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## **Combined confusion between cult and religion**

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Worse was the realisation that their love of God had been replaced by a dedication to their guru, who had become the purpose of their lives, their identification model, the object of idolisation.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 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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!