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## Fighting for Differences: Forms and Limits of Religious Individuality in the 'Shepherd of Hermas'

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### INTRODUCTION

For a historian of religion, to inquire into individualization is a twofold enterprise. On the one hand, it is an attempt at revisiting established historical narratives about the rise of individuality, frequently connected to the notion of modernization. As such, it demands a long perspective on institutional changes and histories of mentality and a comparative view that necessitates the cooperation of scholars of different regions and periods. This is exactly what the 'Kolleg-Forscherguppe' 'Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective' tries to instigate. On the other hand, individualization is an offer of different perspective that might elucidate selected monumental or textual sources, helping to better understand them. This is exactly what this volume tries to do. Terms like 'individuation' and 'individuality' and the differentiation of types of these provoke questions that could be applied and must be adapted to individual texts.

Three groups of questions are of particular importance. First, how is the relationship between the main character or characters and society and its different forms of communities and associations described? How are socialization and individualization thought of as two sides of the same coin? How are the constellations, roles, and conflicts (to use modern conceptualizations) of individual and society

described and evaluated by contemporaries? Secondly, the description of agency. Who are the agents, what are their capacities, in what situations do they act? Again, we have learned to ask about conceptualizations as a primary focus of textual analysis, and yet the attempt to pose the question of references to social reality (itself shaped by such conceptualizations) should not be entirely discarded. And thirdly, individualization invites us to enquire into concepts of the self, again taking note of intertextuality and the place of a text in larger discourses. As a historical enquiry, we have to be aware of the available apparatus of concepts as we have to pay attention to the originality of the text in this regard.

This bundle of questions, mapping axes of analysis that have to capture the specific content and position of the text analysed, finally must be specified in order to concentrate on the notion of religious individualization. Without disregarding the general historical context, interest is concentrated on the specifically religious aspects of processes of individualization. Of course, this refers to the role of religious organisations and groups, but 'religious' needs a definition, in particular for cultures as distant as the Roman empire. I propose to base the analysis on an action-oriented definition of religion. 'Religion' is social actions, symbols, and concepts based on the notion of supra-human powers. Thus, in the different respects the questions listed above are concentrated on the place given to gods, to divine mediators, and to human institutions connected with them.

## THE TEXT ANALYSED

With a length of four thousand 'verses' (according to the count of the *Codex Claromontanus*)<sup>1</sup> the 'Shepherd of Hermas' is much longer than every book of the canonical New Testament; the same Codex gives 2900 verses to Luke, and 2600 each to Matthew and the *Acta apostolorum*. The ancient headlines structure the text into five visions (*vis*), twelve mandates (*entolai*, *mand*) and ten parables (*sim*). The mandates are dictates of the appearance of the shepherd, who enters

<sup>1</sup> Schneemelcher 1990, 30. These are 115 chapters in the counting of Whittaker 1967.

the text only here. They are partly short, partly longer paranetic texts that might include dialogues and visions (for instance *mand* 11). The headlines are not precise in generic terms. Within the twelfth mandate the appearance changes and introduces itself as an angel of penitence.<sup>2</sup> As such it presents ten parables; the longest (9) repeats the vision of the building of a white tower of vision 3, supplemented by a detailed allegorical interpretation.<sup>3</sup> In an earlier treatment I argued that the imagery is informed by Hermas' own profession as a producer of salt.<sup>4</sup> Hermas' vision of the transformation of creation into church<sup>5</sup> is not only inspired by the Jesuanic metaphor of the 'salt of the earth', but also by his contemporary Roman world and technology and myths of his profession about the use of salt as a building material.

Without doubt, the first four visions originally formed an independent text to which the later part refers. Only now the whole book could acquire the title *Poimên* or in Latin *Pastor*, 'Shepherd'. *Herma*, a common name in the city of Rome, is addressed as such only in the earlier layer of the text.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, there is much to support the assumption that the text as a whole stems from a single author.<sup>7</sup> Self-interpretation and self-correction is a principle of the reasoning from the very beginning.<sup>8</sup> The growth of the text seems to reflect oral communication,<sup>9</sup> or more precisely an oral communication supported by writing and confined by the circulation of earlier texts.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the imagery is restricted and subjected to varied, even contradictory interpretation. For our reading of the text this has important consequences. Different passages of the text might illuminate each other, but any strictly synchronic and systematic approach is bound to fail. The text reflects a longer doctrinal development, even if we do not have the slightest indication of the length and absolute dating of this development. The fields of shift,

<sup>2</sup> PH *mand* 12.4,7; 12.6.1.

<sup>3</sup> Benz 1969, 150 points to the general tendency of visionary interpretation of images to be didactic or even pedantic (Hermas serving as an example, 151); see also 651.

<sup>4</sup> Rüpke 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Leutzsch 1989, 89. Cf. Schneider 1999, 93–163, who points to the paraenetic function of this aspect of Hermas' ecclesiology (163).

<sup>6</sup> Lampe 1989, 135–53.

<sup>7</sup> This is now *opinio communis*, Hilhorst 1988, 682–701, here 685; Ehrmann 2003, 166. For the unity Henne 1992 and Rüpke 1999 for the unity of the imagery.

<sup>8</sup> Leutzsch 1989, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Leutzsch 1989, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Osiek 1999, 10, 13.

however, make this more a problem for historians of dogmatics than of individualization.

Most attempts to date the 'Shepherd' point to the second quarter of the second century.<sup>11</sup> The claim of the *Canon Muratori* that Hermas was the brother of the Roman bishop Pius and had written the text during the latter's time of office (lines 73–7), traditionally dated to the 140s, converges with the period indicated before.<sup>12</sup> Even if there was no monarchical episcopate at Rome by the time and the dating was a construct of a later time,<sup>13</sup> the implied synchronism is interesting. It might imply that an important presbyter, Pius, supported a contemporary visionary—who took care to refrain from any mention of the relationship.<sup>14</sup>

Methodologically, we are not able to decide whether Hermas' visions were authentic. Despite the long growth of the text, the literary strategies so clearly visible in the earliest part of the book, containing visions 1 to 4, are elaborate, consciously introducing the concept of *apocalypsis*, as I have shown in a treatment of this part of the book.<sup>15</sup> This is no argument against authenticity.<sup>16</sup> There is nothing but formed language and generic frames to communicate individual experience. A roughly contemporary apocalyptic text, 4 Ezra, which might have been produced in the city of Rome too (it claims to be written in 'Babylon'),<sup>17</sup> demonstrates the acceptance of the genre and the possibility of visionary experience.<sup>18</sup> At least, such texts—apart from possibly many individual narratives that never were turned into writing—enabled contemporaries, as later readers, to conceptualize their own experiences as religious and visionary experiences.<sup>19</sup> Within a perspective on individualization, together with the likewise not pseudepigraphic apocalypse of John the 'Shepherd' it attests to a 'democratization' of visionary experience.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ehrmann 2003, 169: 110–140 CE.

