional protections of older and more traditional religions. From that premise, Wright proceeds in a one-sided attack against the religion and the Church based upon his discussions with a selected group of anti-Scientology apostates with an agenda to destroy the Church and the religion.

This quote clearly shows to what kind of accusations CS wants to defend itself against:

- 1) Scientology is a **false religion**, its religious beliefs and doctrine are **without basis** and unworthy of respect and the **Church promulgates them knowing they are false**
- (2) it, as a "**cult**" (as that term is used in common parlance as a term of degradation), **is not entitled to the respect** and constitutional protections of older and more **traditional religions**.

This means if we accuse CS of one of these things and go into discussions about it, we are giving them what they want. Why do they want this?

Because it shifts the focus of our real concern: their harmful practices. Cults will not stop shouting that they are being discriminated. And for an open minded and uninformed public, it is hard to put questions and concerns of discrimination aside and see them for what they are: a dishonest manipulation of discourse/discussion. By raising questions and concerns again and again they are choosing the subject matter. When trying to be open-minded, you will postpone your judgement about something when someone is talking or shouting about discrimination, and will listen to what he/she has to say. But by doing that, you are already thinking about what the other wants. In the case of cults like Scientology, it is part of their proselytism or of converting the other to one's own thoughts. Even when you are critically thinking (which is a good way of thinking), you might be thinking about the wrong thing.

And when being open-minded, this sounds a bit counter-intuitive. Shouldn't we always have to listen to what someone has to say? The answer is: no, not if we know that what they are saying is solely a rhetorical statement without any willingness to listen to another viewpoint or debate. That is what is dishonest about it. Their indignation is orchestrated and seems like a call to be heard, but it is a call not to listen to others.

An example of how we do make the mistake of going into their discussion, in my opinion, is in stating that Scientology or other cultic belief systems aren't real religions, because they are based on a one man's fantasy or because of commercial purposes. Unless this is stated as a funny fait divers, it is problematic because I believe it is hard or impossible to make a distinction between right and false metaphysical beliefs, unless you are accepting some unprovable premises, such as: god and authentic spirituality are good, thus bad deeds can't be inspired by authentic spirituality. This only counts when your definition of god or spirituality includes goodness. I think most of you would agree that referring to a sacred source such as the bible, isn't of any help in deciding whether a belief or practice is true or good, unless you already accept scriptural value. Otherwise, it proves nothing. But, when talking about Scientology, we always point at the fact that LRH made it all up. And we love to quote him saying that 'the best way to become a millionaire is to start a religion', thus it must be all fantasy. This may be true, but for many scientologists, it is the truth. They believe it like most protestant believe in the truth of the gospels. And so I believe that we shouldn't go into questioning the religiosity of this group of people, as we shouldn't of jihadist fighters and other problematic forms of 'religion'. Probably there are jihadist fighters and scientologists who are in it for other purposes, without believing what they preach. But most of them are believers and religious. Anyway, engaging into this discussion can sometimes be inter-

esting, but it is giving them what they want and dragging away the focus of what really counts: the harmful practices within these groups.

So, this is what I plea for. And I think it shouldn't cause as many practical problems as it does now. For example tax exemption. It is not enough to show that you are a religious organization to be able to benefit a tax exemption status. Another criterion should be, and this has way to little focus in the US and other countries, that you respect the laws of that country. Terrorist or criminal organization don't respect that and so they shouldn't get that exemption, even if they are religious. Religiosity doesn't discharge you from respecting other laws and fundamental rights. And neither does pointing at such offences entail any discrimination. Off course it doesn't expel you from respecting one's freedom to belief and practice its religion, but it is a relative respect.

And it is precisely this relativity and balance that is missing in cult rhetoric. 'Our rights as a religion are not respected so stop talking about other things, because it doesn't matter.' In the mind of cult member, there is no other.

So again, my advice, unless a person is willing to listen and engage in a dialogue, don't let them set the discussion topics. We have to be present in discussions, but then we should steer it to the topics that matters. They see themselves as true believers and authentic religious people? Whatever. As long as they respect the law and all fundamental rights. And if we can keep on informing the public about the offences, harm and dangers, I think we are doing a great job.

The emotional tipping point between religion and cult

Pierre Le Coz, Director Department Humanities at the Faculty of Medicine
(Aix-Marseille University)³²

Introduction

Manipulation is a major criterion of distinction between cults and religions. Except for the particular case of it becoming sectarian, a religion does not need to use manipulative strategies; it inducts its members mainly through family traditions. Contrarily, a cult forces the new member to destroy their relation with their tradition and their family. This break with their past, their relatives and friends, is a costly process for the new recruit. That is why a cult leader will have "to force his hand", using the whole range of manipulative techniques (emotional control, baiting, "foot in the door", emphasis...)

We all have an intuitive idea of what manipulation is, but few have conceptual and objective knowledge of it. We can sometimes have the impression that we have been manipulated, but it takes some time before we understand how the trap closed around us. To identify and to categorise undue influence and persuasion strategies takes a reflexive effort, a critical distance to uncover all the components of the manipulative mechanism.

This difficulty to determine the cogs of undue influence is part of the reason of the spinner of yarns' success. In order to smooth out these difficulties and to better understand the way in which the power of cult domination is wielded, philosophers and thinkers, past and present, can provide a framework of analysis and conceptual tools.

