"For we Cyclopes do not care for Jupiter": Latin *religiō*, *neglegō* and Greek ἀλέγω

Outline of the talk:
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2. Ancient opinions on the etymology of *religiō*
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1. Basic meaning of *religiō*

1.1 In Ciceronian Latin, often a connection with 'religious' matters:

   (1) *religio est, quae superioris cuiusdam naturae (quam divinam vocant) curam caerimoniamque af   fert*   (Cic. *Inv*. 2.53.161)

"*religio* is that [attitude] which gives care and worship to some higher being (which is called divine)"

   (2) *religione, id est cultu deorum, …*   (Cic. *N. D.* 2.3.8)

"as regards *religio*, that is, in the sense 'care for the gods', …"

Note, also, an expression like *religiō est* + AcI 'it is forbidden', referring to the observance of religious rules:

   (3) *equo Dialem flaminem vehi religio est*   (Gell. *Noct. Att*. 10.15)

"**it is forbidden** for the *flamen* of Jupiter to be transported by a horse."

1.2 The connection with 'religion' is not original. A relic meaning of *religiō* is 'engagement, commitment, observance', whence *religiōsus* 'dedicated, engaged, conscientious':

   (4) *non nullius officii religio*   (Cic. *Sest*. 8)

"the **strict observance** of an important duty"

   (5) *testem ipsum Jovem suae voluntatis ac religionis adhibere*   (Cic. *Verr*. 2, 4, 67)

"to take Jupiter himself as a witness of one's intentions and **dedication/engagement**"

(6) *rerum Romanarum auctorem … religiosissimum*   (Cic. *Brut*. 44)
"the most **meticulous/precise** historian of Rome".

(7) *religione obligari*   (Cic. *Balbo* 34)
"to be bound **by a commitment**"

(8) *ut religione civitas solvatur*   (Cic. *Caec*. 98)
(the people do not wish to ratify a treaty) "so that the city be liberated **of a commitment**".

Cf. also:
- *religiō jūrisjūrandī* 1. 'observance of an oath'; 2. 'duty of keeping one's oath' (Cic. *Font*. 20);
- *testis religiōsus* 'a conscientious witness'.

1.3 Also, note the meaning 'scruples, concerns, troubles of conscience':

(9) **hac** *ego* **religione** *non sum ab hoc conatu repulsus*   (Cic. *Or*. 36)
"**these scruples** did not detain me from this enterprise"

(10) *Nunc, Calcha,* **finem religionum fac***, desiste exercitum morari nec me ab domuitione arcere tuo obsceno omine.* (Accius fr. 136-7 Warmington)
"**Put an end to your scruples** now, Calchas: make the army stop tarrying, and do not keep me from returning home, by your ill-boding omen."

A semantic development from 'observance' to 1. 'engagement' and 2. 'scruples' is likely, as this would be a case of **subjectification** (e.g. Traugott 2010): the listener makes an inference to a presumed attitude on the speaker's part (*in casu*: being dedicated, being concerned, etc.), and this attitude eventually becomes part of the lexical meaning.

Conclusion: the original meaning of *religiō* may well be 'observance, attention paid'.

2. Ancient opinions on the etymology of *religiō*

Cicero, *N.D.* 2.28.72: connects *religiōsus* with *legere*:
(11) *… qui autem omnia, quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent, diligenter retractarent et tamquam relegerent, sunt dicti* **religiosi ex relegendo, ut elegantes ex eligendo, ex diligendo diligentes, ex intellegendo intellegentes***. His enim in verbis omnibus inest* **vis legendi eadem***, quae in religioso.*

Accepted by Walde-Hofmann (*LEW* q.v.), Benveniste (1969, II: 267-272)

Morphologically this derivation is fine:
- Abstracts in *-iō* normally derived from 3rd conj. verbs
- Cf. also *legiō* from *legere* 'gather'
- ptc. *religēns*, quoted from Nigidius Figulus, who in turn cites an older poet:

(12) *religentem esse oportet, religiosus ne fuas*   (codd. *nefas*)   (Gell. *Noct. Att.* 4.9.1)
"You should be *religēns*, so that you do not become over-scrupulous"

