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# Individualization and Individuation as Concepts for Historical Research

Jörg Rüpke

## A NEW APPROACH TO ANCIENT RELIGION

Why bother with individuation?<sup>1</sup> Ancient Mediterranean religion is traditionally viewed through the lens of public religion, that is, it is seen as consisting of the religions of political units (usually city-states) that are part and parcel of civic identity. Such analyses of ancient polytheistic religions, whether they refer to 'embedded', 'civic' or 'polis' religion,<sup>2</sup> work on the assumption that all members of ancient societies were in principle equally religious. From this point of view, religion (and this also applies to Judaism) is a taken-for-granted part of every biography: *rites de passage* structure the life of each individual, while ritual acts within the domestic cult, family cult, or burial, and death rites facilitate change of status within the primary social units. This basic assumption of a *homo religiosus* is bound up with the political interpretation of ancient religion: since religion is an unquestioned given, religion is thought to be particularly well-suited to cultivate 'collective identities' and to act as instrument for the justification of power. Paradigmatic of this approach is the claim,

<sup>1</sup> Working on this paper has been much facilitated by a reduction in teaching assignments enabled by a grant of the German Science Foundation (DFG) related to the work of the Research group 'Religious individualisation in historical perspective' (KFG 1013).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g. de Polignac 1995a, 1995b; critically Bendlin 2000; again Dondin-Payre, Raepsaet-Charlier 2006 with the critique of Haussler 2008 and Ando 2009.

now historically disproved,<sup>3</sup> that only citizens were entitled to take part in the rituals of the *polis*. Here the religious actions of individuals take place solely in those niches and predefined spaces permitted by the civic religion, which is in turn created and financed by the dominant social groups.<sup>4</sup>

The public religion perspective forms the vast majority of accounts of ancient Mediterranean religion during the last decades. This holds true for handbooks and monographs on Greek religion,<sup>5</sup> which show a remarkable tendency to concentrate on single cities instead of the transregional world of shared mythologies, common festivals (Olympia, Corinth), and diffused philosophical reflection. The same holds true for Italic religion as well as for the description of Roman religion in general<sup>6</sup> and, more recently, in that of Ostia or Pompeii in particular.<sup>7</sup> The role of women is analysed against this backdrop, too.<sup>8</sup> The description of less urbanized polities and whole provinces follows the same pattern, even if, owing to the overwhelming presence of epigraphical evidence, more space is given to the cultic practices of different groups, professional as well as ethnic.<sup>9</sup>

Civic religion is also understood as supplemented by or—in the end—even in competition with ‘cults’. Being elective in nature, these cults offered options for more intensive social interaction and in particular sociological perspectives, starting with Orphism in classical Greece.<sup>10</sup> Interest is focused on the so-called ‘oriental’ cults or religions such as those of Isis, Mithras, or the Syrian deities. Frequently, a history of religion, in particular for late antiquity, is told as the struggle between different cults or religions—Jupiter or Isis, Mithras or Christ.<sup>11</sup> This is not only problematical as far as the status of these units of the narrative is concerned. Conceptualizing all instances of the veneration of Isis as a coherent religion or ‘cult’

<sup>3</sup> Krauter 2004, 142 for Rome.

<sup>4</sup> See Rüpke 2007b, 21–9 for the role of the elite.

<sup>5</sup> Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992; Mikalson 1998; very differentiated: Parker 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Beard, North, and Price 1998 for the republic; Scheid 1998; Warrior 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Van Andringa 2009, adding substantial considerations on domestic cult.

<sup>8</sup> Schultz 2006; Bremen 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Mitchell 1993; Derks 1998; cf. the reflections on the problem in Woolf 1997; Woolf 1998; Spickermann 1997, 2003, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Burkert 2011, 115–16. For Rome see North 1994.

<sup>11</sup> For critique see now Rüpke 2011.

is as problematical as postulating the coherence of an actor 'Christianity'.<sup>12</sup>

Accepting the framework of civic religion, much of twentieth century scholarship on ancient religion has been directed towards locating, identifying, and classifying the evidence into 'cults' or—if the documents seemed hostile to plurality or explicitly favoured monolatry—'religions'.<sup>13</sup> The topic of the diffusion of such 'cults' dominates research on the religion of the provinces of the Roman empire as well as the influx of cults to the large urban centres. Cult-centred *corpora* of evidence laid the groundwork for enterprises, supplemented by prosopographical<sup>14</sup> or historical studies<sup>15</sup> or studies addressing the iconographic or narrative construction of divine figures.<sup>16</sup> Topically, research has focused on key factors determining membership in these supposedly small, soteriologically oriented groups ('sects', to use the terminology of the sociology of religion), which are regarded as forerunners and ultimately competitors of Christianity.<sup>17</sup> The starting point for such an approach is the assumption that public cults failed to address the individual and its existence within social orders, which were in some cases gripped by change to the point of crisis. Public cults would not have offered any emotionally and intellectually satisfying perspective to a consciousness of individuality that had started to take shape. This analysis could apply both to Hellenistic cities and the metropolises of the imperial era.<sup>18</sup> Recently, however, the category has encountered severe criticism, since it does not provide a stable criterion either as regards content (mysteries) or geography.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, among such cults, so it was claimed, only religious options like Christianity offered a fundamental alternative to polis religion. On this understanding, Christianity (even more than Judaism) marked a rupture with the truly ancient, the polis religions, as a result of its emphasis on individual promises of salvation and

<sup>12</sup> See the contributions in Cancik and Rüpke 2009.

<sup>13</sup> e.g. dozens of volumes in the *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain*; cf. now, with elaborate methodology, Bricault 2005; Bricault 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Mora 1981, 1990a, 1990b.

<sup>15</sup> Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Versnel 1990; Versnel 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Starting with Cumont 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Schwertheim 1974; Turcan 1996; Casadio and Johnston 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Bonnet 2008; Bonnet and Huet 2008; Bonnet and Rüpke 2009; Bonnet, Rüpke, and Scarpi 2006.

faith rather than ritual practices. As with oriental cults, so with Christianity, a principal revision has been its recent reinterpretation as 'ancient religion'.<sup>20</sup> The same holds true of Judaism as well as Manichaeism. The manifold links and large overlaps of these 'isms' with the background and ongoing development of ancient (and late antique) religion is only insufficiently reflected.