1. Plato: the rationalist critic of the sophist's manipulation

³² Author of « Le gouvernement des émotions. Et l'art de déjouer les manipulations » Albin Michel. 2014.
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In philosophical texts throughout history, even in the oldest, we find testimonies of concerns due to mass manipulation phenomena. From the 5th century B.C., Socrates wonders about the way orators manage to overcome the people's vigilance, leading them into counterproductive wars (1). A smooth talker like Alcibiades convinced Athens to fight a battle that, *in fine*, turned out to be a disaster against its Spartan enemies during the Peloponnesian war. The curse attached to the demagogic use of speech can explain Plato's repeated attacks against sophists who were the worst usurpers of his time. Plato distinguishes the philosopher, who seeks knowledge (*philosophia*), from the sophists who claim to possess knowledge. Sophists have one thing in common inasmuch as they have an answer to everything. Plato describes them as "*experts in the tempers and desires of a mighty strong beast*", that is to say the people, when their opinion is manipulated by opinion leaders. The sophist masters the demagogic art of cosyng up to the public: "*what irritates it*", "*what softens it*", and, "*how to approach and handle it*"(2).

The philosophical dialogue is about questioning, along with others, in order to walk together towards the truth, while in the sophistic dialogue the aim is to have an effect on others to seduce them and convince them to concur with our own ideas. The sophist asks himself: "*what does the other want to hear?*", "*what can I say to please him?*"

The first feature of manipulation is, then, to be tell a tale unrelated to the truth, even though it claims to be the truth. The priorities of this tale are to gain the support, to lure mass approval and capture targeted individuals. To persuade is not only to convince of an idea, on the ground of rationality. To persuade is to defeat psychological resistance, to flatter self esteem, to feed passions and to charm with promises of better days (3).

For the manipulator, what is essential is to start conversations, to find a good teaser, to have a launching pad. A few words stuttered by his prey will be enough to begin with. The main thing is to obtain a simple "yes" or, even better, several consecutive "yeses" ("yes, indeed, it's a beautiful day", "yes, you are right, there is a lot of traffic", etc. The skill of the manipulator consists in provoking in his interlocutor a state of mind favourable to acceptance. The manipulator does not appeal to reason or general ideas, but reaches for the imagination. It's about leading someone to adhere, not to think. In a manipulative process adherence is not rational, it is emotional. Perverted rhetoric becomes the mechanism to "seize emotionally".

While the philosopher appeals to the mind, the sophist hounds; he plays on the level of emotions that he manipulates with the artifices of eloquence. He knows how to overcome his audience's vigilance with strong expressions, full of imagery. The sophist will be able to gain support where an honest orator would fail. This is how a man as wise as Socrates could defend his "straight" ideas, objectively valid, and yet had not been heard or taken seriously by the masses. He did not know how to convey emotions through his speeches (5).

2. Troeltsch: the difference between adhering to a church and adhering to a cult

In the modern period, the first sociologists of religion such as Max Weber (6) or Ernst Troeltsch (7) elaborated distinctions between cults and religions that we can still use to distinguish adherence modalities to spiritual groups. Religions recruit members through a system of affiliation. In broad outlines, cults offer rupture where religions encourage continuity. Thus, the "Church" type corresponds to an institution for salvation that ensures, for everyone, the transmission of a founding story, such as the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. It is not looking to innovation or exoticism. On the contrary, a religion remains loyal to a legacy, to the speech of a prophet or a Messiah (8). The believer fits in a group through immersion into a tradition that existed before him. The Present is placed under the authority of the past. New members are incorporated from their birth. With baptism, the individual is at the centre of a ritual of incorporation into the community. He is assimilated with the relig-

ion de facto, with the support of his family. The new member has never been personally recruited. Psychological manipulation has no need to be.

To reinforce its specificity regarding cults, Troeltsch attributes to religion an extensive mode of action. The fact that "catholic" means "universal" is significant. The number of members is more important than the way they live their faith. On the contrary, the cult is in a logic of intensity. It requires a conscious and personal commitment; the quality of the experience is prioritised over the quantity of members. The admission into the group is made, in theory at least, by an individual choice, if need be, in rupture with the original religion.

Because religion places itself under the sign of extension, because it aims to embrace all societies and cultures (even if it means compromising with local beliefs and local particularities), it asks of its members only minimum ethical expectations. It is clear that if religion was demanding, it could not spread beyond a small circle of initiated. Either one asks a lot, and one will have little, or one asks little, and one can hope to get a lot. The aim of a religion is not to change its member's ordinary life. The realistic moderation of its ambitions explains why religion does not need to use artifices of manipulation. The admission in a cult is much more costly because it requires a conversion, a rupture with others and oneself. The leader asks for an allegiance without limits and a total commitment. Cult is "a radical commitment to serve a radical cause" (9). Manipulative strategies are essential for the guru to incite the individual to leave his current life behind and to disown both his historical and family attachments.

3. Jouve and Beauvois: the misleading feeling of freedom

We know that "free will" is often used by spiritual leaders and upholders of liberalism to counter the idea of "undue influence". It would not be legitimate to talk about "enrolling" minds in cults because members are supposedly free to commit themselves. We can ask ourselves if the inner feeling of freedom is not, precisely, the crucial cog of manipulation. Social psychologists defined manipulation as a "voluntary submission" (10). To be manipulated, is to "freely" do what the other expects us to do. Expressions such "*you are free to accept or to refuse to follow me*", "*I would perfectly understand that you refuse, you are free to do what you want*" are used by any guru or spiritual adviser to create a bond of trust. The member is reassured by this apparent flexibility of choice that is left to him ("*I can trust him because he is offering me the choice to come or not to come to meditation sessions of his community*").