Lactantius (*Div. Inst.* 4.28.2): derivation from *religāre* 'bind'

(13)   *Hoc **vinculo pietatis obstricti** Deo et religati sumus ; inde ipsa Religio nomen accepit, non ut Cicero interpretatus est, a relegendo (…). Haec interpretatio quam inepta sit, ex re ipsa licet noscere. (…) diximus **nomen Religionis a vinculo pietatis esse deductum**, quod hominem sibi Deus religaverit, et pietate constrinxerit.*

Accepted by e.g. Ernout-Meillet (*DELL* q.v.). De Vaan (*EDL*) lists *religiō* s.v. ligāre, but notes that "the appurtenance … is uncertain", without any further comment.

Morphologically problematic:
- one expects **religātiō*.
- does not explain the occurrence of ptc. *religēns*

Questions concerning the derivation from *legere*:
- how did 'gather anew' or 'recollect' develop into the attested meanings of *religiō*?
- Why does Cicero speak of a *vis legendi eadem* in all the examples? Does he really mean the sense 'gather, collect'?

3. Comparison with *neglegere* and Greek ἀλέγω

A third alternative:
- *religiō*, *religens* derived from an old verb *legere* (homonymous with, but etymologically different from *legere* 'gather') which also occurs in *dīligere* 'esteem, hold dear', *intellegere* 'remark, notice (etc.)' and *neglegere* 'despise; disregard (etc.)'.
- Outside of Latin, related to Greek ἀλέγω 'to attend to, pay due regard'.

This view originates with Schulze (1888: 263-4); it is mentioned in older etymological dictionaries of Greek (Meyer 1901, Prellwitz 1905, Boisacq 1916), cf. Prellwitz 1905, s.v. ἀλέγω:

"ἀλέγω kümmere mich um etwas, ἀλεγίζω ds., ἀλεγύνω besorge : lat. *neg-lego* (*nec-lego) kümmere mich nicht, *dīligo* liebe, *dī-ligens* sorgfältig, *religens* gottesfürchtig, *religio* Rücksichtnahme, Bedenklichkeit; dazu ἄλγος n. Schmerz, Kummer, dessen vollerer Stamm ἄλεγες noch in ἀλεγεινός (*ἀλεγεσνος = ἀλγεινός) und in δυσηλεγής τανηλεγής erscheint."

Rejected by Walde-Hofmann (*LEW* s.v. *diligo*); more recent etymological dictionaries of Greek (*GEW, DELG, EDG*) and Latin (*DELL, EDL*) fail to even mention the idea.
But: defended by Wilt (1954), Seiler (1958: 9-11), Rix (1970: 87), Leumann (1977: 243), Garnier (2013[2014]: 116-9), although these scholars differ on the exact details.

Advantages:
- semantically perfect (cf. section 4, especially the opposition to *neglegō*, οὐκ ἀλέγω);
- phonology: Indo-European root **h₂leg-* 'observe' (distinct from **leĝ-* 'gather') explains Greek ἀλέγω and ablauting ἄλγος (see section 6);
- explains why only *dīligere*, *intellegere* and *neglegere* have a perfect in *-lēxī*, not *-lēgī*

4. Use of ἀλέγω in its contexts

The verb ἀλέγω is exclusively poetic, from Homer onwards. It is attested mostly with a negation, and is rendered by the scholia as φροντίζω, i.e. 'to heed, observe, pay attention'.

4.1 object = a person deserving respect (usually a god)

(14) **οὐ** γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου **ἀλέγουσιν**
  οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων   (*Od.* 9.275-6, cf. also *H. Ap.* 279)
"For we Cyclopes **do not give regard** to Zeus, nor to the other blessed gods"

Seiler (1958: 9): "Die negative Verwendung, und hier diejenige mit Bezug auf die Götter, ist typisch: die Kyklopen beachten, berücksichtigen Zeus und die Götter nicht. **Sie sind „irreligiös".**"

(15) ἀλλ' οἵ γ' ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ναίουσι κάρηνα
  ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι, θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος
  παίδων ἠδ' ἀλόχων, **οὐδ'** ἀλλήλων **ἀλέγουσι**.   (*Od.* 9.113-5)
"But they live on the tops of high mountains, in hollow caves, and each of them rules over his children and wives, and they **do not pay attention to** each other."

