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CHAPTER 46

INDIVIDUALIZATION AND PRIVATIZATION

JÖRG RÜPKE

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Recent discussions of the individualization and privatization of religion have been advanced by Thomas Luckmann's notion of invisible religion.
- The debate about individualization and privatization of religion has risen as a function of and in critical engagement with theories of secularization and modernization.
- These concepts do not refer only to phenomena in the Western industrial and post-industrial world; they have relevance for conceptualizing religion far beyond.
- Processes of individualization are key to important developments in the history of religion.
- Processes of individualization can paradoxically lead to institutionalization and the establishment of institutionally sanctioned norms, which limit individual choice or castigate deviant religious behavior; this in turn has the potential to provoke further individualization.

Religion changes, even if some are not ready to admit this.¹ Change can be constituted by new agents and new events and can be regarded as contingent and narrated as such. Change can also be analyzed as a sequence of changes in time and as a result of time, that is to say, as a 'process,' as underlined by the words ending in "-ization" in the title. A process can be classified as continuous or as temporary, as repeated or unique, or as

¹ Work on this chapter has been helped by discussion in the Kolleg-Forscherguppe 'Religious individualisation in historical perspective' at the Max Weber Center, Erfurt, financed by the German Science Foundation (DFG, FOR 1013). I am particularly grateful to Martin Fuchs, Erfurt, to whom I owe the references regarding *bhakti*.

reversible or irreversible (as is illustrated by other chapters in this volume). Progress was regarded as irreversible in much nineteenth- and twentieth-century research; monotheism was seen either as a primordial phenomenon that soon declined or as an irresistible trend in the history of religion. A process looks very different when regarded as a contemporary development rather than as a historical and comparative phenomenon. Diagnosis of one's own time tends to stress uniqueness and the acceleration of change. A comparative perspective is more able to take account of large variations. 'Privatization' and 'individualization' take on very different aspects if used as tools of cultural criticism or historical research. Concepts are products of history, but might be useful far beyond their origins. Thus, I will start by historically locating the concept of privatization.

PRIVATIZATION OF RELIGION: A THEORY OF THE 1960S

By the 1960s industrialization and the spread of welfare, socialism, and democratization, along with de-colonization and the arms race, were seen as hallmarks of the period and perspectives for the future. What was the place of religion? It is important to look beyond Europe. In the wake of postcolonialism—1960 was a prodigal year for the African continent due to the sheer number of states founded—members of elites approached religion as important for the continuity of collective identities and cultural pride. This holds true not only for Africa. Hindu nationalists, for instance, founded the *Vishva Hindu Parishad*, a “world council of Hindus” in 1964 (Jaffrelot 2007). However, the Western academic discipline of Sociology still adhered to the paradigm of secularization, developed in the formative period of the discipline, according to which modernization and rationalization would leave less and less space for the phenomena and functions of religion (critically reviewed by Joas 2012).

Thomas Luckmann, to whom we owe the concept of ‘privatization of religion,’ was born in Slovenia in 1927, studied at Vienna, and taught at the New School of Social Research in New York. He participated in empirical research in Germany, where he taught sociology from 1967 onwards. His contributions are above all theoretical, but his experience of the very different role, activities, and social bases of Christian churches in Europe and the United States were vital for his thinking and for his book on the problems of religion in modern society (thus the title of the original German edition in 1963). It became famous in its English version as *The Invisible Religion* (Luckmann 1967) and was later republished in an enlarged version in German (Luckmann 1991).