Another common belief is that some people being vulnerable are more easily influenced and that this can explain manipulation. Here again, social psychology warns us to be cautious with preconceptions. It teaches us that it is not the character of people that can explain their submissive behaviour but the actions and decisions they previously made (11). It shows that once one has been committed to a cause or a group, there is a risk of being trapped in one's own initiative. Everyone has a tendency to agree with his or her own decision, following a kind of self-manipulation. We would rather talk about "adherence" (10) to insist on the fact that it is not a conscious and rational agreement. Anyone who has taken a decision would tend to stick to this decision and not let it go. This natural downward spiral can lead to what we call an "escalation of commitment" (11) based on this tendency we have to persevere in a process, even if it becomes overly costly to us. In the common language we designate this phenomenon with expressions full of imagery such as "*slippery slope*", "*tripping over the carpet*". During wars, belligerents seem to find in each defeat a reason to keep on fighting. We are obscurely looking for a confirmation of the righteousness of a decision when facts show, obviously, that it is time to stop and get out of this trap. We continue to act, against all odds, because we have spent time and energy. We are loath to undo what we have fought for, which is one of the main reasons of the "akrasia" phenomenon (4). To act against our better judgment. What we refuse to accept is the "waste". We want to rescue the

meaning of what we did ("I did not do all this for nothing!"), also perhaps for our self esteem (12). We can imagine the effect of "*the escalation of commitment escalate*" on a person attracted to a cult and who, facing mockery and irony from relatives, will persevere on her path to prove she was right to frequent this group.

Psychologists Beauvais and Joule observe, among other things, that the force of our commitment, supposedly "free", can vary according to some attributes of this decision. Thus, we feel more obliged when we made a decision in public. I committed myself before other people. My freedom is also reduced when I committed myself explicitly. For instance, I have been asked if I would come to the community's meeting or to take a subscription and I said "yes". My answer was straight forward, it was not uncertain or indecisive; it could leave no doubt.

My possibility for manoeuvre becomes even smaller when what I said is irrevocable. I feel even more bound by my first decision because I have the impression that I cannot undo it. I promised that I would come to the session or the seminar "tomorrow", or "on the weekend". Now, it seems hard to rethink my decision. If I had said something vague ("in the next two months", "one of these days", etc.), I would be freer of my acts and deeds. I would more easily be able to change my mind, pretending a change of circumstances.

Beauvois and Joule also point out the fact that we are even more committed to an action when done repeatedly. I opened my door to Jehovah's Witnesses once or twice in the recent past. It will be more difficult not to let them in next time (even if it is only a probability and not absolute determinism).

Let's notice once again that I would struggle to unbind from my commitment when beliefs to which the guru will ask me to concur with are compatible with my own. Social psychology talks about a "non-problematic character" (10) of belief: I submit more easily to beliefs that are dear to me. For instance, if I believe that modern civilisation is on a decadent path, that men should turn themselves to God, that we need a spiritual regeneration, I would more easily agree with the speech of a spiritual leader that supports this kind of affirmation.

Finally, we will note the fact that we feel more committed to a decision when consequences matter to us. For instance, if I gave several hundreds of euros to a cult leader (when I am already going through financial difficulties), I would feel more committed than if I had only given a little of my time. I want my decision to be relevant because it cost me, in an economic sense.

We can see, then, that behind the apparent freedom to commit to a cult, we can show the existence of six factors of commitment which create a favourable ground for manipulation:

- The visibility of one's decision in front of someone else
- Its explicit character
- Its irrevocability
- The repetition of the act
- The non-problematic character of belief
- The importance of consequences

4. The shrinking range of emotions

Social psychology looks at behaviour and considers it in an objective way, from the outside, by assessing probability. To complete this external perspective, we still have to characterise the manipulation phenomenon from the inside. To do so, in my book *Le Gouvernement des emotions et l'art de déjouer les manipulations* (*The Government of emotions and the art to foil manipulations*), I proposed the concept of shrinking range of emotions (4). What is it?

We usually feel a wide range of emotions, with varying degrees intensity. Descartes even summarised 34 of them, some of them natural, some of them cultural, some of them simple, some of them complicated (13). Emotional shrinking refers to a decrease in the num-

ber of feelings the member experiences. It consists in a tendency to always feel the same emotions, and in a more acute way. That is where the emotional tipping point lies from religion to cult. When I live under the sway of a guru, my emotional life is virtually reduced to four feelings: admiration, fear, guilt and gratification:

- I will admire a guru's charismatic aura, and correlatively, I will experience less admiration for movie stars or athletes.
- The brief thought of leaving the cult will come with fear of punishment by forces from the beyond, of losing the esteem and recognition earned within the group.
- I will feel guilt because I cannot fulfil the cult's expectations.
- I will also be grateful to have become someone important, the narcissistic satisfaction to have a mission on earth, to be chosen among the damned, lucid among the blind. Gerald Bronner highlights the fact that cult related movements "offer individuals who concur to them micro-societies where cards have been re-dealt, where it is possible again to hope to reach a status meeting expectations" (9).