(16) ἠδ' ὅτις **οὐκ ἀλέγει**, σὲ δ' ἀτιμᾷ τοῖον ἐόντα   (*Od.* 16.307)
"and whoever **disregards** [you, Odysseus], and dishonors you, noble as you are."

(17) … τεᾶς, Ἀγησίδαμε, πυγμαχίας ἕνεκεν
  κόσμον ἐπὶ στεφάνῳ χρυσέας ἐλαίας
  ἀδυμελῆ κελαδήσω,
  Ζεφυρίων Λοκρῶν **γενεὰν ἀλέγων**.   (Pi. *Ol.* 11.12-15)
"[For the present rest assured, son of Archestratus], Hagesidamus: for the sake of your boxing victory, I shall loudly sing a pleasant song, an adornment upon your garland of golden olive, while **giving due regard to the race** of the Western Locrians."

4.2 object = signs of divination, especially in augury

(18)   αὐτὸς δὲ θεοπροπίας ἐδίδαξεν
  οἰωνούς τ' ἀλέγειν ἠδ' ἔμπυρα σήματ' ἰδέσθαι   (A.R. 1.145)
"and he himself taught us the art of divination, to **observe the birds** and see the signs in the burnt sacrifices"

(19) *cum omnis populi Romani **religio** in sacra et in auspicia divisa sit*   (Cic. *N.D.* 3.5)
"for the **cult** of the Roman people is, generally speaking, divided into sacrifices and auspices"

(20)   *namque omnis cursum mihi prospera dixit*
  ***religio**, et cuncti suaserunt numine divi*
  Italiam petere et terras temptare repostas: (Verg. *A.* 3.363)
"For every **augural inspection/oracle** has auspiciously shown me the right course, and all the gods have advised me by their signs to set sail to Italy and to try for far-distant shores: (…)"

5. More Latin evidence for *$h_2$leg-* 'to observe; pay attention'
Objection:
- Schrijver (1991: 22): Why did *neglegere* and *intellegere* escape vowel reduction, while **religere*, *religēns* and *dīligere*, *dīligēns* did undergo reduction?
- De Vaan (*EDL* s.v. *legō*): *neglegere* and *intellegere* are recent compounds with *legere* 'collect'.

Indeed, a simplex *legere *lēxī* 'observe, care' is not attested. However, *legere lēgī* and various compounds occasionally mean 'observe, listen, examine' in Old Latin:

(21) *clam nostrum hunc sermonem **sublegerunt*** (Pl. *Mil.* 1090)
"they secretly **overheard** this conversation of ours"

(22) *nunc huc concedam, ut horum sermonem **legam*** (Pl. *Ps.* 414)
"now I will withdraw from here, so that I may **overhear** their conversation"

(23) *et tumulum capit, unde omnes longo ordine possit*
    *adversos **legere**, et venientum discere vultus.* (Verg. *Aen.* 6.754-5)
"he took his station on a mound, whence he could **observe** them all [the shades] as they were coming towards him in a long procession, and discern each face."

Scenario:
- The old verb *legere *lēxī* > 'to observe, be attentive' was retained until in Old Latin, when it influenced the root vowel of *intellegere* 'to remark, take notice' < "observe among/in between" (*inter-*) and *neglegere* 'to disregard' < **né ge legere* or **né kʷe legere*;
- Next, in the simplex and in compounds, where the verb would usually mean 'to gather, collect', the old perfect **lēxī* was replaced by *lēgī* (cf. *sublēgērunt* in Pl.);
- The perfect in *-lēxī* was preserved only in those compounds that never had the meaning 'to gather, collect', *dīligere*, *neglegere* and *intellegere*.
- The lexical slot of *legere* 'observe' was taken over by other verbs, e.g. *observāre* (likewise, the old simplex *specere*, *specio* falls out of use).