Invisible Religion

An evolutionary perspective on religion within the framework of Talcott Parson's theory of social differentiation leads to the paradox that religion is, on the one hand,

defined by its ensuring individuals' integration into society. On the other hand, at least in Europe, religion had developed very special institutional forms, i.e. churches, which are part of the process of differentiation and which could offer little or no guidance for many areas of social action. One might suppose on theoretical grounds that the 'sacred cosmos,' as formulated by institutionalized religious reflection ('theology'), is the perfect blueprint of an individual's ultimate meaning, thus enabling his or her full integration into society. This flies in the face of the empirical evidence (Luckmann 1991, 119). The fact that an individual is able to act effectively within the many different and independent organizations of modern life proves to be increasingly irrelevant for that person's identity (139), traditional dogmatized churches being no exception. Personal identity has become a private matter. Meaning as produced by the existing plurality of institutionalized religions is on offer and might or might not be utilized by individuals in their private formation of ultimate meanings for the 'great' transcendences they face. Whereas, according to Luckmann, the 'smaller' transcendences beyond daily routine are dealt with by concepts like 'personal' or 'self-fulfillment,' and the 'intermediate' transcendences are reflected in concepts like 'nation' or 'humanity,' the 'great' transcendences are those countered by a 'holy cosmos' of specifically religious concepts.

Institutionalized religion is thus either the (functional) remainder of rather peripheral and premodern groups (dominantly in Europe) or the result of the new and voluntary, less specialized forms of religious action (143). According to Luckmann there is no comprehensive symbolic system organized as Church that embraces all *and* ensures their integration into society.

Given these conditions, privatization of religion has two dimensions. It refers to a private activity and it concerns solving problems mostly situated in the private sphere outside of the internal rationalities of large institutions. In that sphere, many small and secondary institutions try to offer religious ideas as commodities, competing in an open market (147) (see Koch, "Economy," this volume). Why are they successful? Even subjective experiences need communicative reconstruction (171). However, such communication need not be qualified as 'religious' by subjects as they are by observers. Still fulfilling the *function* of religion, i.e. integrating the intersubjectively constituted individual into society in order to allow him or her to act as a full member of society, these constructions of ultimate realities are no longer visible *as* religion, they are 'invisible religion.'

Luckmann's book merits this (summary) retelling because it was the foundational text for a large field of empirical research, even if the phenomenological breadth of his functional definition of religion (see Stausberg/Gardiner, "Definition," this volume) has drawn some criticism. 'Privatization' extended the search for religious action and beliefs well beyond membership and participation in religious institutions. The notion of 'spirituality' follows Luckmann's lead in definitively transcending 'church sociology' without giving up substantialist definitions of religion. It has come to characterize large areas of religious identities (e.g. Knoblauch 1999, 189–202; Woodhead/Heelas 2000; van der Veer 2008; Wilcox 2013), and it has come to serve as the most important counter-argument against the diagnosis of secularization (Aupers/Houtman 2008). Individual 'bricolage,' spiritual self-empowerment in New Age figures of thought (Bochinger 1994; Hanegraaff

2000; Woodhead 2009, 319–338), biographical production of meaning in narrating conversion (Oksanen 1994; more generally Somers 1994), or fragmented episodes of pilgrimage and tourism (see Bauman 1996, 25; Stausberg 2010, 28–29) and the sacralization of the self (Dawson 2006; see also Joas 2013)—all illustrate such privatization.

INDIVIDUALIZATION: AN ELEMENT OF A THEORY OF MODERNITY

Looking at empirical data in the early 1960s, Luckmann pointed to the growth of American church religion. For Europe, too, recent studies have pointed to the fact that a lot of prototypical privatized religious action happens within the wider framework of religious affiliations or that it tends to build networks (Bochinger/Engelbrecht/Gebhardt 2009; Wilke 2013). And yet, most of these modifications remain truthful to the dominant sociological narrative of modernization theory. Here, ‘individualization’ is regarded as a characteristic feature of the modern age far beyond religion: a de-traditionalization of individual behavior. This is one of the dominant associations of ‘modernity’ even in popularized sociological discourse, usually—and unlike Luckmann—losing sight for example of the paradoxical rise of mass culture as a concomitant mode of integration. Even if there are differences in the importance of the notion in individual sociological theories of modernity, individualization takes a firm place within all classical sociological accounts (Kipple 1998). In these theories, religion is negatively related to the process of individualization. With the exception of a few thinkers—who reflected upon a specific function of religion for the constitution of the individual in society like Georg Simmel (1858–1918) (1968) and later Luckmann—religion, taken as the epitome of traditional acting, is held, as a consequence of secularization, to have fallen prey to those processes characterized by individualization.