The intensity and recurrence of these four feelings correlates with the loss of other emotions from ordinary life. The focus of emotional energies on the group and its leader causes a decrease in the usual range of emotions, which often gives the relatives an impression of "a heart's anaesthesia". What moves us leaves the member indifferent. He seems to be "a stranger to the world", which is the very definition of alienation (*alienus*, stranger). In psychoanalytic jargon, we would say that his libidinal resources are focused on the guru through a transfer mechanism. The member's affectivity has not disappeared but has been channelled in only one direction and has been siphoned off by the guru for himself.

Consequently, helping a disciple to leave a cult cannot be "bringing him back to reason" with philosophical or scientific arguments. A frontal opposition could even be counter-productive, strengthening the member in his beliefs, irritated to see his "knowledge" questioned. It is rather with caring benevolence that relatives can hope to reset the cult victim's emotional dynamic, by arousing other emotions than the one his guru cultivates in order to manipulate him.

Conclusion: a new path to explore to help victims

The analysis of the affective tipping point between religion and cult allows us to understand why educated and sensible persons can also be trapped by manipulative strategies. It is in the affectivity field that manipulation can be found. Thus, besides rational ways (those of education and culture) we need to focus our attention on other possible ways of preventing cults' undue influence. In this perspective, I propose to widen the range of expression of feelings in order to re-establish the natural diversity of feelings itself. The idea is to reactivate the natural relation of balance between emotions. By increasing their number, emotions can, among other things, decrease one another's intensity. Only emotions can balance emotions and advance the liberating doubt in the member's mind.

Associations that struggle against cults could, in the future, look at this emotional shrinking phenomenon, in order to clear paths to reset the dynamic process of emotional balance in cult members' minds. In the extent that emotions are often set off by sensitive perceptions from the outside world, this is most likely by renewing the member's sensitive perception field that he will be able to retrieve his emotional flow and see the world through an emotional kaleidoscope again. This approach could also help victims that have left a cult to mentally free themselves more efficiently.

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The Jehovah's Witnesses' internal judicial system as a human rights problem – efforts to draw attention to the problem in Finland

Joni Valkila, president of UUT, Finland

A brief introduction to UUT

- UUT (Uskontojen uhrien tuki) means “support for victims of religions”.
- UUT provides peer support e.g. to former members of fundamentalist groups and provides information for the media, researchers and the general public regarding these groups.
- UUT started in 1987, was registered in 1993.

The sources of UUT “clients”

Group	Estimated number of members in Finland
Conservative Lestadians	120,000 (+ over 120,000 former members)
Charismatic Christian groups	>50,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	20,000
Mormons	3,500

Jehovah's Witnesses and shunning

- Shunning = JWs are not allowed to speak with a former member or say “hello” to them.
- UUT has been successful in drawing the attention of the media, researchers and the government (including ministers and a government funding source) to the problem.
- How did we do it?

The pre-history of former JW's in Finland

- In the 1970's a critical book by Herrick Åberg was published.
- Some criticism in the media in the 1980's.
- The internet changed everything in the late 1990's. Former JW's form a community through on-line discussions.
- Between the late 1990's and 2015 over 40 former JW's have told their story in the media.

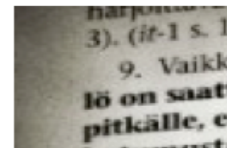
NEWS FROM FINLAND HELSINKI TIMES

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The end of the world

Details Parent Category: [Finland](#) Category: Domestic 04 May 2014

Last autumn, Jussi K. began to plan his disassociation from Jehovah's Witnesses. But if he left the apocalyptic movement, he would lose everything: his friends would refuse to meet him, as would probably his parents.

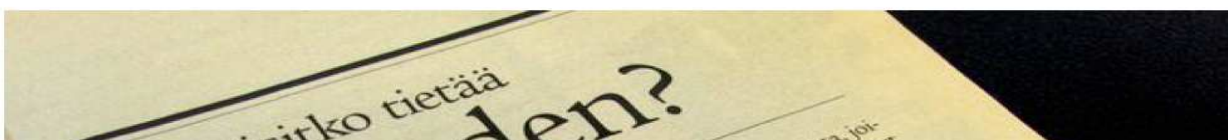


News 3.5.2014 16:58 | updated 3.5.2014 20:54

NGO calls on Ministry to probe closed religious groups; Jehovah's Witnesses under scrutiny

The UUT - the Support group for the Victims of Religions - has asked the Ministry of Justice to study ways in which to intervene in the activities of closed religious communities. The group released a report Saturday on the Jehovah's Witnesses which UUT claims uses its own internal judicial system with a board that interrogates members and hands down sentences for infractions.

 **Recommend** 626 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.



Räsänen: people must not be punished for leaving a religious community

Details Parent Category: [Finland](#) Category: Domestic 04 May 2014



Päivi Räsänen (Christian Democrats), the Minister of the Interior, will next week sit down with Minister of Justice Anna-Maja Henriksson (SFP) to discuss the results of a survey conducted by UUT, a support group for the victims of religions, according to which the customs of Jehovah's Witnesses trample on human rights.

"People must not be punished if they choose to disassociate from a religious community," stresses Räsänen.

Räsänen on Saturday expressed her concerns over the realisation of freedom of religion within Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious communities. "Freedom of religion entails not only the right to practice a religion but also the right to disassociate from a religious



Päivi Räsänen (Christian Democrats), the minister responsible for church affairs, stresses that resignation from a religious community should have no penal consequences.

