

**International Conference “Destructive Groups and Youth”****Manipulation and Exploitation of Young and Vulnerable People by Destructive Groups:  
Legislative Action at the European Level**

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**Manipulations of the Mind by the Techniques of Transcendental Meditation (TM)**

The influence of cults is not something unusual or exotic: it results from a set of commonly-encountered social influences, which are specifically arranged, augmented and targeted by the cult to serve its own purposes.

Interpretations of social psychology suggest three main principles.

The first principle implies that the behaviour and the mind-set of a person depend very much on the characteristics of the specific situation. The second principle explains the high degree of subjectivity and imagination in the normal perception of reality. The third principle is an orientation to search for "channel-factors" and the critical points of action, where relatively little guidance can result in significant effects.

Every social impact is the product of two processes: one that affects the action by the cult leader/guru or the group itself on the one hand; and the perception, interpretation and other mental processes by the person who comes in contact with the cult or cult followers on the other hand. The abuse of the personal characteristics and internal processes of the victims of psychological manipulation is more important, in practice, than the direct influence of the cult and of its leader. The main problem in the framework of which cults are parasites is the human need for a clear system of orientation in the world and for realizing one's own desires.

Mental manipulation is a method where the impact of a person or group to another person is devised with the intention to achieve some goal, producing effects on the emotions, mind, will, beliefs, intelligence and behaviour of the target.

At the time they mature, young people seek to identify with someone or something. They seek their intimacy and autonomy. In the process of seeking their independence, youth can be influenced, more easily than adults, by gurus and teachers who propose alleged holistic solutions for all situations and problems. The latter deliberately delay their process of maturation of the former, who are placed in a kind of emotional prison.

The cult of Transcendental Meditation (TM) is advertised as a charity organisation with a variety of activities, which guarantee the achievement of a life without stress with "globally-recognized methods".

Teachings or beliefs are adorned with scientific and psychological vocabulary. The guru/teacher takes on the status of psychotherapist.

It is a kind of psycho-cult using psychological principles, with superstitious or religious beliefs.

Success is guaranteed if you surrender to a leader who becomes your channel mediator of the transcendental reality, since he claims to have full knowledge of the body, psyche and soul.

At a quick pace, courses are offered which constantly create new followers, who continue to multiply, creating an international cult based on a rigid pyramidal system, where the guru (master/shaman) is God and the believers are obedient followers, drug addicts and fanatics.