Narratives about Religion and Individualization

From a study-of-religion perspective, it is worthwhile venturing a closer look at the narratives of historical processes, which were thought to form the basis for the equation of individualization and modernity. These narratives take quite different forms. In his famous study of the Italian Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) (1860, 141) claimed that interest in subjectivity rose considerably from the end of the thirteenth century onwards. A space of critical distance toward traditional society by means of new groundbreaking philosophical, aesthetic, linguistic, institutional, and also religious alternatives was formulated and practiced in this period (e.g. Martin 2004). If Renaissance paganism was not merely an aesthetic form but also a religious alternative (which remains controversial, see Stausberg 2009) a tradition of religious individualization can be

identified which would be enlarged by late-medieval practices of religious piety (*devotio moderna*). Later in the early sixteenth century, the Reformation made religion the object of individual choice, thus creating space for the individual. When in the Renaissance the dominating Aristotelian and Scholastic paradigms came under scrutiny, the Reformation again questioned a dominant, that is, Catholic, religious tradition. Now, however, the mainstream was not only supplanted by intellectual and artistic enterprises, but even openly resisted.

European Prejudices

The European focus of these narratives and the resulting self-image is strengthened by a view beyond the Euro-Mediterranean world. Louis Dumont (1911–1998), a French anthropologist of India, identified Indian tendencies toward individualization in the phenomenon of ascetic renunciation. Dumont supposed that in traditional societies individualism could only appear in clear opposition to society (1986, 26); societies composed of self-oriented individualists are a modern phenomenon. Historically, the individualism identified by Dumont was the opting out of society by somebody who replaced any interest in this-worldly society by an extra-worldly orientation (a *sannyasin*). However, Dumont thought Indian individualism to have remained ineffective in the long run since it did not come to the same theocratic radicalization of social order witnessed by Europe, where, in a first phase, the religious authorities of the church and the pope were made superior to the more worldly powers of the emperor and the nobles and where, in a second phase, religious freedom of the individual was established in the institutionalized shape of a post-theocratic society itself. In Dumont, one of the most influential thinkers on modern India, the story ends as we know it—in the exceptionalism of Western modernity—but he offered at least hypotheses on a more complex early phase.

Careful analyses like this or the earlier ones by Max Weber (1864–1920) on non-Western rationality (1921; 1996) were easily silenced by the Orientalist stereotype of Asian despotism and collective protagonists like the ‘castes’ dominating the imagination (Said 1978; Assayag/Lardinois/Vidal 2001; Robinson 2004). Individualization was seen as a prerogative of a unique Western Modernity. This led so far as to insinuate that certain non-European, contemporary, but so-called premodern cultures lack even the possibility of formulating any opposition of interests between ‘themselves’ and ‘society.’ Such extreme ‘dividualism’ has been successfully criticized by anthropologists (e.g. Spiro 1993). Recent work on the religion of premodern and pre-Christian Mediterranean antiquity, usually characterized as ‘collective,’ has produced similar results. Extensive ancient discussions about religious deviance and attempts to legally standardize religious behavior attest to the perception and acceptance of an extensive religious individuality practiced in quite different forms (Rüpke 2011).

A COMPARATIVE VIEW ON PROCESSES OF INDIVIDUALIZATION

Meanwhile it appears that such phenomena can be critically reviewed outside a 'Western world' that claims to distinguish itself from others by virtue of the self-description 'modern.' This critique takes either the form of pointing to the historical nonsense of such claims of singularity or the form of a counter-stereotype, elevating Eastern collectivity over supposed Western individuality (e.g. Asad 1973; 1983), taken to combine philosophical notions of an autonomous subject, legally guaranteed and socially supported by corresponding options.