Jehovah's Witnesses to hand over top secret manual

On Friday Finland's Jehovah's Witnesses will give their religious rule book to the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior so that it can be inspected to ensure that it's in line with Finnish rule of law.




318 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.



Former Jehovah's Witness: I resigned when my spirit and my children were threatened

Former Jehovah's Witnesses, visiting YLE Morning TV, hope that Finland would be a pioneer in the defense of the human rights of this movement's members.

 **Suosittelen** 622 henkilöä suosittelee tätä. Ole kavereistasi ensimmäinen.

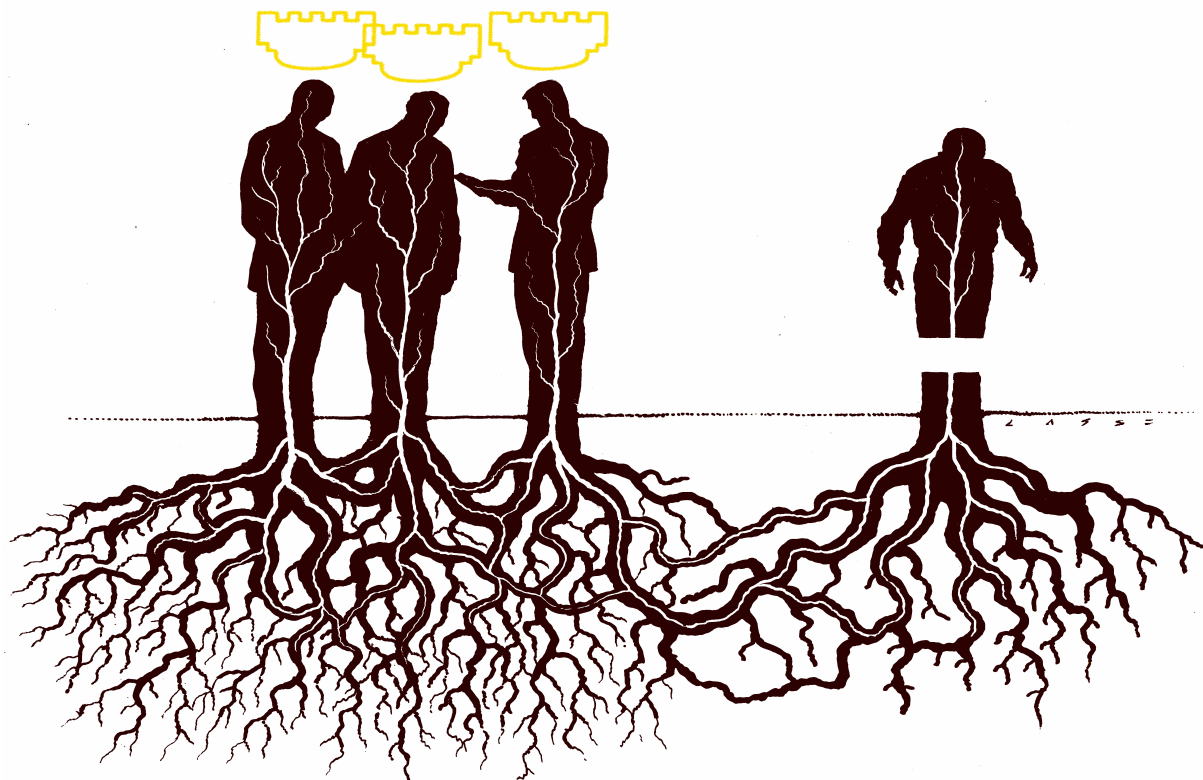


Abuse victim: "Jehovah's Witnesses refused to report rape to the police"

The Jehovah's Witnesses' so-called "judicial committee" is dealing with criminal cases, according to some former members of the Christian religious denomination. The committee has refused to reveal sexual abuse cases to the police. Minister of the Interior Päivi Räsänen of the Christian Democrats is asking for clarification on how police could better serve victims in such cases.

 **Recommend** 109 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.





The situation now...

- The police is investigating shunning to see if it breaks existing laws.
- UUT continues to have meetings with various officials in Finland to provide assistance - e.g. healthcare - for former JW's. Child ombudsman.
- Research. For example a book will be published this year.
- More attention to Pentecostals, Lestadians, Mormons and other groups.

Perspectives on U.S. Cult-related Court Cases

Janja Lalich, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Sociology

Introduction

As I see it, presently, four main issues affect cult-related court cases in the United States. These are (1) not enough attorneys who will take these cases; (2) not enough qualified experts to testify on behalf of victims; (3) the unwillingness of the courts to touch anything related to "religion" because of the omnipotent First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (the so-called "freedom of religion" amendment); and (4) the confusion wrought by cult apologists – that is, the confusion about cults vs. religion, and the confusion about free will vs. what I call "bounded choice"³³ – which may also be regarded as a confusion about brain-washing vs. indoctrination. These factors can affect both criminal and civil cases, including divorce and custody cases and settlements.