<sup>12</sup> Without further substantial arguments Staats (1986, 100–8, 104) accepts the *Canon Muratori* and dates the texts to the 130s or even 120s.

<sup>13</sup> Probably from the last quarter of the 2nd cent., see Lampe 1989, 343.

<sup>14</sup> See Rüpke 2005, also Lampe 1989, 334 and Joly 1993, 524–51, in particular 546.

<sup>15</sup> Rüpke 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Frenschkowski 2006, 350–2, reaches a similar conclusion.

<sup>17</sup> Stone 1990, 10, speculates about a production in Judaea, if the Babylon reference is not meant historically. He postulates a Hebrew original (*ibid.* 1).

<sup>18</sup> See Stone 2003.

<sup>19</sup> See Jung 2006, 21, on the interrelationship of individual, emotional experience and communicated and even institutionalized meanings.

'Democratization' or rather 'popularization' is indicated by the history of reception of the 'Shepherd'. Among the early texts of the majority church that did not make it into the canon of the 27 books of the New Testament, the Shepherd of Hermas was among those that achieved canonical rank at least temporarily. Already by the second century the text, probably written at Rome, found its way to Gaul (Irenaeus) and Africa (Tertullian): it was especially popular in Egypt<sup>20</sup> and quoted by the Alexandrine authors Clemens and Origenes. The *Canon Muratori* (which I date to the late second century, too)<sup>21</sup> protests against the text: the 'Shepherd' should be read, but not be read out to the people. Obviously, the 'danger' of canonical status was seen as large.<sup>22</sup> The Codex Sinaiticus contains the 'Shepherd', together with the letter of Barnabas, at the end.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the distancing from, or even ignoring of, the Shepherd by the Fathers of the fourth and fifth century—Hieronymus says *apud Latinos paene ignotus est*, 'it is close to unknown among the Latins' (*vir. ill.* 10)—the text was multiplied in Latin translations of the second and fourth century and had been diffused in the Western as well as in the Eastern part of the empire in many manuscripts; many papyri go back as far as the second century.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the text even inspired paintings in catacombs, surely in the catacomb of San Gennaro at Naples where a group of young women building a tower was depicted in the early third century.<sup>25</sup> At least partial translations were made into Achminic and Sahidic Coptic, Ethiopic, and middle Persian. From 1513 onwards four printed editions of the sixteenth century demonstrate the interest in the text from Martin Luther to Carl Gustav Jung.<sup>26</sup>

The 'Shepherd of Hermas' is one of the earliest texts of the 'followers of Christ' that is neither an epistolary treatise nor a biography of

<sup>20</sup> Osiek 1999, 5.

<sup>21</sup> The dating has been questioned by Sundberg 1973, 1–41, and Hahneman 1992, dating it to the 4th century. Opposed by Kaestli 1994, 609–34, and Hill 1995, 437–2. This need not question the authenticity of the claim, see Wilson 1993 and 1995, who dates the 'Shepherd' to 80 to 100 AD.

<sup>22</sup> *Canon Muratori* l. 77–80.

<sup>23</sup> See Brox 1991, 70–1 and Henne 1990, 81–100.

<sup>24</sup> *P. Michigan* 130; s. also Carlini 1991.

<sup>25</sup> Osiek 1999, 7–8, also pointing to a possible influence on the popularity of the depiction of Jesus as a shepherd (8).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Brox 1991, 69–70 with literature quoted in notes 75–7.

Jesus or a collection of his sayings. It is the text of a Roman Jew<sup>27</sup> from the first half of the second century who is bothered by the moral status of his fellows, thus displaying a post-Matthew theology.<sup>28</sup> He tries to communicate the visions of an ideal church, which he has received, to his and other groups of co-religious. This is not to follow Völter's identification of an originally Jewish kernel of the text, but the denial of a dichotomic view.<sup>29</sup> Hermas does not thematise 'Jews' as people different at all.<sup>30</sup> His (Jewish) group does follow Christ, and surely he would have accepted the term *Christianus* as a description of himself. Hermas is not interested in those who do not, he has no interest in differentiation among these, and is certain that many more will join. His concern, however, is those that have followed for whatever time, but stopped doing so in different stages.<sup>31</sup> Unlike his contemporary, the author of Hebrews, comparable in many aspects,<sup>32</sup> Hermas is not interested so much in Christology, even if that is one of his concerns—and a subject of highly unusual (in the light of later developments) solutions.<sup>33</sup> The text offers visionary, apocalyptic literature like 4 Ezra or John, that tries to come to grips with the realities of Roman power, but its plot is clearly autobiographical (unlike the other apocalyptic texts, apart from John) and intensively localized.<sup>34</sup> Thus it is *prima vista* suitable for an analysis of specifically religious individuality.

However, I will return to this aspect only at the end.<sup>35</sup> My main thesis will be that for Hermas, a specifically religious individuality was the solution to the more general problem of a lack of distinction of the new *ekklêsia* in his contemporary world. Thus, I will first address Hermas' characterization of the contemporary

<sup>27</sup> Völter 1900, 20.

<sup>28</sup> I am grateful to Ian Henderson for this hint as to the reflection of Matthew on the divide between the followers of Jesus and the rest, given his strongly ethical message and developed ecclesiology and Christology.

<sup>29</sup> But cf. Rutgers 2009, 121 for the conception of early Christians as 'high tension minority groups' that were clearly separated from the Jews.

<sup>30</sup> See Brox 1991, 430. For the implied permeability of the Greco-Roman notion of 'people' see Janowitz 2000, 213–14.

<sup>31</sup> *Sim* 9.11–13 = 88.9–91.2.

<sup>32</sup> See Rüpke, Hebrews (forthcoming).

<sup>33</sup> Summarily Brox 1991, 485–95.

<sup>34</sup> See Osiek 1999, 24.

<sup>35</sup> I am grateful to Martin Harrer, Wuppertal, for stressing this aspect in a discussion.

social and religious setting of the problem that the text is addressing. The solution will be interpreted in terms of different types of individuality and their limits and the interplay of personal experience and social responsibility, which forms the framework of the narration of all the visionary material. A brief look into Hermas' conceptualization of agency (of course never called this) follows. As a conclusion, the place of the whole text in the history of religion of the second century will be discussed.