'Cults' and 'polis religion', however, leave a major gap. Religious phenomena of the ancient Mediterranean societies have been analysed far beyond what has been described so far. Tens of thousands of votives in sanctuaries have been collected, documented, and studied. They point to a 'votive religion' that copes well with individual crises.<sup>21</sup> 'Magic', ranging from amulets and curse tablets to elaborate rituals and discursive methods manipulated by ancient specialists,<sup>22</sup> has been analysed as a cultural resource that might even be opposed to religion. Divination makes up another field of 'instrumental religion', provided not only by and for state officials (and hence described as part of public religion), but also by a broad range of male and female practitioners.<sup>23</sup> Finally, funerary rites and the cult of the dead are a further area that abounds with evidence, yet occupies a marginal position (if any) in the polis religion paradigm. To sum up, vast areas of evidence and excellent research done on these phenomena have not managed to open up a new, broader framework within the study of ancient religion. As a consequence, with a few exceptions, the field has assumed a marginal position in global religious studies and comparative religion—that is, for today's understanding of contemporary and historical religion—and has not adequately contributed to our understanding of ancient Mediterranean cultures in general.

In order to supplement the cults-and-polis religion perspective, it is not sufficient to merely point to these fields, but to firmly establish a perspective that has been used as an argument for explaining religious change in the imperial period but was never systematically explored, that is, the individual, who has been much underrated as a religious agent. It is a fact that non-Christian antiquity also knew individual

<sup>20</sup> See Markus 1990 and J. Z. Smith's stress on the 'locative' character of most strands of early Christianity (1990) and Rüpke 2009.

<sup>21</sup> van Straten 1981; Bouma 1996; Parker et al. 2004; Bodel and Kajava 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Faraone 1999; Faraone and Obbink 1991; Graf 1996; Gordon 1987; Bohak 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Belayche et al. 2005.

religious practices. Ancient conceptualizations gave such *sacra privata* precedence even over the state, with respect to military conscription for example.<sup>24</sup> Cicero's 'religious legislation' explicitly excluded the *sacra privata* from any kind of interference. In contrast to this ancient perception the realm of individual religious practice emerges as a marginal phenomenon in scholarship. Attention is drawn to rituals of birth and mourning and the notions of the soul and the hereafter.<sup>25</sup> In the case of domestic cult, an antiquarian perspective predominates, which at best includes economic history<sup>26</sup> and seeks no further historical contextualization.<sup>27</sup> 'Domestic cult' has not been properly integrated into the complex topography of individual religious action that involves various sites—house, garden, family tombs, neighbourhoods, and selected shrines and healing sanctuaries as much as centralized public festivals—and diverse social contexts.

The present volume intends to take up these lines of research and bring them together by focusing on the individual and individuality in religion. The use of this term has been hindered by an assumption, shared by many Western intellectuals, that individuality is the result of a long process called 'individualization' which in itself is a process peculiar to Modernity. What does individualization mean?<sup>28</sup> First and foremost it includes the notion of de-traditionalization. Individual action is less and less determined by traditional norms handed down by family and the larger social context. Options open up, choices are made. On the part of the individual, this development is reflected in changes in 'individuation', the parallel process of a gradual full integration into society and the development of self-reflection and of a notion of individual identity. Socialization, the biographical process of being integrated into ever larger social contexts (not necessarily in any formal manner) by the individual's appropriation of social roles and traditions—and 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 the contrary, it is safe to say for the period under consideration that being different was not a value-informing individuation. Dignity and

<sup>24</sup> Gell. 16.4.3–5.

<sup>25</sup> Bremmer 1983; Vernant 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Bakker 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Bassani 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. for classical sociological approaches Kippele 1998.

honour, notions of competition, being better than others in certain respects, or even being perfect, were such values. Religious practices might be among fields of competition, in euergetic activities, in displays of a cultured taste, in intensive relationships with a deity.

Such changes entail institutional developments. Options are declared legitimate, voluntary associations help to realize certain options, writing helps to develop notions of individuality, inscriptions might help to express it. The rights of the individual are legally protected against society's demands. This process culminates in the formulation of individual human rights. Finally, individuality takes on a normative character: you have to be an individual. Should anything less be called individualization? The usual self-understanding of Western modernity tends to answer in a negative manner. But rather than accepting this simple answer, the authors of this volume take up the notions of individuation and individualization in a heuristic and descriptive manner,<sup>29</sup> in order to explore the individual factor in the history of religion in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the dynamics of religious change (including revitalization and invented traditions<sup>30</sup>), the spaces of experience, the limits of individual agency, and the mechanisms and forms of religious individuation.

Within the societies of the ancient Mediterranean, individuation is full of variables. Already primary socialization in the elementary social group of the family is subject to many complications.<sup>31</sup> Basically, one has to learn the biographically changing roles of, for example, son or older sister, wife or *pater familias*. But families were not stable, mortality in birth and childbed was high, and military conflict endemic in the Mediterranean basin, resulting in the death or slavery of the individual.<sup>32</sup> Processes of urbanization increased social and local mobility, migration was frequent. Secondary socialization in a system of general education, by specialized agents and institutions was probably restricted to a minority of affluent people, and nearly exclusively to male members of such groups. Here, a literacy that went beyond the ability to write one's name or to read a short

<sup>29</sup> The underlying concept of the individual and individuality, too, is inter-culturally and intra-culturally widely varying, but again, neither coextensive nor restricted to the 'Western' world; see Spiro 1993.

<sup>30</sup> Hobsbawm 1983.

<sup>31</sup> There are few studies on childhood in antiquity with a view on religion: Leeuw 1939; Brelch 1969; Wiedemann 1989; Eyben 1993; Martin and Nitschke 1986.

<sup>32</sup> See now Eckstein 2008 for the latter; ancient demographics: Scheidel 2001.

inscription<sup>33</sup> was taught. For members of local elites who were not Greek or Latin by origin, bilingualism might have been widely present. In sum, a large potential for de-traditionalization was given.

### ANCIENT CONCEPTS: INDIVIDUA, SELF, AND PERSONHOOD

In throwing one's net into a pool of so many phenomena, it is reasonable to ask whether concepts in ancient thinking and texts offer guidance. It was M. Tullius Cicero, in his accounts and discussions of Greek philosophical positions, who coined the term *individua* as a translation of the Greek *átoma*.<sup>34</sup> In his paraphrase of the Platonic *Timaios*, Cicero employed the term to distinguish between the indivisible and divisible matter used by the creator god to form the human soul (*animus*).<sup>35</sup> Seneca could use the term for indivisible material connections as well as indivisible goods like peace and liberty.<sup>36</sup> By the end of the first century AD the term could be used for very strong bonds of friendship or love.<sup>37</sup> Within the philosophical discussion the ontological debate about the priority of the individuals as first substances (Aristotle) or a priority of the generalities (Plotinos) remained dominant, leading to an understanding of individuals as clearly and demonstrably separate beings, easily illustrated by human individuals, but never restricted to human and super-human rational beings.<sup>38</sup> As far as I can see, neither the problems of the growth of individuality by developments in time and space (individuation) nor the problem of the communication between separated individuals<sup>39</sup>—and hence the social dimension of individualism—became a matter of debate in ancient texts. Unlike the discussions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, difference did not form a central implication and hence problem of individuality in antiquity.