1. Not Enough Willing Attorneys

Quite simply, not enough American attorneys are willing to take cult-related cases. They

³³ Lalich, J. (204) Bounded choice: True believers and charismatic cults. Berkeley: University of California Press

may be stymied by the problem; they may not clearly understand the issues of undue influence or the workable theories; they may not take advantage of the knowledge of cult experts in devising strategies; and they may not see a win. And, of course, for many attorneys, if they don't see a win, they are not likely to proceed with a client. In many instances, they won't even hear the client out. Even should they be interested in the case, they may not know how to argue the cult-related issues because they may hold some of the same prejudices and misgivings about cults as much of the general public does about this sorely misunderstood social problem. This latter point may also create obstacles during jury selection.

Some of the older attorneys who did such cases are just that: older, retired, and passing on. Unfortunately, a new crop of attorneys interested in cult-related cases has not materialized. This means, naturally, that even if a former cult member or someone victimized by a cult wants to file a lawsuit or fight for custody of his or her children, he or she may be hard-pressed to find an attorney willing to take on the case. Needless to say, most victims/survivors don't even consider filing a suit because either they are unaware of how to do so or they simply are wanting to move on with life and not think about it anymore. Similarly, spouses and/or parents tend to find the courts not willing to address the issues, especially if it involves a "religious" cult.

An illustrative example of the use of cult expertise and theories of coercive persuasion is the case of Lee Boyd Malvo, the young man charged with sniper attacks and murders in Washington, DC in 2002. Malvo, 17 at the time, was under the influence of his "surrogate father," the older (41-year-old) and extremely domineering John Allen Muhammad. In hoping to mitigate a death penalty verdict, Malvo's defense utilized the late psychologist Dr. Paul Martin. As reported in *The Baltimore Sun*:

Martin's testimony was the groundwork for a series of mental health experts who will be called to the witness stand next week in an effort by the defense to try to convince jurors that Malvo was insane - and not guilty - when he was involved in the attacks. The defense began with having Martin explain how people can be coerced into changing their systems of beliefs and behavior. On Monday, psychologist Dewey Cornell will be called to testify that, based on his 300 hours of examinations, he believes that Malvo was "indocctrinated" by Muhammad, 42. The former Army soldier was convicted last month for his role in the attacks; the jury recommended he be sentenced to death. Cornell's testimony will be followed by other defense experts who will say that Malvo's brainwashing was so severe that it overwhelmed his sense of right and wrong. [Despite prosecution objections], the defense maintains that Malvo's brainwashing was a "dissociative disorder, not otherwise specified"³⁴ (a diagnosis in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*³⁵).

Ultimately, Malvo was spared the death penalty, but "remains incarcerated at Red Onion State Prison in Virginia, where he is in isolation, having no human contact."³⁶ John Allen Muhammad was executed in November 2009.

Similarly, in 2013 in a Washington State Superior Court custody hearing, I was able to explain to the presiding judge why it could be harmful to the couple's 5-year-old son if he were to be exposed to the cult environment in Colorado, where the father had moved to be more involved with the cult. The cult leader, Lord Ra-El had declared himself to be Christ returned and was preaching about the benefits of adult sexual activity with minors, as well as trying to make contact with known high-profile terrorists.

The judge ruled no contact between father and child until he sought counseling and

³⁴ Siegel, A. F. (2003, December 6). Witness links Malvo profile, brainwashing, *The Baltimore Sun*.

³⁵ American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author, pp. 490-91.

³⁶ Albarus, C. (2012). *The making of Lee Boyd Malvo: The D.C. Sniper*. NY: Columbia University Press, p. 10

various other requirements. If and when all requirements outlined by the judge were satisfactorily completed, any visitations between father and child were to be monitored by a professional evaluator.

I submit that those of us who are active in this field must strategize about how to pique the interest of lawyers and how to educate them about the potential for good outcomes in these cases.

2. Not Enough Savvy & Qualified Experts

Being an expert witness in the American legal system is not a picnic. Not even close. It is even less so in cult-related cases. It is the job of the other side to tear you apart – which is done in deposition and carries on into the courtroom. It takes a confident person with tough skin to endure the badgering and efforts at degradation and humiliation time and again.

But our problem here begins with the reality that there are not enough qualified cult experts – individuals who preferably hold doctoral degrees, have or had university affiliations, and who are savvy about this subject – that is, the methods and consequences of cult indoctrination and the ease by which citizens may be taken in by a cult ploy. In the United States, unfortunately, long-time cult apologists and some of their protégés reside in many Religious Studies programs and many Sociology departments.

Unsuspecting graduate students who may show an interest in cults (or “new religious movements,” the apologists’ preferred label) are then taken under the wings of these naysayers and groomed to carry the torch. The few of us in Sociology – for example, Dr. Benjamin Zablocki, now retired from Rutgers; Dr. Stephen Kent at the University of Alberta in Canada; and myself, recently retired from California State University, Chico – have fought the good fight, but we are sorely outnumbered. And as you might suspect, ICSA has been of no help in this regard, having given more and more credence to apologists such as Eileen Barker and company, since the passing of ICSA’s brilliant and unafraid longtime president and leader, New York attorney Herbert Rosedale..

Again, it is my desire that we encourage the study of social influence and control, with an emphasis on groups and/or individuals that espouse ideological extremism of any sort and live by an ends-justify-the means philosophy. This would also include cultic “personal” relationships (one-on-one or family), cultic businesses, human trafficking, and various New Age cons that use similar methods of undue influence and coercive persuasion to woo, retain, and control their followers.