Criticizing Stereotypes of Unique Western Individualization

The conceptual linking of the modern age and religious individuality has obstructed the study of comparable phenomena in earlier periods, so that a focus on individuality has played only a limited role in the examination of the dynamics of religion in history. Here I will give just two examples. For Mediterranean antiquity, the concept of '*polis* religion' or 'civic religion' identifies the shared religious practices of a political unit and their functions as being the whole, or at least the only significant sector, of religion. The variety and changeability of individual religious actions and their profound influence on those rituals called 'public' by the elite has been disregarded. This allows modern research to underline the collective and fundamentally different character of premodern societies (see Rüpke 2007, 5–38; Kindt 2012, 12–35 for criticism). Likewise the stereotype of the religious unity of medieval Europe (see Borgolte 2001 for criticism) is just the reverse of the self-description of modern societies implied in the secularization thesis. The diagnosis of modern privatization and individualization and the ascription of a public and collective character to premodern and non-Western religion reinforce each other.

Such observations and criticism cannot overlook the fact that religious individuality is distributed unevenly. This holds true even in situations characterized by processes of individualization based on, or transforming, religion. In identifying the Renaissance as a turning point, Burkhardt recognized the existence of some isolated dissenters already in the preceding period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. However, what made a difference in the fourteenth century and constituted individualization as a process was not only an intellectual like Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374), but the large number of people interested both in objective processes of technical and economic matters and in the subjectivity of human agents. But mere numbers do not provide a scale for assessing this phenomenon. One needs to more precisely identify the extent and forms within a

local society. Even in a 'modern' and 'Western' society, the acclaimed form of 'individuality' might turn out to be very partial.

An examination of contemporary religion in the United States has shown that 'individuality' is not simply a characteristic of 'modern' religion, as is claimed for the privatization of religion. 'Individuality,' as a framework of interpretation and a form of behavior, is primarily located among mobile members of the white middle class. For them 'individuality' is confirmed by their own commitment and its social consequences (Madsen 2009, 1279–1282). This emic concept of 'individuality' is not an arbitrary option within the range of possible privatized sacred *cosmoi*; rather it is a concept developed by a specific group, and which carries a hegemonic character. It is a way of life that is dominant in the eyes of the entire society (Madsen 2009, 1279–1282). Historically as well as sociologically, there is an important consequence to this. Certain religious traditions might have (or develop) practices (or anthropological and theological reflections) that could foster individuality. The institutionalization of such tendencies, however, and its conceptualization as 'individuality' is a matter of historical contexts and social location; it is contingent.

From such a perspective, there is no fundamental difference between 'Western' and 'non-Western.' For India, *bhakti* offers a comparable constellation. The narrative and theological framework of the propagation of an individual and even loving relationship between a human and a god—Vishnu and Shiva being particularly popular, wherever the addressee was regarded as personalized (instead of abstract, *nirguna*)—proved to be a reservoir that led and leads to processes of individualization of very different forms. These are different in terms of the media employed and the longevity of the process (Eck/Mallison 1991). They could serve as a medium of expression, for instance in giving a voice to women in the form of religious poetry and thus constituting a self (Chakravarty 1989; Craddock 2007). Its inbuilt distancing from the world as it is and simultaneous opening toward divine and human others could serve as political tool and basis for political movements, which aim at gaining recognition (Fuchs 2001; Omvedt 2008).

Delineating Individualization

Contrary to the dominant view of individualization as a unilinear and coherent process, the perspective from the history of religion reveals diverse, temporary, and discontinuous processes. The usual claim of uniqueness, unity, and irreversibility of individualization is not the result of empirical findings, but is in itself part and parcel of a self-description that finds a scientific expression in modernization theory. For historical analysis, it is useful to differentiate between the concepts of 'individual' and of 'individuality,' of 'individuation' (the biographical process of acquiring a full member's role in a society; see Musschenga 2001, 5 for these terms) and 'individualization' (the social structural process of institutional or discursive changes allotting more space for individuality). Elsewhere I have proposed differentiating types of individuality, in order

to enable a closer look at phenomena and their contexts, a typology that will be introduced and developed further in the following (Rüpke 2013a). A more general reflection is necessary first.