### THE PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED

If there is one feature of the whole text that is most peculiar, it is Hermas' interest in typologies. This holds true for the categorization of virtues and vices. After a first summary,<sup>36</sup> a list of virtues and vices is the organizing principle of the *mandata*, even up to the point that temperance (*enkráteia*) is presented as 'twofold', to be observed in some cases (not to do the bad), not in others (not to not do the good).<sup>37</sup> Even more extreme—but central—is his classification of the members of the *ekklêsia*, visualized as stones (*vis* 3, *sim* 9) or tested by rods (*sim* 8). Obviously, to differentiate neatly between types and degrees (even percentages) of good and wicked believers, is of importance for him. *Simile* 8 leads to 28 different types of believers.<sup>38</sup> I quote only the earliest example:<sup>39</sup>

*Vis* 3, 5 [chapter 13]: (1) 'Hear now about the stones that go into the building. On the one hand, the squared and white stones that fit together at the joints are the apostles, bishops, teachers and deacons who live reverently towards God and perform their duties as bishops, teachers, and deacons for the chosen ones of God in a holy and respectful way; some of these have fallen asleep, but others are still living. And they have always been harmonious with one another and at peace with one another, and they have listened one to another. For this reason their joints fit together in the building of the tower.'

<sup>36</sup> PH 16 (*vis* 3.8). 4–5.

<sup>37</sup> PH 38 (*mand* 8).1–2. A similar list is given in 92 (*sim* 9.15), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Leutzsch 1989, 226. In her anti-individualistic interpretation, Osiek (1999, 201) stresses the appearance in (at the start) 13 groups.

<sup>39</sup> This and the following translations are by Osiek, Loeb Library.

(2) 'But who are the ones drawn from the depths of the sea and placed into the building, who fit together at their joints with the other stones already built in it?' 'These are those who have suffered on account of the name of the Lord.'

(3) 'But I also want to know, Lady, who the other stones are, the ones brought from the dry land.' She said, 'Those that go into the building without being hewn are ones the Lord has approved, because they walk in the uprightness of the Lord and carry out his commandments.'

(4) 'And who are the ones brought and placed in the building?' 'These are those who are new in faith and faithful. They are admonished by the angels to do good; for this reason, no evil has been found in them.'

(5) 'But who are the ones who were tossed aside and cast out?' 'These are those who have sinned but wish to repent. For this reason they are not cast far away from the tower, because they will be useful for the building, if they repent. And so if those who are about to repent do so, they will be strong in faith—if they repent now while the tower is still under construction. But if the building is completed, they will no longer have a place, but will be outcasts. This alone is to their advantage, that they lie next to the tower.'

(6 [14]:1) 'But do you want to know about the ones that are broken off and cast far from the tower? These are the children of lawlessness. For they came to faith hypocritically and no wickedness ever left them. And so they have no salvation, since, because of their wickedness, they are useless for the building. This is why they were broken off and cast far away, because of the Lord's anger, since they aggravated him. (2) But with respect to the many other stones you saw lying on the ground and not coming into the building—the ones that are rough are those who know the truth but do not remain in it nor cling to the saints. This is why they are of no use.'

(3) 'But who are the ones with cracks?' 'These are those who hold a grudge against one another in their hearts and have no peace among themselves. Even though they seem to be peace-loving, when they leave one another's presence, their wickedness remains in their hearts. These are the cracks the stones have.'

(4) 'But the ones that are broken are those who have believed and live, for the most part, in righteousness, but also have a certain share lawlessness, this is why they are broken off and not whole.'

(5) 'But who are the white stones, Lady, which are rounded and do not fit into the building?' She replied to me, 'How long will you be foolish and ignorant, asking everything, and understanding nothing? These are the ones who have faith, but also are wealthy in this age. But when affliction comes, because of their wealth and their business affairs, they deny their Lord.'

(6) And I responded to her, 'And so when, Lady, will they be useful for the building?' 'When the wealth that beguiles them is cut off from them,' she said, 'then they will be useful to God. For just as a round stone cannot be made square unless it has something cut off and discarded, so also with those who are rich in this age: if their wealth is not cut off from them, they cannot be useful to the Lord.'

(7) You should know this above all from your own case. When you were wealthy, you were of no use; but now you are useful and helpful in life. All of you should be useful to God. For you yourself are also being taken from the same stones.

(7 [15]:1) 'But the other stones that you saw cast far from the tower and falling on the path and rolling from the path onto the rough terrain, these are the ones who have believed, but have left their true path because they are of two minds. They are lost, thinking they can find a better path; and they are miserable, walking over the rough terrain. (2) But the ones that fall into the fire and were burned are those who completely abandoned the living God; and they no longer think about repenting because of their licentious desires and the wicked deeds they have performed.'

(3) 'But who are the other ones, which fall near the water but cannot be rolled into it?' 'These are the ones who have heard the word and wanted to be baptized in the name of the Lord. But then when they recall what the life of purity involves, they change their minds and return to pursue their evil desires.'

But Hermas is a fine observer and scrupulous elsewhere, too. As Leutzsch has shown in his analysis, for the publication of Hermas' visions in the *ekklêsia*, Hermas is aware of different audiences and groups of addressees,<sup>40</sup> which will not be reviewed here. Applying instead a very simple model (that will have to be modified) for the social settings, Hermas is in an inner circle of his co-religious, which itself is surrounded by an outer circle. In one of the earliest formulations, the revelatory figure speaks of the 'righteous' on the one hand, and the 'peoples' (*ethnoi*) and 'apostates' on the other.<sup>41</sup> As already mentioned, the interest in the 'ethnic' part of the outer circle as such is very limited. However, as the pairing of 'peoples' and 'apostates' already suggests, the borderline between the two circles is permeable. And it is very easily permeated. Following Hermas' descriptions, it is easy to become a believer, and it is very easy to drop out afterwards. Or more precisely: it is very easy to get into the borderlands. The latter are the concern of Hermas' classifications. Even if the majority

<sup>40</sup> Leutzsch 1989, 66–82.

<sup>41</sup> 4.2 = vis. 1, 4.2.

is clearly within, as is demonstrated by the test of the willow rods,<sup>42</sup> this fact is stated only once. The majority of classes, and the interest of the text, is on the grey zone to both sides of the borderline. The central problem is formulated in the simile of the trees in winter:<sup>43</sup> You cannot see which one is still living. You cannot tell the bad and the just from seeing them. They cannot be differentiated in this world:

*Sim* 3 [52]:1 He showed me many trees that did not have leaves but appeared to me to be withered. And they were all alike. He said to me, 'Do you see these trees?' 'I see them, Lord,' I replied. 'They are like one another and withered.' He said, 'These trees you see are the people who dwell in this age.'