This means publishing more articles in peer-reviewed journals, getting book contracts with academic or serious presses, writing editorials and news analyses in conjunction with current events, and doing smart media interviews and press conferences. We are at a troubling, for sure, but also an auspicious moment to do this – in that the terrorist activities have re-opened the public discussion of “brainwashing,” of extreme indoctrination. We are on the right side of history and we must take a stand and we must draw young scholars into our midst.

3. Fear of Offending – The Shadow of the First Amendment

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

And with that first clause comes, among other things:

1. Financial assistance to church-related institutions (how many millions of U.S. Federal dollars go to so-called faith-based charities?)

2. Release time in public schools for religious holy days
3. Tax exemption on religious property (how low would the U.S. national debt be if Scientology, for example, paid taxes?)
4. Sunday closing laws
5. Religious governmental observances and religious displays on government property (from the U.S. Congress down to my local City Council, every session starts with a prayer)
6. Exemption of religious organizations from generally applicable laws (and you've no doubt heard of the same-sex wedding cake hullabaloo?)³⁷

Yet, in rulings regarding polygamy in 1878 and 1890, the U.S. Supreme Court made a distinction between freedom to believe and freedom to act.³⁸ One could only wish that that tradition had continued. But not so. Over the years, more and more U.S. courts have tended to give considerable protection to religion. In 1940 the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the conviction of a Jehovah's Witness and his two sons for proselytizing, and concluded:

In the realm of religious faith, and in that of political belief, sharp differences arise. In both fields the tenets of one man may seem the rankest error to his neighbor. To persuade others to his own point of view, the pleader, as we know, at times, resorts to exaggeration, to vilification of men who have been, or are, prominent in church or state, and even to false statement. But the people of this nation have ordained in the light of history, that, in spite of the probabilities of excesses and abuses, these liberties are in the long view, essential to enlightened opinion and right conduct on the part of the citizens of a democracy.³⁹

Later, in 1963, Justice Brennan wrote that the line in the sand separating belief from action was to determine whether or not a specific religious practice caused "a substantial threat to public safety, peace or order."⁴⁰

So there you have it.

An excellent resource on this topic is Constitutional expert Marci Hamilton. Her book *God vs. the Gavel: Religion and the Rule of Law* documents how nearly impossible it is to prosecute child abuse by clergy, medical neglect by faith healers, and other intolerable so-called religious practices and behaviors. Hamilton writes in the book's introduction:

There is a dangerous Pollyanna attitude lulling Americans into assuming that if the actor is religious, the inevitable result is good. This is a reality check: religious entities harm people every day, and even though I am a religious believer myself, I say with conviction that it is foolhardy to permit religious individuals and organizations to be unaccountable. The prevailing trust in religious organizations and individuals has led to a patchwork of laws that create special privileges for religious entities beyond anyone's initial expectations.⁴¹

Point in fact, as I was writing this, on April 20, 2015, the California Appellate Court, in another Jehovah's Witnesses-related case, found that "the church has no duty to prevent its members from harming each other" (*Conti v. Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, Inc.*).⁴² This judgment reversed an award of \$8 million in punitive damages. The plaintiff had

³⁷ Available: www.constitution.findlaw.com/amendment1.html.

³⁸ Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. 145(1878); Davis v. Beason, 133 U.S. 333 1890).

³⁹ *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296 (1940).

⁴⁰ Available: www.constitution.findlaw.com/amendment1.html.

⁴¹ Hamilton, M. (2005). *God vs. the gavel: Religion and the rule of law*. (NY: Cambridge University Press), p. xv.

⁴² Available: www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/in-childhood-sexual-abuse-case-californ-19456/.

sued her abuser (her stepfather) and the Watchtower Society, claiming that she had been repeatedly molested during church-sponsored activities over a two-year period. He admitted his molestations to his elders, who neither notified the police nor warned the congregation. This privileging of penitential confessions essentially goes along with California courts' consistent rulings in this regard. And the pattern repeats itself in other states.

Another problematic factor in the U.S. is the ease with which a group or organization may become a religion. Given that the Constitution makes it clear that the government cannot define a church, the result has been that anything goes. Just this week an adult sex club in Nashville, Tennessee, declared itself a religion and won approval from the city of Nashville to open its new facility next to an elementary school, Christian no less – even though there is a city law disallowing private sex clubs from being within 1,000 feet of schools, parks, day care centers, and houses of worship. The proprietors changed the name from The Social Club to The United Fellowship Center. A room once labeled “dungeon” is now called “Choir;” and the 49 small, private rooms are now “prayer rooms.”⁴³

4. Confusion Wrought by Cult Apologists

It is not unknown to this audience that the vast damage and damage control perpetuated by the cult apologists – usually in the name of “freedom of religion” – is a long-standing battle that I’m sorry to admit has typically gone in their favor. For years, they managed to silence the press (at least in the U.S.) from writing negatively about cults; in fact, even the word “cult” was rarely to be seen or heard in the media. Thanks to some brave documentarians who have done excellent stories about cults and their victims (praise for HBO and *Going Clear*⁴⁴ and the Investigation Discovery channel’s *Dangerous Persuasions* series), this may be beginning to change.