<sup>33</sup> See Harris 1989, with Bowman 1996, Woolf 1998; Hezser 2001; W. A. Johnson 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Kobusch 1976, 300; e.g. *Cic. fin.* 1.17; *ND* 1.71.

<sup>35</sup> *Cic. Tim.* 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Sen. dial.* 1.5.9; *epist.* 73.8.

<sup>37</sup> *Tac. ann.* 6.10; *Apul. Apol.* 53; *CIL* 8.22672.

<sup>38</sup> Kobusch 1993, 301–3.

<sup>39</sup> See Borsche 1994, 310–22 for the modern development of the term.

For that period a *Begriffsgeschichte* will not lead to substantial results. Being different was not a value that informed individuation, but dignity and honour were. They were attributed to individual persons, even if related to and determined within family and social backgrounds. They were acclaimed for legitimizing purposes, but easily contested and without guarantee of success during your lifetime.<sup>40</sup> *Memoria dignus*, worthy of memory, would prolong this beyond the space of one's own lifetime, but to achieve such a memory, a much higher degree of being remarkable, excellent, and different had to be attained. Difference existed within acceptable degrees and upon agreed fields of competition: euergetic engagement (that is, generosity), display of a cultured taste (referring to an always changing mix of both Greek and local standards), literary and art production. Not all fields were shared by a majority. Individual rationality, as developed in Greek techniques of argumentation, by philosophy and rhetoric, was of growing importance and a source of success during the late Roman republic, but it was always contested.<sup>41</sup>

Huge differences between modern and ancient terminological use can be stated for another term, namely 'person'. Important for ancient grammar as well as Christology, the term, even if primarily denoting a role (in theatre, court, administration), was neither used for an elaborate role theory nor discussions about the attribution of responsibility or holders of right. Without any special emphasis it is used for persons acting and subject to the law. Only in very late (Western) antiquity did Boethius coin his famous definition *persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia* ('person is the individual substance of a rational nature') that connected 'person' to the notion of 'individual'.<sup>42</sup> Hence, I suggest using that term instead of a casual 'individual' in order to denote human beings.

So far, I have concentrated on the relationship of individuals and society. What about the relationship of the individual to her or himself—to keep the gender factor in mind? Terminologically the object of this relationship is best phrased as 'self'. The notions of *autós* and *ipse* were present in ancient philosophical discourse, starting with Platonic dialogues. They have given rise to many historical studies. Should not such a term be preferred to a modern concept

<sup>40</sup> Rilinger 1991; Forbis 1996; Lendon 1997; Cancik 2002.

<sup>41</sup> Rüpke 2012; see Dumont 1986, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Boeth. *c. Eutyech.* 1–3; see Fuhrmann 1989.

like individuality? Michael Trapp has recently presented a detailed analysis of the Hellenistic and imperial thinking about self, person, and individual, some results of which should be briefly summarized<sup>43</sup> in order to answer this question.

At first sight, the evidence is quite differentiated. Contributions to a theory of the self stem from physical thinking about the soul which clearly is identified as the more important part, governing the body and connecting the human with the divine, in particular in the best (and hence leading) part of the soul.<sup>44</sup> The real self tends to be identified with the divine intellect, ultimately separated from the bodily and emotional parts.<sup>45</sup> The second line of reflection is even more central to the essentially ethical concern of all philosophical schools of the time, the question of how to live a good life. Self-analysis, basically driven by a sense of self-preservation, is necessitated by the Stoic concept of *oikeiôsis*. Everyone has to find out and adapt to their own physical and social nature, consciously striving to understand their state step by step from the basic physical facts to their position within the divinely ordered cosmos. The same self-analysis is necessitated by the 'duties' (*officia*) one has to fulfil for oneself and for society.<sup>46</sup> In all these instances, however, it is not individuality in the sense of individual differences that is sought after. The way of living and one's duties vary according to the classes of sex, age, and juridical and social status to which one belongs.<sup>47</sup> As part of the divine intellect—of course we have to except the Epicureans here—the highest aim and capacity of the human soul and (or) mind is participating in rational thinking and its impersonal standards.<sup>48</sup> It is deficits and illnesses of the human body and mind that constitute individual variants. In long therapeutic practices they have to be carefully identified and cared for, whether in healing cults or philosophical activity, and—ultimately—removed.<sup>49</sup> It should be pointed out that a theory of roles (*personae*) is not brought to bear on these discussions.<sup>50</sup> In a parallel manner, the argument from the life and character of a person (*de vita*) is not much articulated in

<sup>43</sup> Trapp 2007, 98–133.

<sup>44</sup> See briefly Setaioli 2007, 350. For the problems of Jewish thinkers to adapt the concept and Philo's creative solutions see Dillon 2009 and van Kooten 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Trapp 2007, 99–109.

<sup>46</sup> Trapp 2007, 109–14.

<sup>47</sup> Trapp 2007, 115 f.

<sup>48</sup> Trapp 2007, 109.

<sup>49</sup> Trapp 2007, 116–22.

<sup>50</sup> Trapp 2007, 120.

the rhetorical system (as part of the invention) and training for advocacy.<sup>51</sup>

These findings are important for the terminological clarification of the inquiry. Positively, they invite the usage of the term 'self' in matters ancient in a psychologically descriptive way as the empirical view of a person of itself,<sup>52</sup> typically including the notion of moral responsibility. Negatively, it must be stressed that the term 'self' cannot include the notion of individuation,<sup>53</sup> as developed so far, but can only be an aspect of it. For a history of individuation and individualization, the textual presence of the notion of the self is not sufficient. Whenever selves are constructed and treated in texts in a high frequency (as could be shown for the second century CE), this is, however, important data for such a history.