What kind of phenomena does the concept of individualization embrace? What kind of family resemblance does it produce? First and foremost it includes the notion of de-traditionalization. This is a temporary process, in which a certain field of individual action is less and less determined by traditional norms handed down by family and the larger social context. Options open up; choices can and need to be made. On the part of the individual, this development is reflected in changes in ‘individuation’—the process of a gradual full integration into society and the development of self-reflection and of a notion of individual identity. Socialization is the parallel biographical process of being integrated into ever-larger social contexts. The individual’s appropriation of social roles and traditions—more specifically religious roles and traditions—and the development of individual identity go hand in hand. I know how to act in society and I act strategically, being self-aware, not necessarily selfish. Religious individuation for instance does not imply the individual’s wish to be different. Quite to the contrary, in many historical circumstances being different was not a value-informing individuation. Dignity and honor were such values, along with notions of competition, being better than others in certain respects, or even being perfect. Religious practices might be among fields of competition, for instance in sponsorship and charity, in displays of a cultured taste, or in intensive relationships with a deity. Being able to make meaningful religious experiences is conceptualized as part of becoming an adult in some discourses.

De-traditionalization and individualization entail institutional developments: options are declared legitimate; voluntary associations help to realize certain options; writing, as is suggested by *bhakti* or *Sufi* poetry, helps to develop notions of individuality; inscriptions on stone, wood, or websites might help to express it on a larger social scale. The rights of the individual are legally protected against society’s demands, culminating in the formulation of individual human rights. As we have seen for the American white middle classes, individuality takes on a normative character: you have to be ‘an individual.’

TYPES OF INDIVIDUALITY

Against the backdrop of the complex notion of individualization used in sociological discourse, it is necessary to develop sharper instruments for historical inquiries. Instead of asking which *degree* of individuality had been achieved it seems to be more useful to inquire into the *forms* of individuality supported by concepts, practices, or institutions that are important for processes of individualization. Elsewhere I differentiate five types of individuality (Rüpke 2013a) that could inform the detailed description and typological differentiation of any long-term processes that might be addressed as individualization (or its opposite, de-individualization). They are here presented in a modified form,

namely: pragmatic, moral, competitive, expressive, and reflective individuality. The types are neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily manifested conjointly.

Pragmatic individuality—the fact that people are forced by circumstances to act on their own instead of simply following established norms or commands—points to situations of dis-embeddedness, due to temporary or permanent rupture of social bonds (as in the case of migrants, travelers, survivors) or to a sharp division of labor. Such a situation was experienced by the large number of migrants in ancient Mediterranean societies. This situation led to the fixation (usually at least partly an invention) of traditions carried on by the migrants or to the invention of traditions in the form of different cults, religious services offered by small entrepreneurs, and hence the exercise of choice on the part of their clients on a much larger scale than previously known (Scheidel 2003 for demography; Noy 2000; Rüpke 2014, 35–52). But we need not confine the argument to antiquity. In present-day Korea, for example, processes of de-traditionalization, typical of ‘second modernity’ (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 2002), have led to ‘pragmatic individuality’ among females, trapped and overburdened in families (Kyung-Sup/Min-Young 2010), and one might hypothesize about consequences for religious behavior. Usually, such developments are not reflected by most practitioners. Prior religious practices and beliefs did not prepare people for the consequences of such migrations and ruptures. Rare exceptions to that are written or memorized instructions for post-mortal traveling (Colpe/Habermehl 1996), exemplified by Orphic gold lamellae accompanying the dead (de Jáuregui 2011; Faraone 2011).

Moral individuality involves the ascription of responsibility to persons for their own behavior, e.g. concepts of sin and punishment as well as law. The very idea of personhood is related to this ascription of responsibility from its ancient—Greek and Roman—roots onwards (Gill 1988; Cancik 2002). Standing in contrast to the concept of privatization, guidelines for individual behavior in antiquity were not developed by autonomous individuals but were the moral norms formulated by others and included judgments about social obligations, often to the point of negating individuality. Specific duties rather than universal rights were stressed. And yet, an obligation for the individual to participate in rituals in person instead of just relying on a community to hold the ritual can be seen as indicative of such a moral religious individuality that transcends mere bans (‘taboos’). Such social obligations can entail specifically religious consequences. In several instances people claim that their close personal relationship with a deity forced them to take over standards of behavior that were in conflict with societal standards, as is illustrated by the phenomenon of asceticism or even martyrdom in ancient Judaism and Christianity or by Dalit-movements (among the ‘Untouchables’) in contemporary India which are based on *bhakti* and are striving to gain recognition (see Rüpke/Spickermann 2012 for further examples).