Alongside the apologists’ strategy to influence the media, they have consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or without mal intent, tarnished the reputations of known cult critics, none more viciously so than the assaults on Dr. Margaret Singer in California and Dr. John Clark in Massachusetts (Clark was a psychiatrist at the Harvard Medical School, and founder of the American Family Foundation, the precursor to ICSA). This behavior emboldened the cults in their advances in this arena. For a time, for example and perhaps this persists today, Scientology would lend private investigators and legal assistance to any cult-related case, even to some of their sworn or ideological enemies. Unethical activities elicit strange bedfellows indeed. And many of the apologists have been used as counter-experts in legal cases – the most infamous being professional cult apologist, Dick Anthony, who reportedly makes \$3,500 a day testifying for cults – and that was in 2003.⁴⁵

No matter the case, no matter the charges, no matter the evidence, Dick Anthony is likely to come to the aid of any cult or closed group that is being sued.⁴⁶ In 2009 I was retained by the El Dorado County (CA) District Attorney’s office to testify in the trial of a polygamous cult leader who was accused of torturing and beating to death his own 4-year-old son.⁴⁷ The defense hired Anthony to write a declaration supporting a *motion in limine* to exclude me from testifying at trial. Despite the lengthy false and misleading protestations of Anthony, the court ruled that my testimony was admissible. Another ruling, however, excluded the word “cult.” No problem, I said. I educated the jury about the power of social influence and control in a closed, or what I call a “self-sealing” setting, dominated by a charismatic personality and creating a mindset that I call “bounded choice.” It was that phenomenon that prevented the women from calling the police at the time of the murder. No

⁴³ Loller, T. (2015, April 25). Sex club seeks Nashville blessing by vowing to be a church. Associated Press.

⁴⁴ HBO (Producer), & Gibney, A. (Director). (2015). *Going clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*.

⁴⁵ Available: www.cultnews.com/?p=1482.

⁴⁶ For an excellent critique of Anthony’s thinking, see “Questions from the Balcony: A Critique of Dick Anthony” by Herbert L. Rosedale in *Cults and Society*, Vol.1, No. 1 (2001).

⁴⁷ *People of the State of California v. Ulysses Roberson*, No. S01CRF0236 (1985)

need to talk about cults or brainwashing. The average citizen is perfectly capable of understanding this type of undue influence. At trial's end, Ulysses Roberson was convicted of 2nd-degree murder and sentenced to prison for 15 years to life.

Two things were unique about this case: (1) The child's disappearance happened 24 years earlier in 1985 and, at the time, the "wives" who witnessed the beating and murder would not testify as they were still under Roberson's sway; and (2) the boy's body has never been found. It is extremely rare, as you probably know, to get a conviction on a bodiless murder charge. Yet, in this case, the prosecution prevailed.

The confusion about cults vs. religion is merely one important tactic in the legal defense of cults and their actors. Needless to say, the aspersions cast upon cult experts goes way beyond that debate, at least in American courts. I could tell you about the lawsuit against the owners of what became a business cult, where the defense attorney insinuated that I was Dr. Margaret Singer's lover. Then he tried to show that I was biased because I myself had been in a cult. Then he tried to get the jury to dislike and distrust me because it had been a communist cult (no greater way to discredit someone in America!). Nevertheless, once again, the plaintiff prevailed, as the defendants chose to settle before the case went to jury.

Ultimately, it is my contention that so long as the apologists are actively trying to confuse judges and juries, it is our responsibility to take the matter in hand and put on the best defense against their distortions and false accusations. We do this by standing our ground, being extremely thoughtful and logical in our explications in courtroom testimony, and knowing that indeed we are on the right side of history.

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Conclusions of the Conference

Danièle Muller-Tulli, President of FECRIS

I thank all the participants of this remarkable conference. Remarkable for the number of speakers, more than a dozen, remarkable for their quality and diversity, a researcher, a lawyer, a psychiatrist, a philosopher, a professor of sociology, Presidents of associations defending victims, the President of MIVILUDES, and last but not least, the Deputy Rudy SALLES whose report, viciously attacked by cult lobbies, failed, but inspired the title of this conference "Concerted and deliberate confusion between cults and religion."

Mr. Rudy SALLES in his capacity of deputy, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, emphasised how the approach to the question of cults differed from one European country to another, some countries doubt about the need to address the issue, others deny its very existence, others ignore it. Europe "is a continent without borders, conducive to the development of certain cultist multinationals". Difficult under such conditions to find a consensus.

Hence arises the absolute necessity of belonging to a network without which there could be no information concerning the groups that are present on the international scene. That is the role of FECRIS as Didier PACHOUD reminds us "When you use one of our associations, you are in fact contacting all the network."

It seems to me, at the end of the day, having heard the victims as well as researchers and experts that "concerted and deliberate confusion between cults and religion" operates on two levels.

- In the system designed to snap up the future follower, even if, as was so clearly demonstrated by Pierre Le COZ, it is ultimately a different system, one resulting in "loyalty", the other demanding severance and rupture.

. - The political project, as brilliantly demonstrated by Jean-Pierre JOUGLA, detailing "the cult State, "a real danger to democracy", the cultist project is to change the paradigms on which we base ALL the sovereign principles of our democratic societies.

Each year at the meeting of the ODIHR Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw, FECRIS tries to raise awareness among the government representatives present that cults, far from being "New Religious Movements" are systems where fundamental freedoms are flouted.

However, to date, only two countries, Belgium and Luxembourg have followed France by drawing up a law on the model of the About-Picard law. I warmly thank Catherine Picard, co-author of that law, for being present among us today.