(2) 'Why then, Lord,' I asked, 'do they seem withered and like one another?' 'Because', he said, 'neither the upright nor the sinners stand out clearly in this age, but they are like one another. For this age is a winter for those who are upright: they do not stand out clearly while dwelling with the sinners.'

(3) For just as the trees that shed their leaves in the winter all look alike, with the withered indistinguishable from the living, so too in this age it is not clear who the upright are and who the sinners, but they all appear alike.'

What seems to be so difficult for the first-century intellectual Paul is judged as easy for the second-century literate entrepreneur Hermas: *Pistis*, belief, is easy to attain or proclaim. The problems begin only afterwards. This is transformed into the image of the tower. Quickly raised to impressive size, the building has to be revised, stones have to be removed.<sup>44</sup> The interruption points to the present halt to the eschatological completion,<sup>45</sup> but there is an historical basis to the speed. This success is—not explicitly—related to the Roman empire. It is easy to spread the word, and all the peoples of the word come to believe.<sup>46</sup> Hermas never claims the believers to be the majority, but that is not seen as the major problem. Clearly, the victory is only an eschatological one. The problem is the very character of the borderline. Who is really within and who is really outside? To bring all of those in the grey zone inside, to bring them to conversion (*metanoia*),<sup>47</sup> is Hermas' foremost intention.

<sup>42</sup> *PH* 67 (*sim* 8.1).16. <sup>43</sup> For the repetition of the image, see Marin 1982.

<sup>44</sup> *PH* 82 (*sim* 9.5).2; 83 (*sim* 9.6).3–5. <sup>45</sup> Osiek 1999, 222–3.

<sup>46</sup> *PH* 94. <sup>47</sup> Osiek 1999, 29.

What are the (ideal) differences between the 'peoples' and the believers? Hermas remains remarkably silent—in accordance with his just quoted statement. The very few statements remain vague. In the discussion of marriage and separation, 'to do the same as the peoples' is regarded as equivalent to adultery, leading to the pollution of the flesh.<sup>48</sup> Whether 'pollution of the flesh' is related to sacrificial meals is far from clear.<sup>49</sup> With regard to Israel's relationship to Yahweh, idolatry is regarded as adultery in the Tenakh, but there is no clue suggesting this association.<sup>50</sup> Idolatry, however, is mentioned in another context. To take counsel from some professional divinity is equated with it:

*Mand 11 [43]:1* He showed me some people sitting on a bench, and someone else sitting on a chair. And he said to me, 'Do you see the ones sitting on the bench?' 'I see them, Lord,' I replied. 'These people', he said, 'are faithful, and the one sitting on the chair is a false prophet who destroys the understanding of the doubleminded, not of the faithful. (2) And so, doubleminded people come to him as if he were a soothsayer, and ask him what is about to happen to them. And that false prophet, having within himself no power of the divine spirit, speaks with them in the light of the requests and the evil desires they have, and he fills their souls as they themselves wish. (3) For he, being empty himself, gives empty answers to those who are empty. For whatever he is, he answers in a way befitting the emptiness of the person. But he also speaks some true words. For the devil fills him with his own spirit, to see if he can dash one of the upright. (4) And so, all those who are strong in the faith of the Lord and have been clothed with the truth do not cling to such spirits, but abstain from them. But all those who are of two minds and who are constantly changing their minds [*Or: who are always repenting*] consult the oracle as do even the outsiders. And they bring a greater sin upon themselves by thus committing idolatry. For the one who asks a false prophet about any matter is an idolater, devoid of the truth, and foolish. (5) For no spirit given by God is consulted, but having divine power it speaks all things from its own authority, because it comes from above, from the power of the divine spirit. (6) But the spirit that, when consulted, speaks in light of human desires is earthly and insubstantial, having no power. And it does not speak at all, unless it is consulted.'

<sup>48</sup> PH 29 (*mand* 4.1).9.

<sup>49</sup> See PH 60 (*sim* 5.7).

<sup>50</sup> Such a reference is assumed by Brox 1991, 208, pointing to passages like Hos. 2:4; 3:1, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

This text is at the same time a remarkable testimony for the strength of divinatory practices and prophets in early Christian groups.<sup>51</sup>

In *simile* 8, Hermas speaks of 'the deeds of the peoples' as the ultimate indicator of full reintegration into the gentiles (as *ethnoi* is usually translated) or rather 'outsiders' (as suggested by Osiek).<sup>52</sup> Again, any substantiation is lacking. Hermas' central concern regarding the others is always formulated from a point of view from within. It is the rich who are most endangered. Against a Jewish background the mechanism of euergetism, prestige, and eternal memory were problematic, even if benefactory behaviour could easily be reconciled with piety.<sup>53</sup>

### FALSE AND RIGHT INDIVIDUALITY

Again, the description goes far beyond mere *topoi*. Of course, being a rich man usually has some problematic corollaries. Avidity for more wealth and other women, luxury, and sumptuous meals are frequently correlated.<sup>54</sup> Yet, to eat too much endangers one's health, Hermas rightly observes already in the earliest book of visions in Stoic tradition.<sup>55</sup> Riches endanger the contact among believers, whom the rich avoid in order to avoid being addressed by beggars, unacceptable behaviour by every standard.<sup>56</sup> Business causes contacts with the 'people'.<sup>57</sup> Hermas formulates an elaborated model for the psychological mechanisms and sequences:

*Sim* 8. 9 [75]:1 'Those who handed over sticks that were two parts withered and the third part green are those who have been faithful, but who also have grown wealthy and maintained a high standing among the outsiders. These have clothed themselves with great arrogance and become conceited; they have abandoned the truth and do not cling to those who are upright, but live with the outsiders. And this path has become very sweet to them. Still, they have not fallen away from God,

<sup>51</sup> Osiek 1999, 141. <sup>52</sup> *PH* 75 (*sim* 8.9).3.

<sup>53</sup> Schwartz 2010, 174. Cf. Katz 2006, 2 for the similarity in lifestyle with the non-Jewish environment and 5 for the notion of 'porous Judaism'.

<sup>54</sup> *PH* 36 (*mand* 6.2).5; 45 (*mand* 12.2).1.

<sup>55</sup> *PH* 17 (*vis* 3.9).3. See Osiek 1999, 81.

<sup>56</sup> *PH* 97 (*sim* 9.20).2. See Osiek 1999, 246.