Martyrdom or, on a larger scale, monasticism also exemplify *competitive individuality*. This refers to the wish to be distinct, often, for instance in aristocratic societies, combined with a struggle for recognition and superiority, which typically establishes norms toward which other social groups would orient themselves. Individuals should strive to become exemplary. The life of such distinct personalities would be narrated as example,

thus adding a further incentive for the individual endeavor. The aim is not individual difference but perfection in fulfilling a social or religious role, whether as female Roman priest, Christian martyr, or male rabbinic Jew (Fonrobert 2013), yet fulfillment remains a personal feat. Individual differences would be sharply noticed by close contemporary observers, but evaluated against a discursively constructed common ethos that would stress the commonwealth. In difference to privatized or 'implicit religion' (for the development of the concept see Bailey 1990; 2009) visibility of performance is important and can be perpetuated in material form. Donations in the form of votives or the founding of temples and churches in Southern India or medieval European cities could result (Appadurai/Appadurai Breckenridge 1976; Jaritz 1980; Schleif 1990).

Expressive individuality was at the heart of Robert Bellah and his team's investigations of American individualism (Bellah 1985). People felt legitimized and encouraged to present a very specific image of themselves, to express their 'individuality' in material and behavioral form. This goes clearly beyond just striving to be better in fulfilling social norms, but rather was based on a perceived social expectation to be individual. It could also be a part of private and situational, rather than coherent, 'sacred cosmoi,' which are created by the very individual and by diverse appropriation (to speak with Certeau 1984) of institutionalized religious traditions. American anthropologist Meredith McGuire (2008) has delineated everyday religious life on such a basis, but demonstrative forms of renunciation or mysticism are known from Indian, West Asian, or European medieval examples. One might count 'visionary individuality' as a form of this, too, even if the semantics of visionaries usually stresses the external source of their sometimes far-reaching claims and thus gain a substantial reflective element (Rüpke 2013b).

Finally, *reflective individuality* demands the formation of an individualistic discourse, an individualist ideology so to speak. Again, such reflections on the self or individual human nature (for example in the Stoic figure of *oikeiosis*, according to which each person should learn about and adapt to his or her physical and social nature [Engberg-Pedersen 1990; Trapp 2007, 109–114]) could be informed by normative concepts of social roles, usually produced by and adapted to elites. Such concepts of the self can further be combined with different concepts like 'soul' (frequently employed in antiquity, Bremmer 2002) or 'inner person.' Again, imagined communication with the divine or the presence of the divine in or for oneself could be of great importance in religiously stabilizing such subjective individuality, and its expression could lead to visible processes of individualization, institutionalized for instance in practices of confession or spiritual care.

Paradoxes: Individualization and De-individualization

Evidently, different types of individuality relate to different types of processes and contexts of changes that are referred to as individualization. Pragmatic individuality is only rarely accompanied by a growing tradition of reflexivity, the latter being the typical standard for acknowledging the existence of a process of individualization

in modernization theory. Competitive individuality presupposes a (even if minority) social environment of shared values, at least indirectly questioned by expressive individuality. Without the support of individual choices by institutionalized practices or beliefs or even full-grown organizations, explicit religion might become implicit religion, visible religion invisible religion, and vice versa. Processes of individualization in their different forms are in principle reversible (even if sometimes self-stabilizing), potentially following or being followed by processes of de-individualization.