## TYPES OF INDIVIDUALITY

Against the backdrop of the complex notion of individualization used in sociological discourse,<sup>54</sup> it is necessary to develop sharper instruments for historical inquiries. Instead of asking which degree of individuality had been achieved in individuation it is more useful to inquire into the forms of individuality supported by concepts, practices, or institutions that are important for processes of individuation. I propose to differentiate five types of individuality that would ultimately shape the detailed description of individuation as well as of any long-term processes that might be addressed as individualization (or its opposite, de-individualization):

- practical individuality
- moral individuality
- competitive individuality
- representative individuality
- reflexive individuality.

<sup>51</sup> See *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.5.

<sup>52</sup> Thus Schönplüg's definition of the modern psychological usage of the term (1995, 305).

<sup>53</sup> As in Martin and Miller 2005.

<sup>54</sup> See above and Kippele 1998.

These types are not necessarily correlated. Practical individuality, the fact that people have to act on their own instead of simply following tradition, points to situations of dis-embeddedness, due to temporary rupture of social bonds (as in the case of migrants, travellers, survivors) or to a sharp division of labour. This would frequently not be reflected, but could be prepared for by written or learnt instructions, for instance for post-mortal travelling.

Moral individuality involves the ascription of responsibility to persons for their own behaviour, concepts of sin and punishment as well as law. Usually, for antiquity, the standards would be those of others and would include judgements about social obligations, often to the point of negating individuality. Specific duties rather than universal rights are stressed. Any juridical individuality in the sense of a declaration of human rights is far from being sought after. Thus, we have to look for details. An obligation of participation in rituals might already be indicative of such a moral individuality that transcends mere bans.

Competitive individuality refers to the widespread aristocratic struggle for distinctiveness, which typically established aims towards which other social groups would orient themselves. Individual differences would be sharply noticed by contemporary observers, but evaluated against a discursively constructed common ethos that would stress the commonwealth. The concrete norms would be very much shaped and modified by actual competitive behaviour. Conflict is inherent.

Representative individuality is clearly related to the two preceding types. Individuals may strive to become exemplary and those who succeed would be cited as examples. The aim is not individual difference, but perfection in fulfilling a social or religious role, whether as Roman general, Christian martyr, or male Jew, yet fulfilment is a personal feat.

Finally, reflexive individuality would demand the formation of an individualistic discourse—an individualist ideology, so to speak. Again, such reflections on the self or the individual human nature, for example in the Stoic figure of *oikeiosis*, would be frequently informed by normative concepts of social roles, thus pointing to the type of representative individuality.

All these types vary according to gender and to a person's position in society. They will be found in the elite or on the margins in different forms and degrees. They interact. Rules on representative individuality,

for example, could easily outlaw a more general understanding of what behaviour is acceptable and preferable in competitive individuality. Finally, the phenomena that give rise to processes of institutionalization are transitory. Here, religion is of special interest. The largest part of ancient evidence on religious action—that is, dedicatory inscriptions and votives—mostly comes from religious actions of single persons. At certain times certain temples were open for individual cultic and other use, and some groups recognized individual membership, thus enabling and stabilizing choices. How do these practices and institutions relate to individuation?

### A HEURISTIC OF RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUATION

In order to deal with the complexity of our problem, I propose to start from the process of individuation and the opportunities offered by religions for increasing individual difference and the space of action not defined by traditions, always keeping in mind that the individual acquisition of religion and the reproduction and reproductive changes of religion are mutually interdependent. This has to be set in the context of a society with a view to the changes within and beyond this society. The model to describe and analyse the processes I am proposing here is rather simple in its implicit equation of tradition and the *status quo* of that society. This is admittedly a defective but perhaps acceptable account of the basic stability of ancient societies.

My model is presented in graphic form (*Figure 1*). I start at the centre, the individual member of an ancient society of the Hellenistic or Roman period. Above all I thought about the late Roman republic and the empire, but tried to keep the model generalizable. The person's individuation is informed by different factors, gender above all, then economic and social factors, like legal status (freeborn or slave, freedman origin), wealth, space (town or countryside—most of our textual evidence comes from urban zones) and mobility, social status (like being a member of the local elite), and finally cultural factors like the name system, education or current practices of self-representation. Of course, the (probably very variable) exposure to the phenomena of all the following areas is of importance for any specific religious individuation.