NB: It must be considered whether the sense 'to read' of *legere* does not also reflect the old verb 'to observe, be attentive'. Note the Greek verb meaning 'to read' is ἀναγιγνώσκω, literally 'to recognize anew', and for this meaning we may compare *intellegere*. It would make sense if the Romans used an archaic verb meaning 'to recognize' in order to translate the Greek term.

6. How to explain the ἀ- of ἀλέγω?

(24) Πηλεύς τε καὶ Κάδμος ἐν τοῖσιν **ἀλέγονται·** (Pi. *Ol.* 2.78)
"Peleus and Cadmus **are counted** among them" (tr. Svarlien), probably better than:
"Peleus and Cadmus **are held in esteem** among them" (Wilt 1954)

NB: ἐν τοῖσιν ἀλέγονται: ἀριθμοῦνται. συγκαταλέγονται ἐν τοῖς εὐσεβέσι (sch. vet. *ad locum*)
Cf. also [οὐκ ἐγὼ]ν Λύκαισον ἐν καμοῦσιν ἀλέγω (Alcm. fr. 1.2) "I do not reckon L. among the dead"

Schulze (1888: 263–4): two different verbs:

1. ἀλέγω 'to care' (related to Latin *neglegō* 'to disregard' and also to ἄλγος 'sorrow'). In modern terms: *$h_2$leg-*.
2. ἀλέγω 'to count among' (only in Pi. *Ol*. 2.78 and Alcm.) from λέγω 'to gather; count', where ἀ- < *ṇ- is allegedly the zero grade of the preposition/adverb ἐν 'in'.

Seiler (1958: 9-11), followed by de Lamberterie (*DELG* Suppl. s.v. ἀλέγω):

1. *ṇ-legō* (ἀ- 'in' plus λέγω 'to count') also explains ἀλέγω 'to care' < 'to take into account';
2. ἄλγος compared with Lat. *algeō, algidus* 'cold, freezing' (cf. Seiler 1950: 85);
3. Latin *religio, neglegere* (etc.) are from **leg-* 'to count', while *legere* 'collect' is from a different root **leĝ-* 'to gather'.

Seiler (1958: 9): "Der Zusammenhang zwischen lat. *neglegere* und (οὐκ) ἀλέγω ist längst erkannt (ob zwar noch immer nicht allgemein anerkannt) und damit auch der zwischen *religio*, *neglegere* und (οὐκ) ἀλέγω. Aber die letzten Konsequenzen aus dieser Zusammenstellung sind noch nicht gezogen worden. Das 'irreligiöse' Wesen ist eines, das die Götter nicht in Rechnung setzt, nicht berücksichtigt."

However:

- semantics 'take into account' > 'heed, pay attention' possible, but not compelling;
- evidence for ἀ- as zero grade of ἐν is highly dubious; ἀλέγω ἐν + dat. in Pindar and Alcman could also have copulative ἀ- (cf. van Beek 2018);
- it is unavoidable that ἀλεγεινός, δυσ-ηλεγής (and hence also ἄλγος, ἀργαλέος) are related to ἀλέγω, compare:

Root *alg-* (zero grade):

ἀργαλέος 'painful; difficult, troublesome' < **alg-aléo-* (Hom.+);
comp. adv. ἄλγιον; superl. ἄλγιστος 'very difficult';
ἄλγος 'concern; pain' (mostly plur. ἄλγεα 'trouble, misery');
ἀλγέω (Hom. only aor. ἄλγησε) 'to suffer pains';
θυμαλγής 'which troubles the heart'.

Root *aleg-* (e-grade):

ἀλέγω 'to attend to, regard', οὐκ ἀλέγω / οὐκ ἀλεγίζω 'to be indifferent';
ἀλεγύνω 'to attend (a meal as a guest)';
ἀλεγεινός 'painful; troublesome' (Hom., Hes., Pi.), but later ἀλγεινός;
δυσ-ηλεγής 'hard to deal with' (δυσηλεγέος πολέμοιο, θάνατόν γε δυσηλεγέα);
ἀπ-ηλεγής 'without scruples/consideration' (ἀπηλεγέως ἀποειπεῖν).