This relationship is, however, even more complicated. Periods and regions that are characterized by a variety of individualization processes were also seedbeds of religious traditions, even religious organizations. Let me give a few examples before I unpack the seemingly paradoxical constellation. Mediterranean Late Antiquity was the birthplace of what has been called the first autobiography, Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions* at the end of the fourth century, and of monastic and ascetic *virtuosi* in the preceding century. At the same time, Augustine was the powerful head of the Catholic 'church' of Carthage, fighting the widespread Donatist movements. Many ascetics and hermits grouped together as cenobites in monasteries. Their 'fathers,' the abbots, started to write monastic rules (as stressed by later historiography). Elaborated in South Asia and beginning in the Puranic period (roughly the third century CE), the idea of the loving relationship to a god (*bhakti*), quickly led to the formation of religions of *sampradayas*, of sects, focusing the religious practices on specific deities. The European Reformation of the early sixteenth century propagated individual belief and a personal salvation, which is dependent on God's grace, not on ritual services provided by the Christian Church. At the same time different theologies and alliances organized themselves in structures that were not only of an ecclesiastical nature but also went hand in hand with the establishment of the territorial state. New Religious Movements and New Age spirituality manifest a wide differentiation of worldviews and religious practices, but they are not only indicators of individual options and choices made. At the same time they attest to loose and tight networks, practices of bonding, or even sanctioning disloyalty.

These observations can be generalized. Individual behavior that might be judged deviant, or at least non-conformist, from the point of view of the majority or the religious mainstream, is precarious and threatened. As a consequence, it is safeguarded and institutionalized in the form of minority groups (which can become a majority). From here the paradox takes its point of departure. A bundle of factors and motifs lead to the increasing boundedness of those who group together to preserve their choice and to defend their deviant religious individuality. In order to define their boundaries, groups ('sects' developing into 'churches') dogmatize their norms and denounce outsiders as well as exclude internally deviant members. Systematization of belief and the attempt to gain political support produce rigidity or compromises that turn away other members. Professional leaders judge the power of their institution by its influence on the behavior of people who regard themselves as members of that organization or who are ascribed membership therein. The conviction or practice safeguarded by the institution might be

rigidly enforced among its members. By the fourth century CE, Christian bishops had achieved juridical power, granted by the Roman emperor; 'heretics,' 'followers' of (just another) sect had been banned earlier, but could now be reprimanded with the help of political and juridical authorities. Manichaeans and heretics had to fear for their careers and even their lives. In short, individualization processes culminate in the formation of sharply differentiated 'religions' (Rüpke 2010), even if the question of what constitutes a separate entity might have been disputed. Whether Mohammad's Islam was just a new heresy or an independent 'religion' of its own was discussed by Christian observers far into the Middle Ages.

In Europe, a comparable process can be observed in the early modern period. Down into the eighteenth century, processes of confessionalization—the development of different 'confessions' (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed), of sharp group boundaries, and of formalized standards of belief and behavior—assured the internalization of specific denominational norms, leading to lasting habits, social and economic behaviors, and intellectual orientations. However, few were in a position to choose their confession. Despite the existence of religious plurality from a bird's eye view, the exercise of choice was severely restricted for any historical individual. In many instances, this stimulated internal differentiation within groups rather than a costly switching of allegiances.

To sum up: as has been observed for and criticized with regard to the concept of 'privatization of religion,' processes of religious individualization are frequently paradoxical processes. As a concept for initializing research, 'individualization' like 'privatization' offers a focus, a lens for observing processes that have been neglected due to a conviction on part of many scholars of the 'Western' world, namely that individuality is tied to the notion of modernity. Removing this prejudice opens up a fruitful field of comparative research. Discarding the nexus of individualization and modernity means dropping the idea of a transhistorical process with a concomitant shift to the study of particulars in broader contexts. Historical evidence as sketched briefly above, and not least the relationship of privatization and de-privatization in the 1960s, encourages us to pay attention to the entanglement of processes of individualization and de-individualization.

GLOSSARY

Individuality a Western self-stereotype seen as a philosophical notion of an autonomous subject, legally guaranteed and socially supported by corresponding options for individual action and a corresponding ideology of obligation to present oneself as somebody choosing among available options, even in matters religious.

Individualization the de-traditionalization of individual behavior, often, but as shown here, wrongly claimed to be part of modernization.

Individuation the biographical process of acquiring a full member's role in a society.

Privatization (of religion) transferring religious activities from the public into the private realm and/or focusing religious activities on private problems.

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