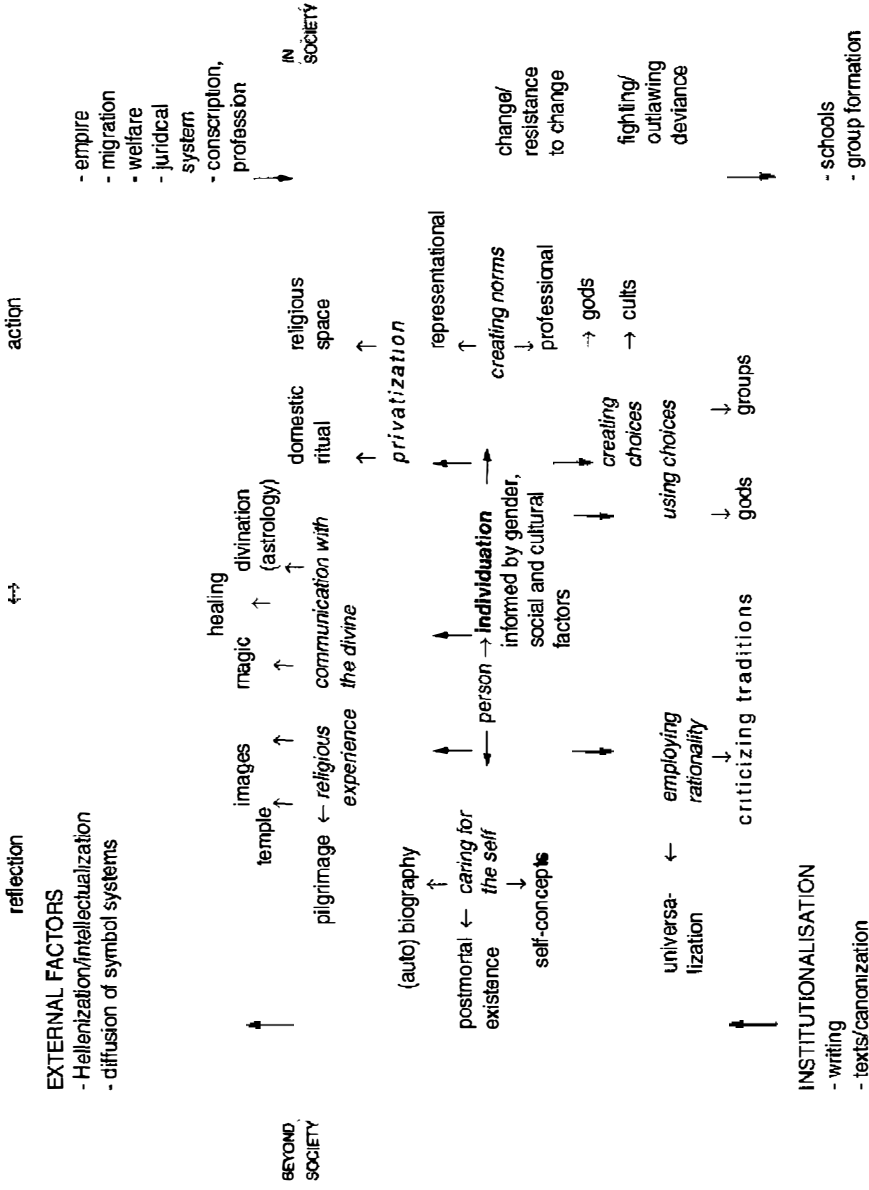


Diagram 1. Facets of religious individuation and potentials of individualization in ancient Mediterranean societies

I have tried to divide the spectrum of religion-related activities into eight segments, sometimes easier, sometimes more difficult to separate. Roughly, the spectrum refers to social action on the right side and to reflection on the left side. This corresponds to more intense interaction in society and the problem of conflicts and even legal persecution by the society on the one hand, and a potentially universal space of communication on the other. Evidently, Greek, and to a lesser degree Latin, texts could be read throughout the Mediterranean basin by the literate echelons of Hellenistic and even more imperial society. It was a particular attraction of the type of rationality offered by Greek philosophy and rhetoric that it claimed universal validity beyond traditional hierarchies and social status.<sup>55</sup> 'Beyond society', however, transcends the human realm as is indicated by direct communication with the divine outside of public rituals and the services of public priests.

## I Using choices

The rise of religious options in the form of gods, temples, and groups<sup>56</sup> has been described as one of the major characteristics of the Hellenistic and imperial period, even to the extent of comparison with modern religious pluralism.<sup>57</sup> This was primarily due to the mobility of merchants, administrators, soldiers, and slaves<sup>58</sup>—and of literature.<sup>59</sup> For an urban centre like Rome the significant permanent immigration might imply the continuation of older traditions rather than the invention of new choices.<sup>60</sup> Ramsay McMullen has pointed to the phenomenon of diaspora as an indicator of the traditional character of religious adherence. People stabilize their identity in a foreign social context by clinging to their old religions. At the same time, however, fast processes of acculturation are visible.

<sup>55</sup> See Rüpke, *Cultural change and rationality*, forthcoming.

<sup>56</sup> The term 'elective cults', although attractive, has been introduced by Beard, North, and Price 1998 as complementary to the traditional patterns of civic religion, an association that I try to avoid.

<sup>57</sup> An excellent summary: North 1994. For the notion of pluralism critically Rüpke 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Briefly Rüpke 2007a.

<sup>59</sup> Rüpke and Spickermann 2009; Spickermann 2009; Sterbenc-Erker 2009; Waldner 2009.

<sup>60</sup> For immigration to Rome even in late antiquity see Purcell 1999; Noy 2000; for the religion of immigrants to Hellenistic Athens: Mikalson 1998; to Rome: Noy 2000.

Immigrants find themselves attracted to the religious options of the new locality. Locals test the exotic offer of immigrated religions and both groups involved change their religious roles and practices within the second or third generations.<sup>61</sup>

A competence to select deities according to situational specifics is fundamental for the Mediterranean type of polytheism. How to address the proper deity is a frequent concern in questions posed to oracles. This does not entail lasting differences between people who venerated different deities in different situations. Only the proliferation of cults that generate religious groups popularized concepts of exclusivity. This ability of cults to create social bonds is a proliferating feature of imperial developments,<sup>62</sup> but it has important Greek antecedents, if we think of Orphic or Bacchic groups. These groups have been neglected in the research informed by the concept of polis religion.<sup>63</sup> This said, it must be stressed that the intense internal interaction of the communities thus created, the degree and range of exclusivity have been grossly overvalued. Here is much work to be done.

## II *Creating choices*

Within the framework of an additive polytheistic system that is open to extension<sup>64</sup> the introduction of new gods and options of veneration into local temples (by setting up votives to gods not previously venerated) or 'panthea' (by introducing new cults into a locality) was frequent. It was frequently subject to individual whims meriting further research for Greek sanctuaries as well as republican Roman temples.<sup>65</sup> Hence, there is no underlying logic to the growing number of gods present in a city. The most important set of religious symbols, the pantheon of gods, was a fortuitous result of different people's individual decisions. Here again future research should pay more

<sup>61</sup> See e.g. Steuernagel 2001, 2004; Rüpke 2006a; Ertel, Freyberger, and von Hesberg 2008.

<sup>62</sup> North 2003; Kippenberg 2005; Bendlin 2005.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. Bremmer 2002; Graf and Johnston 2007; Bernabé 2008.

<sup>64</sup> See Bendlin 1997.

<sup>65</sup> See, for Rome, briefly Rüpke 1990, 260–2; Orlin 1997. It might be interesting to compare the extreme productivity of Christological metaphors to this process (see Wallraff 2003).

attention to historical contingency than to the systematic or structuralist interpretation in particular implied in the notion of 'polis religion'.

### III Creating norms

Donating a new sanctuary was a complex matter, not restricted to the establishment of a new god. Selection of place, choice of architectural detail, regulation of ritual (often hardly visible for us): all of this involved many decisions that would relate to existing traditions, interpret and—as benchmarks in a competitive society—create new norms. Henner von Hesberg has demonstrated such visible individual selections and consequences for the accessibility and usability for republican temple architecture.<sup>66</sup>

Normative statements in this sense could be made in the form of tomb monuments, too. The tomb of Eurysaces, the Roman baker and contractor, offers an example. Being situated close to an aqueduct, which was later transformed into a city gate, the site is even more exceptional today than in Augustan time. Striving for originality, the tomb is representative rather than exceptional in giving expression to a world view dominated by Eurysaces' own professional experiences and horizon. The machinery and the working of his enterprise are prominent; the urn of his wife might have taken the form of a bread basket.<sup>67</sup> In a number of such monuments and in a religious text like the 'Shepherd of Hermas' from the second century CE, which deals with problems of daily behaviour, economic activities, and familial responsibilities,<sup>68</sup> it is everyday life that is given ultimate value. On a societal level, that did not successfully question the dominance of a rather aristocratic system of values, but it indicates an individual re-evaluation of everyday life that reminds us of the importance given by Charles Taylor to the valuing of everyday life in modern, in particular North American, civilization.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> von Hesberg 2005. Cf. von Hesberg 2002 for the basilica.