<sup>57</sup> *PH* 40 (*mand* 10.1).4.

but have remained in the faith, even though they do not do the works of faith. (2) And so many of these have repented, and their dwelling is in the tower. (3) But others have taken up residence, once and for all, with the outsiders. These have fallen away from God by being borne along by vanities of the outsiders and acting like them. And so these are counted among the outsiders.

Being rich is more than a casual condition of one's place in society. It is something to be sought after, a matter of distinction and a competitive individuality. Even if the generation of wealth is full of problematic corollaries, it is fundamentally to be accepted.<sup>58</sup> It is economic hardship that is the clearest signal of divine punishment, of *thlipsis*, otherwise associated with official persecution, for Hermas.<sup>59</sup> Such an economic loss leads to a relocation in society, making an *apokatastasis eis ton topon* necessary (66,6). From the earliest layer of text onwards Hermas reflects on the religious consequences. Rich believers will in situations of *thlipsis*, of trouble—that is, persecution—tend to become apostates.<sup>60</sup> In the choice between this world and the other, owners of fixed property will themselves be fixed: they will tend to opt for the earthly city and forfeit their true citizenship.<sup>61</sup> Gaining profit from work instead of dealing may reduce such dangers,<sup>62</sup> but cannot remove them. Hermas himself might be following such a strategy, as the change in the places of the visions indicates.<sup>63</sup> After two visions on his way to Cumae<sup>64</sup> and interludes in his home two visions happen in his fields of salt production, perhaps identical to the place at the side of the Via Campana.<sup>65</sup> This change must be seen as a progress in occupation.<sup>66</sup> Distant Cumae is the aim

<sup>58</sup> Osiek 1999, 209, attributes a morally more negative view to Hermas.

<sup>59</sup> PH 3.1. See also PH 66 (*sim* 7).6 (cf. 66.1: *thlipsis*) with Brox 1991, 343.

<sup>60</sup> PH 14 (*vis* 3.6).5.

<sup>61</sup> PH 50 (*sim* 1), 4. See also Osiek 1999, 159.

<sup>62</sup> PH 27 (*mand* 2).4

<sup>63</sup> Rüpke 2005; cf. Brox 1991, 163–66.

<sup>64</sup> For the problem of the text see Brox 1991, 80 with n. 13 and 105, and Lusini 2001, 96. The Greek archetype had *kōmas*, 'villages' (confirmed by the Ethiopian text), the Latin for the second instance either *cum his* or *regionem Cumanorum*; see the discussion in Rüpke 2011, 251, n. 40; Osiek 1999, 43, remains negative for the possibility of Cumae.

<sup>65</sup> The text is sufficiently sure as to reject the emanations of Peterson (1954, n. 50), which finally lead to a localisation of the events in the 'Hinnomtal bei Jerusalem'.

<sup>66</sup> See Lampe 1989, 188–91 (without a clear conclusion, based on his misunderstanding of the character of the field).

of the merchant and versatile business man.<sup>67</sup> The salt fields are the aim of the reliable and stable owner or long-term tenant.

Extensively Hermas even reflects upon the psychological situation of the business man caring about his balances, on his activism and irascible character.<sup>68</sup> The permanency of such a character trait (as I would conceptualize this) is expressed by Hermas' postulation of an *angelos tryphês*, an angel of luxury, who is at the same time an angel of deceit.<sup>69</sup> According to him, dishonesty is a necessary implication of the mercantile business.<sup>70</sup>

Obviously, these mechanisms of competitive individuality<sup>71</sup> with all their negative consequences are accepted as given by Hermas, even if they endanger the *ekklêsia*, the community of the believers. To concentrate on exchange, to be a merchant, is especially dangerous, thus Hermas seems to personally recommend productive work, one would suppose (taking Hermas himself and general libertine behaviour as an example) as autonomous artisan rather than in the form of paid labour. Economic upward mobility is a trait of the libertine (if we believe the text) author that is beyond theological reflection and potential social change.

I stress the notion of individuality, as this is the framing given by the text. The interest in typologies is not an interest in theorizing about groups but in catching the situation of a person as precisely as possible. This is underlined by the interest in psychology—*eupsychos* and *dipsychos* are central terms to characterize a person<sup>72</sup>—and the conceptualization of agency, to which I will turn below. It is firmly underlined by the entirely individual eschatology that forms the consequence of any behaviour.<sup>73</sup>

Against the backdrop of the situation as characterized before, compensation and remedies are sought in a specifically religious individuation and individuality. The whole process is seen as a

<sup>67</sup> For the economic ethics of Hermas see Leutzsch 1989, 113–37. Clearly, they are influenced by the orientation towards upward mobility of libertines, as Osiek 1983, has shown.

<sup>68</sup> e.g. *PH* 34 (*mand* 5.2).2.

<sup>69</sup> *PH* 62 (*sim* 6.1).1.

<sup>70</sup> Rüpke 2011, 55.

<sup>71</sup> For the concept see Rüpke, p. 13 this volume.

<sup>72</sup> e.g. *PH* 12 (*vis* 3.4), 3; 39 (*mand* 9).9–11; *eupsychos*: 3 (*vis* 1.3).2. For *dipsychia* see Osiek 1999, 30–1.

<sup>73</sup> Stressed by Leutzsch 1989, 207: 'Tendenz zur Individualisierung der Eschatologie'. Contrarily Osiek 1999, 30 and 37.

biographical one. The conception of 'repentance', *metanoia*, is such a biographical process, indicating a change of mind. It is the consequences of this change that are of interest for Hermas, not any ritual correlates of some 'sacrament of repentance' never referred to by the author.<sup>74</sup>

Competitive individuality is a helpful term to go beyond the notion of compensation. Compensation remains useful in a specific respect. Only very occasionally Hermas goes as far as to suggest that one's wealth might be donated,<sup>75</sup> but that is never described as a change of status.

*Sim 1 [50]:8* Instead of fields, then, purchase souls that have been afflicted, insofar as you can, and take care of widows and orphans and do not neglect them; spend your wealth and all your furnishing for such fields and houses as you have received from God. (9) For this is why the Master made you rich, that you carry out these ministries for him. It is much better to purchase the fields, goods and houses you find in your own city when you return to it. (10) This kind of extravagance is good and makes one glad; it has no grief or fear, but joy instead. And so, do not participate in the extravagance sought by outsiders; for it is of no profit for you who are slaves of God. (11) But participate in your own extravagance in which you can rejoice. And do not counterfeit or touch what belongs to another, or desire it. For it is evil to desire someone else's goods. But do your own work, and you will be saved.