Note: ἄλγος is originally not 'pain', but 'object of attention', hence 1. '(object of) concern, scruple', 2. (pl.) 'misery, hard fate, trouble'. Compare:

(25) οὐ σὲ προσήκει <u>τὸ μέλημ'</u> **ἀλέγειν** <u>τοῦτο</u>·   (A. *Ag*. 1551-2)
(Clytaemnestra to the Chorus) "It is not your business to **trouble yourself** <u>with that concern</u>" (tr. Sommerstein)

7. Possible further evidence for the root *h_2leg- 'observe, pay attention'

- Toch. B pres. *läkā-*, pret. *lyaka* < *$h_2lēg$-*ā*- 'to observe; see'. The meaning is a perfect match, especially given the phrase *lakle läk-* 'to suffer' (*lakle* 'suffering, misery, grief'), which strongly reminds of the semantic development in Greek ἄλγος (cf. ἄλγεα πάσχειν). The long vowel preterite *lyāka*, which matches the Latin perfect *lēgī* 'gathered' (from a different root), might be considered a problem – but see the next point.

- It is attractive to derive Latin *lēx*, *lēgis* 'contract, agreement; commandment, law' from *h_2leg- as 'that which is observed, given heed' (cf. 4.3 above); its long vowel would match that of Toch. B pret. *lyāka*. Compare:

(26) ὡς δ' ὑπὸ λαίλαπι πᾶσα κελαινὴ βέβριθε χθὼν
  ἤματ' ὀπωρινῷ, ὅτε λαβρότατον χέει ὕδωρ
  Ζεύς, ὅτε δή ῥ' ἄνδρεσσι κοτεσσάμενος χαλεπήνῃ,
  οἳ βίῃ εἰν ἀγορῇ σκολιὰς κρίνωσι θέμιστας,
  ἐκ δὲ δίκην ἐλάσωσι **θεῶν ὄπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες·** (*Il.* 16.384-8)

"As when the entire dark earth is pressed down under the weight of a thunderstorm, on a late summer day, when Zeus pours water in abundance, when he has grown angry with men who have violently pronounced wrong verdicts in their assembly, and who have driven out justice without regarding the treatment of the gods – (…)"

(27)   ἐπεὶ οὔ τι **δίκης ἀλέγοντες** ἔναιον (A.R. 1.1229)

"for they lived without paying due regard to justice"

(28) **legum**, *officii, rei publicae, sociorum atque amicorum* **neglegentior** (Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.62)

"negligent of the laws, one's duties, the common good, and one's associates and friends"

- If related, Alb. *plogë* 'slow, indolent, lazy' (from PAlb. *pa- 'without' plus *$h_2lēg$-) would show that the root has a pure velar, while Alb. *mbledh* 'collect' reflects *$h_2embʰi$ + *leĝ- 'gather' (cf. *mblodhi* < *lēĝ-), with a palatovelar.
- We may wonder whether the verb ἀλέξω 'to guard; ward off' (aor. ἀλέξασθαι), Ved. *rákṣati* 'protect' is not derived from this root *h_2leg-, rather than from *h_2elk- 'defend'. The semantic developments 'observe, watch' > 'ward off' or 'protect' are easily paralleled.

8. Conclusions

- Lat. *neglegere*, *intellegere*, *dīligere* and *religiō* are etymologically related to Greek ἀλέγω.
- The root must be reconstructed as *h_2leg- (Beekes 1969: 25-6 and 39; Rix 1970: 87; *LIV* s.v. *h_2leg-).
- The basic meaning is 'to observe, pay attention', not 'sich kümmern um' (as per *LIV²*, Rix 1970: 85).
- This meaning is preserved in *legere* and its compounds in Old Latin, and also in Toch. *läk-* 'to observe, see'.
- In ἀλέγω and Lat. *neglegere*, *dīligere*, the meaning 'pay attention to' developed into 'care for, attend to' by a common type of semantic development (subjectification).
- Lat. *lēx* 'contract; law' and *legere* 'to read' also derive from *h_2leg- 'observe'.

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