<sup>67</sup> Petersen 2003.

<sup>68</sup> Thus Rüpke 1999 and ch. 13, below.

<sup>69</sup> Taylor 1994, 14. I am grateful to Mathias Huff for the qualification.

#### IV Privatization

Privatization of religion is one of the central diagnoses of modernity,<sup>70</sup> but there are striking findings for much earlier periods. For Hellenistic and Roman antiquity a view on domestic cult, which has seen in it a residual of traditional behaviour, has overlooked serious indicators of innovative de-traditionalization and privatized appropriation of traditions. Some domestic rituals seemed to be mimetic representations of public cult. For Christianity, Kim Bowes has shown the extent of such ritual practices in late antiquity and the conflicts with ecclesiastical institutions caused by them.<sup>71</sup> Here, late antiquity is a good case for the complexity of developments. Indicators of growing individuality are contemporaneous with growing centralization and standardization. This discrepancy was producing clashes as the Priscillianist controversy or the ban on a wide range of private ritual practices in the Codex Theodosianus<sup>72</sup> show.

The establishment of private ritual space is part of that conflict, too.<sup>73</sup> But we need not wait for late antiquity to observe this phenomenon. Spectacular sanctuaries could be part of the entrance area of an urban house or part of the large gardens of a suburban *villa* as has been shown for the Casa dei Vettii at Pompeii.<sup>74</sup> The same holds true for the idyllic landscape on the banks of the Tiber that included a circular sanctuary for Hercules, right in the centre of Rome.<sup>75</sup> But creation of private ritual space could be observed on a smaller scale even more frequently. The creation of a tomb established a sanctuary for the defunct's relatives—and had to be defended against the use by others.

#### V Communication with the divine

Personal communication with the gods was never restricted to public rituals or temples. Votives probably resulting from personal concerns are extant from the archaic period onwards.<sup>76</sup> Forms and intensity, however, are changing and might be related to a growing concern about one's family and oneself. The rise of the cult of Asclepios could

<sup>70</sup> Luckmann 1967.

<sup>71</sup> Bowes 2005, 198; Bowes 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Collected in *CTh* 9 and 16.

<sup>73</sup> Bowes 2005, 199.

<sup>74</sup> Kastenmeier 2001.

<sup>75</sup> von Hesberg 2005.

<sup>76</sup> e.g. Bouma 1996.

be such an indicator,<sup>77</sup> as healing and the social topography of healing imply statements about the relationship between a person and society: *ex-centric sanctuaries attract individuals who leave their social context to care for themselves.*<sup>78</sup> Aelius Aristides' *Hieroi Logoi* are one of the most important testimonies of religious individuality from antiquity.<sup>79</sup>

Two other relevant forms of communication with the divine must be mentioned. Divination is the first. The imperial reinvigoration and proliferation of oracles<sup>80</sup> is an interesting area of research for the individualization of institutions that address the needs of individuals rather than offering advice to polities. Astrology as a mass phenomenon of the personalization of temporal orders would offer further opportunities for knowing about oneself and legitimizing individual decisions.<sup>81</sup> Astrology refers an individual to a universal natural order surpassing his or usual social and political boundaries. For late antiquity, theurgy offered another way of efficacious personal contact.<sup>82</sup>

The vast array of practices called 'magic' is the second area. Again individual concerns about health are important. The privatization is more visible in magic related to legal procedures. Here, employing magic was an attempt to counter results of law suits that were to be expected on the basis of social status. In the highly risky area of relationships of and with prostitutes the lack of traditional regulations is replaced by magic.<sup>83</sup>

## VI Religious experience

Despite the centrality of experience in the thinking about religion since the end of the eighteenth century, 'experience' has not been brought to bear on ancient religion outside Judaism and Christianity despite some recent book titles.<sup>84</sup> The very subjectivity of 'experience'

<sup>77</sup> Graf 1997, 96; more general: Gordon 1995.

<sup>78</sup> See McGuire 1988, 240–57; Rüpke 1995.

<sup>79</sup> Behr 1968; Harris and Holmes 2008; Petsalis-Diomidis 2009.

<sup>80</sup> Bendlin 2006; Belayche and Rüpke 2007; cf. Rosenberger 2001, Bowden 2005 for the classical period of Greece.

<sup>81</sup> Rüpke 1995, 587–92; Rüpke 2006b, 182–7.

<sup>82</sup> Janowitz 2002; Athanassiadi 1993.

<sup>83</sup> Gordon 1987; Gordon 1999; Gordon 2009.

<sup>84</sup> Bispham and Smith 2000; Cole 2004. "Emotionality" has gained more attention, but needs not be related to individuality: Linke 2003, 84.

(*pathos*),<sup>85</sup> unlike the ancient notion of *experientia*, that is, learning from practising) seems to conflict with the dearth of ancient sources. However, recent analyses of the phenomena have produced a concept of experience that takes into account the connection between personal experience and communicated meaning and opens a perspective for a historical use of the concept: 'Personal, lived experience in its qualitative-emotional dimension remains dumb and has no power to transform behaviour as long as it is not articulated symbolically and . . . any system of convictions and practices, that from the first-person-point of view is no longer seen as expressive for qualitative experience, becomes increasingly obsolete.'<sup>86</sup> Experience, thus, could stress the observer and user of images, sacred space, and movement towards and in sacred space, that is, pilgrimage.<sup>87</sup> The latter established a tradition to temporarily drop out of society, of privatization.<sup>88</sup>

For the use of images I would like to point to the presentation of cult images in temples. Certain arrangements point to a stress on a *lively and overwhelming appearance in a rather intimate space*<sup>89</sup> in Hellenistic Italy. For the imperial period and perhaps already in Augustan times Heron of Alexandria describes a wide range of instruments and mechanisms to create emotionally intensive and surprising confrontation with the image. A bend in the access route, mirrors, or the opening of doors offers sudden visibility of the statue.<sup>90</sup> Architectural arrangements could serve the same purpose. Spectacular encounters seem to be intended in the arrangements exemplified by the ground plan and furnishing of the so-called sanctuary of Syrian deities on the slopes of the Janiculum at Rome,<sup>91</sup> but they are not restricted to 'exotic' deities. Regular temples, too, might secure overwhelming encounters, for instance, on confronting an oversized image in a rather small temple. The Roman temple of *Fortuna Huiusce Diei* must have produced such

<sup>85</sup> Troles Engberg-Pedersen presented on the Boston SBL conference in 2008 an attempt to define and identify religious experiences in ancient texts by this term.