Again, Hermas is fighting with the fact that lavishness is not easily discernible as something specific for the believers. Even his suggestion of a self-restriction in the accumulation of capital beyond 'autarkeia'<sup>76</sup> is entirely compatible with the ethics of *leiturgeia*.<sup>77</sup> The following simile, however, specifies the usage of the surplus within a religious framework. Employing the specific Italian imagery of the elm as a support of the vine,<sup>78</sup> Hermas goes into biological details to describe a sort of religious symbiosis of rich and poor, pointing to the institution of patronage and the exchange of services between patron and client.<sup>79</sup>

*Sim 2 [51]:8* And so, people may think that the elm tree bears no fruit; but they neither know nor understand that when drought comes, the

<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Osiek 1999, 29.

<sup>75</sup> Osiek 1999, 160.

<sup>76</sup> *PH 50 (sim 1).6.*

<sup>77</sup> Fundamental: Veyne 1976.

<sup>78</sup> Osiek 1999, 162.

<sup>79</sup> Thus Rankin 2004, 306.

elm nourishes the vine by holding water; and the vine, since it has an undiminished supply of water, produces fruit for two, both for itself and for the elm. Thus also those who are poor who pray to the Lord on behalf of the rich bring their own wealth to completion; and again those who are rich and supply the poor with what they need bring their souls to completion. (9) Both then share in an upright work. And so the one who does these things will not be abandoned by God, but will be recorded in the books of the living. (10) Happy are those who have possessions and understand that their riches have come from the Lord; for the one who understands this will also be able to perform a good ministry.

The economic remains important even for the specifically religious fields of attaining one's full religious role. The counsels given by the ephiphanic figures do not support a competition in purely religious activities. Too much prayer is (like too much food, one could add) not healthy. It weakens the body, as stated in the third vision.<sup>80</sup> Here, Hermas is thinking of a combination of fasting and praying. In a later text, the Shepherd is more explicitly critical about fasting, recommending a moral life instead.<sup>81</sup> The following simile demands the reckoning of the money saved by fasting (that is, living on bread and water for one day) and the donation of the equivalent to the poor.<sup>82</sup> The temporal limitation is explicit: it is not on the field of asceticism that Hermas proposes a competition for religious excellence. The latter is, however, recommended. Even if living according to God's commandments qualifies for 'inscription' among the 'number of the keepers of the commandments',<sup>83</sup> more could be done. To do more increases *doxa*, honour, and honour by God. The excess to be performed is called *leiturgiai*.<sup>84</sup> Of course, all of this would never reach the level of those who 'suffer on behalf of the name' (never called 'martyrium' nor 'Christ') torture or wild beasts, but this type of victory (they are accorded a wreath and palms<sup>85</sup>) is part of an encompassing classification only. It is not part of the everyday life for which one has to think about rules and moral behaviour.

<sup>80</sup> PH 18 (*vis* 3.10).7. For Hermas' interest in embodiment, i.e. taste and smells, see Fredrikson 2003.

<sup>81</sup> PH 54 (*sim* 5.1).3–5. The formulations of this criticism are very restrictive, see Osiek 1999, 169.

<sup>82</sup> PH 56 (*sim* 5.3).7.

<sup>83</sup> See Leutzsch 1989, 94–5 on the forms of the heavenly use of writing.

<sup>84</sup> PH 56 (*sim* 5.3).2–3. This is quite in contrast to general use, Osiek 1999, 174.

<sup>85</sup> PH 68 (*sim* 8.2).1. For the notion of the name, see in particular Gieschen 2003.

There is another area of religious individuation, which, however, is not explicitly conceptualized in terms of degrees, quantities, and excellence. This is religious knowledge—one of the virtues.<sup>86</sup> Distinction is brought into play performatively. Hermas himself is addressed or even ironically criticized for his appetite for knowledge regarding the visions or textual revelations he is granted. This is a feature that links the early visions and the late parables.<sup>87</sup> The problem of 'foreign'—not even bad or wrong—teachings within the group<sup>88</sup> is referred to only once.<sup>89</sup> Finally, it is knowledge (*gnosis*) or, rather, the lack of it, that offers the only clear definition of the 'peoples'. They do not know their creator.<sup>90</sup> In this respect, the dubitant is particularly close, as he reflects 'whether God is or is not'.<sup>91</sup> Relevant distinction is related to God: it is religious distinction.

#### LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALITY

There are limits to religious individuality that go beyond its general social functionality, of the rich sustaining the poor, of the glad and firm strengthening the sad and doubting. In the 'Shepherd of Hermas' individualization and socialization, individuality and sociality are not contradictions, but are inseparably intertwined. Two types of limitation by social roles are of special importance: the role of the head of the family, and functions within the religious community.

According to the autobiographical<sup>92</sup> sketch at the very beginning, the first-person narrator of the text was raised as a slave, not necessarily as a homebred one (*verna*),<sup>93</sup> freed and able to found a business (first as a merchant, than a producer of salt) and a family.<sup>94</sup> Despite

<sup>86</sup> PH 16 (*vis* 3.8), 5 and 7.

<sup>87</sup> e.g. PH 11 (*vis* 3.3).1; 28 (*mand* 3).4; 57 (*sim* 5.4).1 – 58 (*sim* 5.5).1.

<sup>88</sup> Stressed by Osiek 1999, 207.

<sup>89</sup> PH 72 (*sim* 8.6).5.

<sup>90</sup> PH 53 (*sim* 4).4.

<sup>91</sup> PH 12 (*vis* 3.4).3.

<sup>92</sup> For arguments for fictionality cf. Joly 1958, 17–21, but see Leutzsch 1989, 29–46, for the lack of any linguistic signals for fiction.

<sup>93</sup> The latter might be indicated by the term *threpsas* for the first owner, see Lampe 1989, 182; Leutzsch 1989, 139, but a foundling would be an even more fitting solution: Osiek 1999, 42.

<sup>94</sup>

all individual shortcomings, his vicissitudes in terms of business as visions are not related to his own behaviour only. Several times he is admonished to care morally and religiously for his wife, children, and family. This is frequently put into the formula of 'you, your children, and your house', the last obviously including any further servile members of his household.<sup>95</sup> This does not only refer to a common moral standard or style of life. There are references to specific instances of misbehaviour of his wife or his children.<sup>96</sup> In one instance of Hermas' suffering, he is explicitly freed from any personal fault, but made the object of punishment for the transgressions of his children:<sup>97</sup>

*Sim* 7 [66]:2 'Listen,' he said, 'your sins are many, but not enough for you to be handed over to this angel. But your household has committed great sins and lawless acts, and the glorious angel is embittered by their deeds. This is why he commanded you to afflict for a time, to lead them to repent and cleanse themselves from all worldly desires. When they repent and are cleansed, then the punishing angel will leave.'

(3) I said to him, 'Lord, even if they are acting in ways that embitter the glorious angel—what have I done?' 'It cannot be otherwise,' he said, 'They cannot be afflicted unless you are as well, since you are the head of the household. For if you are afflicted, of necessity they are too; but if you are flourishing, they can experience no affliction.'

The role assumed by Hermas is the role delineated by the Roman social and legal concept of the *paterfamilias* and his noxial liability for any damage caused by his household, including its slaves and beasts.<sup>98</sup> Again, Hermas shows himself to be a member of Roman society and presupposes his fellows to share this framework which limits individual liberty.

The second concerns formal roles within the *ekklêsia*. Such a role obliges its bearer to carefully fulfil its duties. This, again, is a concern in the earlier, as in later, parts of the text. This reflection is applied to *episcopoi* (I avoid the translation as bishop, as there is no clear difference from the occasionally mentioned presbyters<sup>99</sup>), teachers,

<sup>95</sup> *PH* 1 (*vis* 1.1).9; 27 (*mand* 2).7; 56 (*sim* 5.3).9 etc.

<sup>96</sup> *PH* 6 (*vis* 2.2).2–4; the reference seems to relate to a specific instance: Osiek 1999, 54 rather than to be generic.

<sup>97</sup> *PH* 66 (*sim* 7).2–3.

<sup>98</sup> Thus Leutzsch 1989, 57–9; Rankin 2004, 312–14 (without knowledge of Leutzsch).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Maier 1991, 63, suggesting the *episcopoi* to be a special type of *presbyteroi*; cf. Simonetti 2006, 6, who shows that it is the latter rather than the former who are

and deacons.<sup>100</sup> One of the problems singled out is internal strife, later explained<sup>101</sup> as fighting for pre-eminence and ranks of dignity.<sup>102</sup> In the very last instance the even more fundamental misuse of the office of deacon for personal enrichment is addressed.<sup>103</sup> Several times a *figura etymologica* stresses the connection between office and fulfilling the office.

Hermas himself never attains a formal role. It is his character as a visionary that gives him—always feeble—legitimation to fulfil his office vis-à-vis his co-religious.<sup>104</sup>

### THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND PERFORMATIVE ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALITY

Within the apocalyptic tradition of Hellenistic Judaism, John is the first to produce a non-pseudonymous apocalyptic text.<sup>105</sup> But whereas John's personality disappears behind his visions, Hermas' autobiography frames and permeates the whole text. And it is not any function or social position that is invoked to induce authority. The opening of the text is personal, even intimate.

1:1 The one who raised me sold me to a certain woman named Rhoda, in Rome. After many years, I regained her acquaintance and began to love her as a sister.

(2) When some time had passed, I saw her bathing in the Tiber river; and I gave her my hand to help her out of the river. When I observed her beauty I began reasoning in my heart, 'I would be fortunate to have a wife of such beauty and character.' This is all I had in mind, nothing else.

(3) When some time had passed, I was travelling to the countryside glorifying the creation of God and thinking how great, remarkable, and

explicitly credited with the task of directing the community. Osiek 1999, 23 thinks of synonyms.

<sup>100</sup> PH 13 (*vis* 3.3).1.

<sup>101</sup> Brox 1991, 151 does not see this problem being referred to already in the earliest text.

<sup>102</sup> PH 17 (*vis* 3.9).7–10; expanded in 43 (*mand* 11).12 (on prophets) and 73 (*sim* 8.7).4: *proteia* and *doxê*.

<sup>103</sup> PH 103 (*vis* 9.26).2.

<sup>104</sup> See the detailed analysis in Rüpke 2002.

<sup>105</sup> On the general trait see Russell 1982, 311–26.

powerful they are. On the way I fell asleep and a spirit took me and carried me through a certain deserted place that was impassable, for the place was steep and split up by the courses of water. When I crossed the river I came to level ground and bowed my knees; and began praying to the Lord and confessing my sins.

(4) While I prayed the sky opened up and I saw the woman I had desired, addressing me from heaven: 'Herma, greetings!' I looked at her and said, 'Lady, what are you doing here?' (5) She replied to me, 'I have been taken up to accuse you of your sins before the Lord.' (6) I said to her, 'So now are you accusing me?' 'No,' she said, 'but listen to what I have to say to you. The God who dwells in heavens and who, for the sake of his holy church, created, increased and multiplied that which exists out of that which does not exist, is angry at you for sinning against me.'

(7) I answered her, 'Have I sinned against you? In what way? When did I speak an inappropriate word to you? Have I not always thought of you as a goddess? Have I not always respected you as a sister? Why do you make such evil and foul accusations against me, O woman?'

(8) But she laughed and said to me, 'The desire for evil did rise up in your heart. Or do you not think it is evil for an evil desire to arise in the heart of an upright man? Indeed,' she said, 'it is a great sin. For the upright man intends to do what is right. And so, when he intends to do what is right his reputation is firmly established in heaven and he finds that the Lord looks favourably on everything he does. But those who intend in their hearts to do evil bring death and captivity to themselves—especially those who are invested in this age, who rejoice in their wealth and do not cling to the good things yet to come.'

To view Rhode, his former owner and a co-religious, who freed him, naked in the Tiber<sup>106</sup> is not only a displaced literary *topos* from novels without much consequence for the further text.<sup>107</sup> Instead, it offers the possibility of starting the whole series of admonitions from an extreme example, sinful thoughts or thought sins.<sup>108</sup> It is this very personal dimension, only open to the divine world (comprising much

<sup>106</sup> This is the most probable conclusion from the situation; see in general Fagan 1999, 24–9, in particular 25, n. 33; cf. for the associations of bathing: Dunbabin 1989, 6–46; for Christian perspectives on mixed bathing: Zellinger 1928, 34–46.

<sup>107</sup> Thus Brox 1991, 76–7.

<sup>108</sup> See *PH* 1 (*vis* 1.1).8; cf. 2 (*vis* 1.2).1. It is noteworthy that the economic dimension of the marriage Herma is reflecting upon, indicated by 'of this kind', i.e. social standing, is not thematised by the appearance.

more than God alone), that produces the characteristic ring of the whole text.

The opening introduces a second idea, to be elaborated in the book of visions as in the address by the Shepherd. The consciousness about one's religiously moral status is rather opaque or even non-existent. It is from outside that insight is brought, from revelatory figures who—in accordance with the religious capacity of the person—shift in character. A fellow human is replaced by someone taken from local knowledge, the Cumeaen Sibylla, to be revealed as the Ekklesia, to be replaced and supplanted in the later visions by the—very personal<sup>109</sup> and personally responsible<sup>110</sup>—Shepherd, who at the same time is an angel, a figure bearable only to the strong.<sup>111</sup> Thus, this is a biographical process that takes weeks, months, and years, even within the framework of the narrative.