<sup>86</sup> Jung 2006, 21; see also Jung 2004 and Schlette, Jung 2005, in particular Jung 2005.

<sup>87</sup> For the latter see, e.g. Petsalis-Diomidis 2006.

<sup>88</sup> See Hunt 1984; Büttner et al. 1985; Dunand 1997.

<sup>89</sup> von Hesberg 2007, 454–6.

<sup>90</sup> I am grateful to Mihaela Holban, Erfurt, for the reference.

<sup>91</sup> Goodhue 1975; see also Scheid 1995.

an experience. In their treatises on ‘superstition’, Seneca and Plutarch found some of their most striking examples for religious folly, as they classify it, in central city temples.

## VII Caring for the self

Caring for the self, *le souci de soi*, is of course a classical *topos* of individuation and individuality. Religion is central, but is subject to historical developments. I agree with Guy Stroumsa that ‘identity, which in the Hellenistic world had been defined . . . in cultural and linguistic terms, became essentially religious in the Roman empire.’<sup>92</sup> Where are concepts of the self developed? Autobiography and—as far as it is displaying interest in other persons as potential role models or references for self-reflection<sup>93</sup>—biography might entirely replace the need for explicit concepts of the self by simply offering a coherent narrative.<sup>94</sup> Conversion narratives and accounts of sin and purification are narrative or interpretive contexts that produce explicit reflections.<sup>95</sup>

Interest in oneself could take the form of interest in one’s post-mortal fate. That might take the form of speculations on a post-mortal continuation of the soul and its divinization.<sup>96</sup> However, neither do concepts of the self in the form of one (or occasionally two<sup>97</sup>) soul(s) need the notion of a continuing existence,<sup>98</sup> nor is care for the post-mortal phase bound to the notion of the soul. In many cases, stress is laid on the continuing social presence, on *memoria*, ensured, however, by one’s family (in the larger sense of household rather than kinship) or professional colleagues. Here, again, developments and regional differences might be interesting. The specific Roman emphasis on a familial context, visible in so many inscriptions, is not matched everywhere.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Stroumsa 2005, 184. <sup>93</sup> See ch. 12.

<sup>94</sup> e.g. McGing and Mossman 2006; see Momigliano 1987 pleading for biographical approaches to ancient religion.

<sup>95</sup> See Assmann and Stroumsa 1999.

<sup>96</sup> e.g. Brenk 1998, 180–1. For Greece, see Vernant 1996.

<sup>97</sup> Stroumsa 1999, 282–91 on Manichean soul concepts influenced by Iranian traditions.

<sup>98</sup> See above, p. 5 and 8.

<sup>99</sup> von Hesberg 2005a. The temporary domestic presence of mummies in Roman Egypt would be an interesting case for comparison (see Wortley 2006). I am grateful to Françoise Dunand for further information.

### VIII Employing rationality

The spread of rational argumentation that I have tried to map in detail for the late Roman republic<sup>100</sup> could be used as a resource of de-traditionalization by anybody. Rhetoric was a learnable technique (and as such opposed by the Roman elite even at the beginning of the first century BC) and (differing from philosophy) intended for performance.<sup>101</sup> It was useful for universalizing one's argumentation beyond the traditional problems of a local society. At the same time it continued to clash with established hierarchies and authorities and found its place in the law courts rather than in the bodies of political decision-making. Like many other phenomena, such a development is not irreversible. Undeniably, there is an anti-intellectual current in fourth-century Christian thinkers.<sup>102</sup> The clash of rationality and spirituality is not an invention of postmodernity.

### OVERVIEW OF THIS VOLUME

The terminology and model presented do not offer a theory of individualization or a chart-flow diagram for historical phases of individualization. Rather, I have tried to identify important areas of intensification of individual differences and individuality as being developed within the necessary process of individuation of every person. It is a map of areas of research and the parallel use of different diverse parameters which could help to historicize the notion of individuality.<sup>103</sup> Research that follows processes and institutions of individuation will help to better understand the complexity and dynamics of the ancient history of religion in the Hellenistic and Roman period.

The authors of this volume address the problem of religious individuation from very different methodological angles and in different ways. They critically discuss the terms presented so far, but they share the basic definitions, thus enabling comparison and mutual exchange

<sup>100</sup> Rüpke 2012.      <sup>101</sup> Trapp 2007, 235.      <sup>102</sup> Stroumsa 2005, 191.

<sup>103</sup> I am grateful for the discussion with Paul Lichterman (Los Angeles), fellow of the research group in 2009, and his insistence on separating the conglomeration of notions tied to religious individualization and religion in modernity.

of evidence. The first group of chapters address historical developments. They point to complex developments and are reluctant to claim to identify stable processes of 'individualization'. In chapter 2 Corinne Bonnet does not put individualization at the centre. Her focus is on intercultural exchange as a further dimension of cultural practices. Fluidity and individual agency are added as important concepts. The chapter sharply criticizes any arguments on the basis of individual 'needs'. The case study of Sidon, hence, is embedded in general considerations. Sceptical as to the claims about long-term changes in individualization, Bonnet in her conclusion stresses that religious acting in the complex 'middle ground' of bicultural social networks is neither to be confused with individuality nor disproves it.

In chapter 3 John North explores the mechanism of open, publicly induced religious change in the Roman republic and the evidence for individually instigated religious change during the empire. Evidence for the latter is rather anecdotal. Apparent changes over time—clearly visible by the fourth century—are often due to the change of types of evidence of the religious practices thus attested. Methodologically the chapter claims the priority of social identity over self-awareness within any notion of religious individuality.

Unlike John North, Clifford Ando in chapter 4 explicitly discusses models of religious change during the empire. He interprets the change of evidence, namely the disappearance of honorific and votive inscriptions addressing a local reality, as a consequence of structural changes. The chapter adds a new dimension to the historical notion of individualization. The superposition of empire questions the ability of local power, communication, and cults to religiously 'emplace' the world. Politically and legally atomized individuals are the driving force for massive religious change.

The following sequence of chapters inquires into the problems of methodologically distinguishing between individual and society in discussing agency. In chapter 5 Fritz Graf presents the cases of Xenophon and Archedamos of Thera around the turn of the fifth to the fourth century BC in order to investigate the limits imposed by shared traditions, laws, and media on individual choices in establishing cults.