These figures are, however, more than external messengers that might be helped by written revelations.<sup>112</sup> They are conflicting<sup>113</sup> internal factors, parts of the personality. Following traditions present particularly in the Septuagint<sup>114</sup> and New Testament writings, the exact place is located in the heart. This is most explicitly formulated in mandate 6:

*Mand 6,2 [36]:1* 'Hear now', he said, 'about faith. A person has two angels, one of righteousness and the other of wickedness.'

(2) 'And how, then, Lord,' say I, 'will I know the inner workings of these, since both angels dwell with me?'

(3) 'Listen,' he said, 'and you will understand these things. The angel of righteousness is sensitive, modest, meek and mild. And so, when he rises up in your heart, he immediately speaks with you about righteousness, purity, reverence, contentment, every upright deed, and every glorious virtue. When all these things rise up in your heart, realize that the angel of righteousness is with you. These are the works of the angel of righteousness. Trust this one, therefore, and his works. (4) See now also the works of the angel of wickedness. First of all, he is irascible,

<sup>109</sup> *PH 25 (vis 5).3.*

<sup>110</sup> *PH 108 (sim 9.31).6.*

<sup>111</sup> For the angelology and the angelological Christology of *PH* see Osiek 1999, 34–6; Bucur 2007; Bucur 2009, 113–38.

<sup>112</sup> See *PH 25 (vis 5).5.* Literacy enables permanent usage. For the importance of writing to establish Hermas' authority see Osiek 1999, 14.

<sup>113</sup> For the implied dualism see Osiek 1999, 31–2, with further literature in n. 241; Fredrikson 2001 (going back to a Septuagint tradition of 1 Sam. 16).

<sup>114</sup> For contemporary Greek bible translation see Rajak 2009.

bitter, and senseless, and his works are wicked, bringing ruin on the slaves of God. And so, when this one rises up in your heart, recognize him from his works.'

(5) 'I do not understand, Lord,' I said, 'how to perceive him.' 'Listen,' he replied. 'When any irascibility or bitterness should fall on you, realize that he is in you. Then there is desire for many activities and numerous extravagant foods and drinking bouts and many wild parties and various completely unnecessary luxuries, and desires for women and greed and a certain great haughtiness and arrogance, and everything that is closely connected to these things. And so, when these things rise up in your heart, realize that the angel of wickedness is in you. (6) So then, since you know his work, draw away from him and do not trust him at all, because his works are wicked and harmful to the slaves of God. This, then, is what you need to know about the inner workings of both angels. Understand these things, and trust the angel of righteousness. (7) But withdraw from the angel of wickedness, because his teaching is wicked in everything he does. For if a man is completely faithful, but the thought from the angel should rise up in his heart, that man or woman must commit a sin. (8) But again, if there is a most wicked man or woman, but the works of the angel of righteousness should rise up in his heart, that one must necessarily do something good.'

The last sentence makes the *modus operandi* very clear—or rather, complicates it further. There is interplay between personality and the external, spiritual<sup>115</sup> influence that leads to unexpected results. This has important consequences, if the perspective is changed. It is very difficult to judge a person from outside. This conforms to the statement of the later parable. In this world it is impossible to differentiate the good and the wicked in an absolute sense. Thus, Hermas' narrative is essential for his purpose. The complicated story of a person can be narrated diachronically, as a history. Only for the divine a synchronic analysis is possible. And even here it is not possible to apply a dichotomy, but only complex typologies and measure rods as fine as the twigs of the willow.

To the temporal element a spatial one is added. The placing of the visions is important, not only as a way to communicate changes in occupational preferences. There is an opposition between town and countryside. It is the latter that is the primary locus of revelations.

<sup>115</sup> Hermas is following here specific Jewish traditions about an angelic spirit: Bucur 2009, 116–19.

Only late in the sequence of visions, Hermas' bedchamber becomes the place of a revelatory event, first a dream, then a vision.<sup>116</sup> However, for the most important vision, that of *simile* 9, a place in the countryside—Arcadia—has again to be found.<sup>117</sup> This is very much reminiscent of the idyllic conception of religious experience formulated by another inhabitant of the megapolis of Rome, Seneca in letter 41.<sup>118</sup> The bedchamber as well as the rurality ensure a type of practical individuality of being on one's own—up to the point of encountering a mythical beast as at the beginning and end of visio 4.<sup>119</sup> It is not a large distance to Rome, which is important. The places—near traffic routes (Via Campana) or on Hermas' fields of salt production or in an Arcadia—suggest a return to his home for the night.<sup>120</sup> The common denominator is the contrast to the intensive interaction within the city, the place of the different religious publics of presbyters, widows, and meetings, too. The city is a complex place, and complex to judge.

## CONCLUSION

Like the real city, the real community is difficult to judge. The 'Shepherd of Hermas' has to draw on the resources of an incipiently reflexive individuality in order to come to grips with the problem of the indifferenciability of so many real-life people. There would have been alternatives which he did not choose.<sup>121</sup> He neither drew on the wealth of traditional texts (as for example his—probably—slightly older urban fellow 'Clemens Romanus', the author of 1 Clemens) nor did he opt for praise of martyrdom (as—perhaps—his contemporary Ignatius does) in order to create clear boundaries. Instead, he opts for an ideal of moral individuality. Even if agency is described as a competition between different interior powers,<sup>122</sup> it is the action of the social person and his or her emotional status that is the decisive indicator for the state of the competition and the willingness or

<sup>116</sup> PH 18 (*vis* 3.10).7 and 25 (*vis* 5).1.

<sup>117</sup> PH 78 (*sim* 9.1).4.

<sup>118</sup> On which see Rüpke 2011a, 120–3.

<sup>119</sup> PH 22–4.

<sup>120</sup> PH 88 (*sim* 9.11).2. Not thematized by Osiek 1999, 228.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. the fine analysis of the strategy to define the community addressed to differentiate itself by a different economic ethos in Dunning 2009, 88–90.

<sup>122</sup> See Marksches 1997 for the notion of the 'interior man'.

reluctance to exchange the real for the imagined community of the *ecclesia*.

This reluctancy is a structural problem that—for the ‘Shepherd’, for the Jewish Roman believer in God’s new ‘name’—could be solved only by individualizing, by religiously individualizing. A strategy based on observation of some individuality, but a strategy aiming at a much sharper religious individualization. Obviously it was a strategy that found many contemporary and later readers.

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