Greg Woolf takes up the notions of religious individuation as a biographical process of acquiring religious roles and experiences in chapter 6. Roman religion was no abstract system, but action carefully drafted on tradition in an always changing present, and on the action

of competent actors. Inscriptural protocols of rituals and highly individualized historiographical narratives offer ample evidence. The growth in complexity of Mediterranean societies from the third century BC to the second century AD furthers individualization in so far as individualization aimed at relational, sociocentric persons rather than autonomous selves.

Evidence about ritual performance hardly ever allows an insight into the actors' competences and reflexions. In chapter 7 Richard Gordon tries to come closer to this by meticulously analysing the multiplicity of illocutions and authorial voices in the late Egyptian texts called magical papyri. The implied reader is left with decisions, reflections, dealing with failures to a degree that suggests one speaks of religious individualization at the time of composition, and re-edition and use in the third to fourth centuries AD. Yet the implied reader died with the dumping of the library.

Individual experience and space for individual behaviour admitted or taken in rituals lie at the heart of chapter 8 by Johan Leemans. His examples from the fourth century Cappadocian cult of the martyrs do not offer a basis to hypothesize on long-term developments, but they attest to circumstances and a period that could be described as of 'modest individualization'.

The two following chapters directly address individual religious experience. In chapter 9 Katharina Waldner surveys mystery cults and ancient descriptions of mystery cults from the hymn to Demeter down to Middle and Neo-Platonism. She points out how philosophers employ mysteries to talk about individual experience. Mysteries are a regular feature of ancient religions; they furthered, one might say, a sustainable individuation even beyond death. Within a city they offered space for competitive individuality.

In chapter 10, written by Nicole Belayche, the focus remains on Asia Minor and on the interaction between individual and collective religious experiences and expressions of such experiences. In the analysis of a corpus of Greek votive inscriptions with a wealth of combinations of divine concepts and names, the perspective of individual experience and agency offers new insights and adduces further evidence for a 'dossier' of individualized religious practice.

'Agency' might serve as a headline for the following couple of chapters. They all deal with texts which reflect on the possibilities of the authorial figure or the reader to act. The application of the terminology of individual allows for the description of the often

paradoxical determination of such agency: individuality finds its apex in the voluntary loss of individuality, in social self-debasement, in giving in to the 'god's' will.

In chapter 11 Ian Henderson analyses the gospel of Mark which deliberately subdues banal individuality by attributing 'flat personalities' to the people narrated. Henderson employs the polar notion of self and social *persona* to analyse such phenomena. His special emphasis, however, is on individuation. Mark is talking about such a process when Jesus is dealing with his identification as 'the Son of Man': Jesus' reflections lead to an exemplary individuality which could be emulated by his readers, leaders-to-be. Henderson does not deny the 'modernity' and even novelty of some of Mark's notions and literary devices, but is insistent on not incorporating this into some 'long narrative' as the history of receptions demonstrates the dominance of alternative readings of the text.

Tessa Rajak deals with the first-century Jewish authors Philo and Josephus in chapter 12. Her focus is on the development of a self-reflective individuality in interpreting and writing about Scripture, thus adding the notion of an authorial individuality to the typology proposed above. Of course, this type remains an elite type of individuality and presupposes institutional components of any individuation into a religious book culture.

Chapter 13 by Jörg Rüpke follows the same line of investigation, focusing on a slightly later author, the author of the 'Shepherd of Hermas'. Fighting with the blurring (more precise: making) of boundaries, 'Hermas' offers a specific religious individuation, an individuation in the confrontation with God, as a strategy to establish differences with regard to other persons or activities. The insertion of autobiographical elements into the text might serve this strategy.

Karen King's chapter 14 reviews the terminology in the light of claims made regarding the position of Christianity within a history of individualization. Analytically she concentrates on the concept of agency for the analysis of ancient martyrological texts. These texts served to provide examples and training to remain faithful in the decisive moment of death. Two premises are particularly important. Agency is first of all a characteristic of situation: the possibilities to act are defined by, for example, legal institutions. Nevertheless, these settings leave room or, better, entail the necessity of individual appropriation. Second, for the Christians, this agency is instrumental;

the ultimate agent is God. As King points out, such a double concept of agency entails important consequences for the larger historical developments, as a divide between a separate religious order and the hegemonic order in society opens.

The following two chapters focus on religious traditions characterized by the importance of a master–disciple relationship. In chapter 15 Giulia Sfameni Gasparro enlarges the field of inquiry by addressing another corpus of texts, Hermetic literature. The dialogical nature of the texts could be read as individually addressing a reader and thus offering her or him a model for religious individuation. In the detailed analysis of the text, however, Sfameni Gasparro is able to distinguish three very different dialogical practices. These are monological teaching in disguise, a didactic interaction, and finally an initiatory process that may spiritually advance in detail. Historically, as the chapter concludes, the evidence remains inconclusive as to whether there were organized groups institutionalizing such individual practices.

In chapter 16 Giovanni Filoramo traces comparable phenomena in Gnostic literature. Given the negative view of the present world and corporality, individuation is negatively defined in a twofold manner, namely, it neither aims at socialization with present society nor at any substance of the self. Instead, literary guidance is offered to attain the divine beyond. In its literary form, an institutionalized practice—Filoramo speaks of *habitus*—is visible, whereas the underlying religious experiences remain beyond our reach.

The two final chapters transgress the empirical person in two important directions. In chapter 17 Aldo Setaioli offers clarification on a topos of reflexive individuality, longing for immortality, and a stark contrast to the Gnostic position. The analysis of philosophical as well as consolatory texts by Cicero and Seneca reaches similar conclusions for both authors: nice to have for the wise, but unprovable and hence ethically irrelevant.

In the final chapter 18 Charlotte Fonrobert turns to a process that offers clear evidence for de-individualization. In analysing second and third century Mishna, Fonrobert demonstrates these texts to be instruments in constructing a sort of collective individual that is able to replace the loss of a locative identity after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE. And yet, precise reading of the texts offers evidence for the intensive drawing on concepts of individuality and the individual body.

Setaioli's final result for Seneca, the recommendation to contemplate this universe's order, makes an important point regarding the relationship of individuation and socialization as developed before. In hegemonic discourse, individuality is understood not as deviance from but conformity with, and perfection of, an order that is both societal and natural. It is, as Karen King points out, the discordance of the divine as fundamental order and the (merely) mundane order that entails the largest potential for conflict. And yet, as the following chapters show, historical dynamic is not confined to open conflict. Even if ideals agree, these very ideals open up large spaces of individual agency and appropriation. Here, the volume provides a starting point for mapping more precise areas of investigation into and refinement of the notion of individualization.

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